

Metropolitan Homelessness Commission Meeting of September 2, 2016

Present: Liz Allen Fey, chair; Freddie O'Connell, Mina Johnson, Tanaka Vercher, Steven Samra, Wendell Segroves, Norman Humber, Phil Duke, Charles Strobel, Tom Turner, Erik Cole, Ellen Zinkiewicz, Renee Pratt, Angie Hubbard, Angie Thompson, Sgt. Ricky Bearden

Staff: Will Connelly, Deon Trotter, Lesley Head, Jessica Ivey, Judith Tackett

Minutes

Welcome and Roll Call:

Ms. Fey welcomes everyone and announced the public hearing would be divided and held in the middle and at the end of the meeting today.

Roll call was conducted.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion made Wendell Segroves to approve the minutes. Phil Duke seconded. All approved.

Finances:

Will Connelly gave a quick update. The budget in the packet has not changed since the July meeting. No budget questions were asked.

National Alliance to End Homelessness Conference 2016 – staff presentation (see Appendix A for the slideshow):

Judith Tackett and Deon Trotter reported on a few of their takeaways from the NAEH 2016 Conference, which was held at the end of July in Washington, D.C. This is one of the largest conferences in the nation.

Judith Tackett said that the conference brings together high-level representatives from federal government, national organizations that lead the efforts to end homelessness, and peer cities. There are many workshops to choose from. The general tone of the conference is in support of Housing First including Rapid Re-housing approaches, and a strong focus is given to expectations HUD has to Continua of Care.

Ms. Tackett said that the HUD message is clear. HUD wants to see community outcomes. That goes beyond the HUD funded agencies. They will evaluate communities based on their overall outcomes on ending homelessness.

As a recap, Ms. Tackett showed a slide listing the performance measures outlined by the HEARTH Act (HEARTH = Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing):

- Length of time persons remain homeless
- The extent to which persons who exit to permanent housing return to homelessness
- Number of homeless persons – PIT and Annual counts
- Jobs and income growth for homeless persons
- Number of people who become homeless for the first time
- Number of successful housing placements

Ms. Tackett quoted Norm Suchar, the director of the Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) that is over the CoCs: “I know that so many people say, ‘We don’t look at the data because the data we have is not good.’ But if you never look at the data, it will never be good.” She also paraphrased Norm Suchar as saying that every community has to get to the point to have very difficult conversations, “Don’t put it off; don’t wait.”

Ms. Tackett continued by saying that her second big takeaway from the conference related to Diversion. The workshop she attended stressed the need for programs to adopt a diversion approach in everything they do. Diversion is not a program. It is a conversation with a client that looks at the person’s strength, looks at connections, and tries to keep a person in the place they are to at least buy some more time to implement longer-term solutions and next steps. Think of diversion as a form of mediation. Will Connelly asked Ms. Tackett to explain what diversion means in terms of what it diverts people from. Ms. Tackett said it is an approach to divert people from entering into the literal homeless systems such as shelters. The goal is to keep people from becoming literally homeless (street, cars, shelters, etc.).

Deon Trotter spoke about Housing First and landlord engagement. He said that there is a housing affordability issue in nearly every city across the nation. “We’ve got to utilize housing focused services. Anything that we do should be housing focused. If you have an employment program, does that employment program immediately lead to housing? From the day they walk in, is there are track for housing?” Mr. Trotter talked about improving our landlord engagement strategies by engaging landlord locators and learning effective strategies to locate housing with a business approach.

Mr. Trotter continued to talk about the meaning of Housing First. “Housing First actually means housing first – not housing first with barriers.” He said it was imperative to look at all type of housing options. “Are we pursuing any and every option for housing and not making it difficult for people to get a key to housing?”

He also talked about the importance of measuring rapid exits to housing. Of keeping data. “It’s important for us to know as a city where we are....What is the affordable housing number we have and what do we need?”

Secondly, Mr. Trotter highlighted the issue of prioritization. He talked about linking people with the appropriate housing options, aligned with their needs. Mr. Trotter also used New Mexico as an example to highlight how New Mexico is coordinating services and vacancies across the state. He ended by saying that it was important for us to continue to focus on data, which he said will help our community to hold each other accountable.

Liz Allen Fey asked that staff send out the slides to commissioners next week and attach them to the minutes.

Will Connelly said that as a goal for next year, staff was going to try to find some dollars to sponsor other people in the community to attend the conference. Council Lady Vercher asked when the conference was held. Mr. Connelly said there was a NAEH conference that focused on ending family and youth homelessness in February, which was usually on the West Coast, and the NAEH Conference staff just went to was in July in Washington, D.C.

Ellen Zinkiewicz asked about available diversion training. Judith Tackett said that the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) is in their process of updating their Website with new information around diversion approaches. That should be done this fall, likely in October. She said staff would keep an eye on it and then find out whether there is more information on training opportunities. The NAEH Website is endhomelessness.org (but current information on Diversion that is posted on there includes questionnaires rather than a strong focus on conversation and mediation, which is old information that NAEH wants to update). Angie Hubbard added that since Nashville now is a Promise Zone, there are opportunities to receive technical assistance (TA) from federal departments. She encouraged to look at these opportunities for trainings and TA. Steven Samra added that there is a lot of motivation around employment training right now. Mr. Samra also responded to Mr. Trotter's comments in regard to the affordable housing crisis nationwide. He said to keep in mind that in Nashville not only gentrification was going on, but hyper-gentrification. He cited the James Robertson Apartments as an example of how quickly displacement can happen.

