

Mayor's Commission on Homelessness Meeting
3rd floor conference room, Phoenix Building
Wednesday, November 28, 2012
3:00 to 5:00 pm

DRAFT Minutes

Commission Members Present:

Steve Kay (Chair), Debra Hensley (Co-chair), Melody Flowers, Darlene Thomas, Kathy Witt, Catherine DeFlorio, Linda Carroll, Jessica Gies, Mike Scanlon, Kate Savage, Janis Durham, Joe Shuman, Harry Richart, Bill Embry, Janice James, Kyle Whalen, Don Ralph, Rocky Burke, Michelle Beverly, Brian Varble, Ginny Vincini, Laura Babbage, and Tanya Torp.

LFUCG Staff (members) present:

Shaye Rabold, Office of the Mayor
Leah Boggs, Legislative Aide to Steve Kay

Guests:

Connie Milligan, Billie Mallory, Sandra Zupan, Josh Madyam and Kelly Waggoner.

The meeting was called to order at 3:07 pm by Steve Kay, Chair of the Commission.

Agenda

The agenda was sounded and there were no changes.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Minutes

The minutes from the last meeting were approved as submitted.

Work Group Reports

Survey – Don Ralph reported that survey was complete. 200 interviews were not conducted but all the data has been analyzed. Unexpectedly, the vast majority needed jobs but there was not a lot understanding of how to seek jobs. They also needed transportation, access to mental health treatment, and basic necessities such as socks, underwear, and hygiene items.

Brian Varble has also heard about the need for jobs so Calvary Baptist is now working with Jobs for Life which has an 8 week work program. There are several other jobs programs in town including the Catholic Diocese and Jubilee Jobs. Christ Church also had a jobs program, Pyramid Resources, but it is closing. The Committee suggested that there needed to be more information about job readiness.

Inability to pass a drug test, criminal history, and the lack of a permanent address are barriers to employment. Rocky Burke addressed the transportation issue and reiterated that his board was interested in donating bus passes to one agency that would manage the distribution.

Discussion of Draft Report

Steve Kay explained that it should be viewed as a very first look. There are gaps and holes and it is incomplete. Nothing in it has any special standing or status. Today, the discussion should start with the big issues to determine what is missing or incorrect. From now on, any other changes will be reflected in "track changes" format until voted on by the committee.

All agreed that the draft was missing the economic impact of homelessness including the cost to the community of inaction and the savings to the community of action and information about funding.

Affordable Housing Trust Fund

Kyle Whalen proposed that this Committee suggest changes to the Affordable Housing Task Fund Report because there are plenty of programs that provide housing for individuals between 50% and 80% AMI. The Trust Fund should focus on providing housing for persons under 30% AMI and between 30% and 50% AMI. A "Housing First" program can be included in the Trust Fund. In this draft it is referred to as "Housing Trust Fund" instead of the "Affordable Housing Trust Fund" which makes it apply more broadly. All agreed that provisions should be included in the Trust Fund proposal to guide the use of the money including the right supervisory structure. The common thought about affordable housing trust funds is that it is a capital fund used to build housing. The Commission will also need to address the on-going operational costs of the housing. Securing stream of funding makes all the difference in success and relieves tension on other line items in the budget.

The Affordable Housing Trust Fund has been before Council since 2008. It was discussed on November 27th in the Budget and Finance Committee. The Commission has requested that the issue be held in the Budget and Finance Committee until the Commission presents its report. Information regarding the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and the proposal before Council will be provided to the Commission. Laura Babbage also requested that information regarding the 100,000 Homes campaign and "Housing First" be provided to the Commission.

If the Commission suggests modifications to the current proposal there should be an explanation. Suggested language might be that "the Commission supports the recommendations with the following modifications."

Debra Hensley asked if the Commission believes that the Housing Trust Fund is the only funding source for homelessness solutions. It is viewed as a tax and will be difficult to pass without lots of data. The community got behind the Lextran tax because they saw the economic benefit. A community education campaign regarding the economic benefit

is needed for the Housing Trust Fund. The Commission members also have an individual responsibility to speak to their Council Members regarding the Housing Trust Fund and the other recommendations of the Commission.

Housing First

There was much discussion and confusion regarding “Housing First.” The Committee believes that it is imperative that there are definitions in the draft so that meanings will be clear. Shaye Rabold will send the Committee the definitions she prepared. She explained that “Housing First” is a type of permanent supportive housing.

In the “Housing First” model, there are no conditions to obtaining housing. Clients do not have to have a job or be clean and sober. The program is controversial because it does not meet societal expectations but it is cheaper than allowing the chronically homeless to remain on the street. Collaboration between professionals, government, and volunteers is required to make it work. It is very successful in major metropolitan areas but might not be successful in Lexington because of its size.

Recommendations and Data

The Commission discussed how specific the recommendations should be. The Commission doesn’t have the expertise to be very specific about some recommendations and some recommendations will be more specific than others. The Commission will use the best data available including national, state, local, and anecdotal.

There are very key junctures where housing makes a difference in preventing homelessness or preventing chronic homelessness. The report needs to be clear about where those junctures are and what is needed.

There are penalties for hospital readmissions in the Affordable Health Care Act which apply across all areas of readmissions so there must be data to support those conclusions. Hospitals have not looked at the data in this way before and it is a large research project.

Don Ralph believes that transportation, jobs, and job training, need to be included in the draft.

All agreed coordination, education, and leadership are needed but disagreed as to whether it should be an agency or person and whether it should be internal or external to government. The Commission needs to be open-minded about best practices and understanding that the government has a significant role.

All agreed that the current service providers are providing excellent service with limited resources. The Commission and report should support what the providers are currently doing and provide additional assistance. The providers coordinate with each other every day in many ways.

Louisville has a homeless coalition like the Central Kentucky Housing and Homeless Initiative (CKHHI) but it is funded. San Diego is also a good model.

There is a big need for affordable rental housing. Wages are too low so more subsidized housing is needed.

Steve Kay asked if the prologue and introduction are appropriate. All agreed that it was well done. Some felt it left the impression that homelessness was mostly about mental health.

The Public Meeting is Dec. 13th from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Steve Kay would like as many members of the Commission there as possible. Laura Babbage requested a "Save the Date" email.

Please get all information that you want included in the draft to Leah Boggs by December 6th.

Public Comment

Billie Mallory asked when the report would be presented to Council. The projected completion date is January 15th but there is the question regarding how the report will be presented.

Sandra Zupin said the meeting minutes are not on-line. She also commented that this draft is inconsistent with the 2010 report in that the 2010 report had 9 recommendations regarding affordable housing and this report has one. If the other recommendations are complete, we should address what has been accomplished. She also thinks that given the low wages discussed in financial constraints, economic development should be addressed and is the function of local government. A livable wage is needed and she doesn't see wages and housing as a part of this solution in this report. She also believes we have to educate the public about the economic impact of homelessness and what our taxes are already supporting and the misperceptions about the causes of homelessness.

Connie Milligan complimented the committee on doing a good job at taking a comprehensive look.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 pm.