

Metropolitan Homelessness Executive Commission Meeting
Friday, March 4, 2016
at the Sonny West Conference Center, Howard Office Building
700 2nd Avenue South, Nashville, TN

The meeting began at 9:07 a.m.

Present: Wendell Segroves, Liz Allen Fey, Kirby Davis

Staff: Will Connelly, Judy Tackett, Karri Simpson, Lesley Head, Deon Trotter

Minutes:

The minutes of the January 7, 2016 Metropolitan Homelessness Commission Executive committee meeting were approved.

Preparation for full Commission Meeting:

The committee prepared for the full commission meeting including topics of the encampment task force and the Focus Strategies report.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 a.m.

Metropolitan Homelessness Full Commission Meeting

Friday, March 4, 2016
at the Randee Rogers Center
1419 Rosa L Parks Blvd.

Present: Liz Allen Fey, Kirby Davis, Wendell Segroves, Phil Duke, Angie Hubbard, Charles Strobel, Ellen Zinkiewicz, Angie Thompson, Sgt. Borque, Josh Lee, Renee Pratt

Staff: William Connelly, Judy Tackett, Karri Simpson, Lesley Head, Deon Trotter

The meeting began at 9:30 a.m.

Minutes:

The Commission could not vote on the minutes as there was not a quorum.

Financial Report and Budget:

Lisa Ricketts reported that the budget is on track.

Ellen Zinkiewicz asked about fringe benefits. There were no additional questions.

Encampment Task Force Recommendations Presentation

Phil Duke reported that the task force worked to come up with recommendations surrounding an interim option to encampments. After meeting for six weeks the task force feels more time is needed.

Will Connelly added that there was a broad consensus among the task force to create a homeless outreach team (HOT), comprised of different departments within Metro, that would take the lead on engaging encampments throughout Nashville. This recommendation also included adding protocols and processes for when a campsite is identified and that process would ideally help someone connect with housing and supportive services. The response would be less of a criminal justice focused and more of a supportive services.

The task force recommendations also included:

- logistics of storage for people to keep their belongings for when a campsite is closed;
- basic behaviors that people living in encampments would be asked to follow, to include no violence, cleanliness, etc.

Charlie Strobel added that there are constitutional issues that need to be considered when discussing encampments.

Encampment Discussion and Next Steps

Liz Allen Fey stated that what stood out within the task force's recommendations for her was the need for the creation of a system. She opened up the discussion for Commissioners to share their take aways and feedback surround the recommendations.

Eric Cole focused on adding to Liz Allen Fey's statement around traction and added that lot of work is happening right now, specifically around Ft. Negley, and all have been operating for the last 18 months knowing that the deadline is approaching. One thing the task force discussed was how an alternative, outside of government/public property is best, and that utilizing non-profit or religious may be the way to go. So as far as traction, this may be the best way to go.

Ellen Zinkiewicz stated that 12 years ago encampments were handled with surprise raids, with members of the police chasing people out of the woods. That memory has stuck with her. She feels that thoughtful conversations are now being had that are headed in the right direction.

There can be no vote on the next steps for the recommendations, as there is not a quorum. Liz Allen Fey did ask for the task force to continue. Wendell Segroves committed to serve; Phil Duke stated he think it would help if the current recommendations be decided upon and then charge the task force with another goal.

Liz Allen Fey went on to ask what questions still remain for the task force. Will Connelly stated that within the recommendation document it states a goal to create guidelines around sanctioned encampments; that is the next step. Liz Allen Fey charged Will Connelly with calling a meeting with Phil Duke and Wendell Segroves to discuss questions still needing to be answered and what the next steps and focus are.

Eric Cole stated that the task force came up with one complete recommendation focused on creating guidelines around how to handle unauthorized encampments with a focus on creating a homeless outreach team. Metro is in the middle of a budgeting session, so work to get this team funded would need to continue immediately. Will Connelly added that a budget request has been drafted and is ready to be submitted to the Mayor's office.

Will Connelly will provide an update on the efforts of the encampment task force and issues surround encampments at the next Commission meeting on May 6th.