Ms. Fey said the commission keeps hearing about the need for urgency. She also said people were looking to Nashville, a city with a new mayor, which could be an opportunity.

Will Connelly gave a shout out to Mandy Woods and Suzie Tolmie who serve as the HMIS lead and the CoC lead respectively at the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency (MDHA). He said they have been doing the work as Continuum of Care leaders to meet HUD requirements for a long time and have been trying to make that a community-driven approach.

Freddie O'Connell asked whether staff attended the NAEH workshop on restricting CoC governance. Judy Tackett said she attended that session last year. Further discussion ensued about the importance to listen to public input that stresses urgency around governance questions. Mr. O'Connell said it was important to try to ask whether plans and processes (he used the Community Cold Weather Response Plan as an example) are actually effective for people. He said he didn't even know the CoC process. In addition, he said it was hard to look at data when the data isn't there. Mr. O'Connell mentioned the need to look at local funding (not only federal funding) and recalled a visit to Minneapolis where he was amazed by a project by Catholic Charities that they were doing with assistance from the county and city governments. He said it was a much more effective permanent supportive housing (PSH) project than he had seen here. "Why aren't we doing that? How can we do that?"

Ms. Fey encouraged commissioners to continue to ask the hard questions. Angie Hubbard said that Housing First was a difficult conversation. She said she went through other HUD programs where the federal government changed the approach. It was hard on agencies and to get the buy-in from the community.

Liz Allen Fey asked commissioners to search for the "do-piece." She pointed to Ms. Zinkiewicz' questions about how she can learn more about diversion training, which is an action-oriented outcome of a conversation. Ms. Fey asked commissioners for additional input.

Charles Strobel said for him the crisis of homelessness is the crisis of death. He said this creates a sense of urgency and that the vulnerability index (*local agencies adopted the use the VI-SPDAT, which stands for Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool*) should serve to give prioritization to the most vulnerable persons. Steven Samra said he agreed, but also felt there was a danger in relying solely on the VI-SPDAT because the challenge is to leave people, who do not meet the threshold of high acuity, out of the process.

Will Connelly explained that in the initial phases, when he first came to Nashville, the community started with a focus on high acuity around chronic homelessness. However, the Focus Strategies report changed that approach and expands that focus to create a system that helps everyone with the appropriate intervention.

The Housing Crisis Resolution System report addresses all needs, not just governance but also how we spend money. Mr. Connelly said we needed to think about how the Commission affects people who are homeless right now. “How relevant are we to people who experience homelessness right now?”

Commissioners further engaged in a brief conversation about whom a system should serve. Ms. Fey summed up the conversation saying that it was really about creating a system and about examining what that system looks like. “I really hope through these conversations that providers who are sitting around the table think about, ‘What does this mean for me? How do I adjust what I’m doing?’ And that we’re able to continue to share that,” Ms. Fey said.

Public Comment period (15 minutes):

Samuel Lester said he appreciated the call to gather statistics, but he said, “we have data that is not really used.” He said a good starting point is looking at the annual count rather than the Point In Time (PIT) count. The annual count lists 12,000 people as experiencing homelessness, whereas the PIT count only lists 2,000+. He said in reality, when people are in and out of housing, they are hard to be classified as “chronic” anymore. Mr. Lester also pointed to the school children who are homeless. He said during the school year, about 3,000 kids are registered as homeless. That number is likely 3 times higher, so it’s more like 9,000. In essence, Mr. Lester, said there are more like 20,000 people (at least 15,000) who experience homelessness in Nashville.¹ Mr. Lester pointed to a mother with 10 children as an example of people who often fall out of homelessness temporarily and are not counted. He also spoke to the financial aspects of homelessness and said it costs on average \$14,000 per person for a person to be housed versus \$35,000 per person.² “There is so much money for the city to save here.”

Lindsey Krinks with OTN has done outreach in the community for about 9 years. She voiced her opinion that the most pressing problem in Nashville right now is to engage in the legislative process at the city and state levels to stop the ongoing loss of affordable rental properties. She pointed to legislation that needs to avoid that companies can buy out rental houses and turn them into Airbnb properties – taking them off the rental market. “What is the Commission doing?” She said that right now for every free unit that allows OTN to house someone, another person has lost that unit. In addition, the available units are substandard and in bad areas. Thus, we are moving the most vulnerable people in areas with high drug trafficking, etc. She said Kirby Davis has been a saving grace because of the high quality of living standards his units provide.

Amanda Wood, the HMIS lead at MDHA, said HMIS was a concept. She said that the community’s HMIS does have good data, but it does not have the coverage and she asked for support from the Homelessness Commission to hold agencies accountable to enter their data. Ms.