Focus Strategies Report Update

Will Connelly and members of the Commission read allowed the vision of what a housing crisis resolution system is.

Will Connelly asked that Commissioners share their feedback and likes/dislikes about the document read:

- Sgt. Borque was surprised by the notion of getting people housed first and then providing the support.
- It really resonated with Ellen Zinkiewicz that if you focus on solving all the unique struggles then you miss the opportunity to focus on the expertise of getting people housed.
- Eric Cole said he is a big data fan and it made him think back to some of the data that the Focus Strategies report generated about current lengths of stay and barriers in regards to the existing programs in Nashville. It strikes him that so much of the system has created massive barriers to the decision making and self-empowerment that this document focuses on.
- Angie Hubbard said that the statement that the lack of affordable housing must not paralyze the current work and that we should allow those who focus is advocating for more affordable housing to take that on.
- Phil Duke said he thinks the Contributor helps put a face to homelessness, allowing others to identify with people who need help.
- Will Connelly stated he thinks it will be helpful for the Commission to continue to learn what a housing crisis resolution system is and then practice how to describe this to their colleagues and friends. Many cities have created this type of system; Washington, DC can house a veteran experiencing homelessness within 45 days. The Commission needs to continue to learn more about creating and implementing this type of system and then make decisions.
- Eric Cole added that the only bullet underlined within this document is about how funders must put their funding toward ending homelessness and not toward homeless support services. This is a massive shift for the Nashville community.

Liz Allen Fey asked that Commissioner's continue to think about how this moves them toward action. There is work that needs to be done and she is going to insist that a learning piece be done at every Commission meeting.

Eric Cole pointed out that we speak about the current homeless service system the word "services providers" is used and we need to reframe the whole lens of what we are doing and become a housing navigation system.

Moment of Silence

Announcements

Will Connelly announced that Tuesday, March 8th at 10:30 at the Trolley Barns in the Emma building, there is a kickoff to start the planning process to end youth homelessness.

On Monday, April 21, Ian DeJong will be in town to lead a training on how to improve landlord engagement.

Public Hearing

John Zirker- He is the local and state chair on housing with the NACCP. In 2006 at the Radisson Convention Center there was a meeting about the planning of Nashville and many of these plans have come to pass. The question asked then was about new development for the homeless and he is asking that again. They tried to create Hope University for the homeless, but the Mayor at the time could not provide the half million dollars needed. He is asking that this now be a consideration.

Barry Hobbs- He is an alumni of TSU. All the ideas discussed today are beautiful but money talks and you know what walks. You can make all the plans you want, but without money it all means nothing. We will continue to just sit and talk. If not mistaken, there is some money in all these conversations but not enough. You don't want the encampment situation to be like the one in France. Homelessness is a crime and no one should be homeless. The Room in the Inn program should be a year long and services at the Mission need to be improved. He is looking forward to the day when there is no longer a moment of silence list of those who have passed. This is his last year he will attend Commission meetings. He has given all the ideas he can think of and ask that they be put to use. Let's work together and not apart.

Steve Ryder- There is no quorum and many commissioners have left early, which is very insulting. Process needs to change. Each agenda topic should be open to the public to add input immediately after the Commissioners discussion; the public should not have to wait until the close of the meeting to be heard. In the 1860s there was an encampment at Ft. Negley and that encampment helped create the Edgehill neighborhood. Ft. Negley is part of the solution and not part of the problem. A HOT is not a part of the solution, which focused on just moving people around. A person experiencing a housing crisis is a ridiculous new term for the homeless. The current navigator system just moves people from place to place, then they eventually end up at the shelters; there is a reason people camp out. Nashville has a 19% poverty rate and people are cost burdened on housing. The Mayor should make something happen, help people and not hurt them.

Robbi Kelley- He is a resident of Ft. Negley. He challenges the Commissioners and Council Members to come live with them at Ft. Negley. Not to depend on their money, but learn how to haul up water, wood, and food; you have to work like they do. This is how you will learn what their needs are. They will learn about the good people who are trying to leave, those that don't want to leave, and the mentally ill who can't leave. Government didn't want to afford the high costs of medical coverage for the mentally ill, so they end up on the streets.

Howard Allen- He has been speaking to this Commission for the past 8 years. He listened at the last Commission meeting as to why Commissioners are here- many said god and others said because there job sent them there. But he does believe they can come to a positive resolve in these meeting. He knows no one will create a pretty high rise for those experiencing homelessness, because it goes against the current economic system in our country. The current issue is the lack of mental illness support. Why not create jobs at the library, since people are already there? Commissioners need to build on these things so that meetings are more productive.

Denis Huey- He calls for the resignation of Commissioners who have missed more than three meetings.

Lisa- She feels the Commission is a joke, a big joke. She sees a lot of talking and doing nothing. She tried to get services, but was denied because she didn't meet criteria. Ft. Negley and Greenstreet are doing good work and helping meet people's needs. She said she has been told there is a 14 year waiting list for help and asked what are you supposed to do for 14 years. She reiterated that the Commission is a joke and they need to do something. She is not knocking Megan Barry, who is her friend. The Commission needs to wake up.

Steve Lindstrom- The Mayor needs to appoint people to the empty seats on this Commission and he seconds Denis Huey's motion that Commissioners who have missed three meetings need to resign. He appreciates that the narrative is being changed to social justice. He is disappointed that the encampment task force did not come up with an actionable plan for Ft. Negley, which will close on April 15th. It will be good to have an open narrative about the plan so that a crisis doesn't ensue. Nashville needs focused leadership around these issues; task forces are great, but unless someone is driving the efforts, nothing happens.

Charles McGuire- Communities like Ft. Negley allow people to take care of themselves and these communities need to be left alone. Encampments do fine until government gets involved. If people are on abandoned property the previous owner needs to ask them to vacate, not the government. He pays his taxes but would get arrested, when experiencing homelessness, for trying to find places to stay; then all his identification would be lost and set him back. People are doing fine until government gets involved.

Samuel Lester- He is also disappointed about a lack of a quorum and hopes an emergency meeting will be called so that a decision regarding the encampment recommendations could be made. He is also concerned about how people experiencing homelessness are counted in Nashville. The way the annual point in time count is conducted is very flawed. There are 12,000 unique people accessing shelter and transitional housing every year, and that doesn't include the 3,000 children experiencing homelessness. The number of people waiting on housing voucher is 14,500 and that doesn't include the 17,000 people waiting for public housing. There is an emergency going on in Nashville right now. For every \$100 increase in rent, homelessness goes up by 15%. Rents have been skyrocketing and there is no sign that this is going to stop. If something is not done, the number of homeless encampments is going to double. He thinks the Commission should call for a homelessness emergency in Nashville.

Lindsey Krinks- Edmondson Manor apartments are closing because the owner sold their building and tenants were just given 30 day eviction notices. Most residents at this complex are refugee and immigrant families that can't afford the higher rent once the renovations are done. This is a time for decisive leadership, not just in this group setting or at your job, but in the public sphere. This community doesn't just want crumbs at the table but a place at the table. She will take on that challenge given by Robbi Kelley to live at Ft. Negley and wonders how many of the Commissioners will join her. She read an email from a young man who stayed at Ft. Negley. The email stated that he got off Heroin in Nashville and Ft. Negley was the only place he has ever found peace. The community needs to pool all the resources so that they can stop this terrible hemorrhaging that is a state of emergency in Nashville.

Liz All Fey asked Commissioners to reflect on what they heard: no satisfaction; urgency; the need for solutions; some progress has been made; changes need to the structure of the Commission; greater visibility around information; ways to continue to engage; and very powerful comments around mental health that the state legislature need to hear around Insure Tennessee.

Liz Allen Fey is very proud of the staff at the Commission, who are always looking for ways to reach out and look for new options, always working for the needs of this community.

The next full Commission meeting is Friday, May 6, 2016. at 9:30 a.m. at the Sonny Weset Conference room in the Howard Office Building.

The next Executive Committee meeting is on Tuesday, April 12, 2016 at 8:30 a.m. at Metro Social Services, 800 2nd Avenue North.

With no other comments the meeting was adjourned at 11:01 a.m.