¹ Staff encourages readers of the minutes to double check any statistics and numbers presented in these minutes. Please contact data sources documents directly (guidance can be provided by MDHA or the Homelessness Commission).

² Homelessness Commission staff is available to assist with cost comparison questions.

Wood also pointed the HUD questions that Judith Tackett listed in her presentation and said that the CoC has to answer those questions every single year. “It would be such a great opportunity, especially at the governance task force level, to show you how we answer those questions now.”

Charles (McGuire?) spoke about police approaches to people experiencing homelessness. He pointed out the constitutional rights of people who are homeless.

Alex Smith spoke to the importance to talk about youth. He felt the Commission is yet again leaving that population out of the conversation. He said addressing youth homelessness was essential if we wanted to end homelessness overall. “Everybody pays attention to the beginning and the end. No one looks at the middle. The middle is the kids, the youth. We’re not going into the schools and talking to these kids.” He said that if we did not start to stop sugar-coating our messages to kids, the kids will follow in the same footsteps. Mr. Smith challenged every person in the room to truly step up to the plate when it comes to youth and do something about it to stop the cycle of homelessness. He said to make a dent, kids needed to be reached at age 15 and up. “For the youth who has no one to represent them except for someone like me, I have a real problem with it. I challenge every one of you to step up to the plate whether it is at your church, your family – homelessness is not an option.”

The public comment period was ended at this point.

Liz Allen Fey moved to the rest of the agenda and asked Freddie O’Connell for an update on Governance.

Governance Discussion:

Mr. O’Connell said he took some of the responsibility that the governance task force, which was formed at the last Commission meeting has not met yet. Unfortunately, he had work obligations and at one point he had to travel a lot. As chair he wanted to conduct some pre-set up work. One thing he is working on now is to get commitments from the committee members. He announced that he wanted to hold a first meeting prior to the next executive committee meeting (which is on Oct. 11). Mr. O’Connell also mentioned the HUD TA that is going to come to Nashville to assist with the Continuum of Care (CoC) process. But he said he didn’t want to wait for other processes to be finished to get the task force to work.

Ms. Fey said members of the governance task force besides Freddie O’Connell who chairs the task force include Will Connelly, Jim Harbison, Renee Pratt, Kirby Davis, Steven Samra, Erik Cole, and she said there possibly may be a foundation person added.

Angie Hubbard asked whether the governance task force intended to attend CoC governance and full committee meetings? Ms. Hubbard also announced that MDHA’s work is HUD-driven.

MDHA functions as the CoC Lead. They will be the recipients of the HUD TA. She also pointed out that the Commission really doesn’t know how the Continuum of Care functions. She said once HUD TA is here, “We’ll have one of the difficult community conversations.”

Liz Allen Fey encouraged commissioners to share information with everyone at the table as they become more educated and informed on different issues.

Mr. O’Connell said he wants to bring education to the governance task force and maybe that a briefing to understand the CoC and HMIS was part of that.

Moment of Silence:

Ms. Allen Fey read the following names of people who had experienced homelessness and had passed away since the July meeting:

James Bradstreet, Alessio Emmanuel, Michael Heil, Ronnie Lanier, Eric Paul Stepp, Roy Thompson, Pedro Viart.

Announcements:

Will Connelly announced the release of a HUD NOFA for a Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program. This program will select 10 cities (four of them rural) and appropriate \$33 million in selected communities toward innovative programs to end youth homelessness.

Freddie O'Connell asked whether the Commission needed to make a resolution in support of this application. Angie Hubbard explained that the city had been prepared for this NOFA, knowing that it was coming.

Action Item:

Freddie O'Connell made a motion that the Commission support the application for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program. Wendell Segroves seconded the motion, All approved.

Will Connelly also gave an update on the new homeless outreach team, which is a street outreach team that will focus on people living in encampments. He said it was a very small team based out of the Homelessness Commission offices.

Mr. Connelly also mentioned the sad news that Joyce Lavery's Husband passed away after a very short illness and services were held this morning.

He then updated the Commission on his personal news, the birth of his son William Clark Connelly on July 22.

Steven Samra thanked Wendell Segroves and Erik Cole for their support and attendance of the ITT technical institute students' development of homeless housing community. It was a project presentation about alternative housing projects on 4-5 acres. Mr. Segroves said he would like to see some of that happen in real life.

Liz Allen Fey encouraged commissioners to share information about new projects, ideas and ongoing conversations in the community. "I'd love to make that part of our conversation together."

Will Connelly introduced Jessica Ivey as the Commission's newest staff member. Ms. Ivey comes from LA where she worked in a very complicated system there. Her main role is to build out our Coordinated Entry system.

Freddie O'Connell talked about a bill in Council, which is on 3rd reading, on Dec. 6.

Mr. O'Connell also mentioned a blog in the Nashville Scene written by Betsy Philips. The blog was a review of the situation at the Downtown Library and raises the point of the complicated nature of homelessness. It identified some things about the use of infrastructure in public spaces. Mr. O'Connell also said that he hears a lot more concerns about the safety in Church Street Park.

He wondered whether with the focus of a new street outreach team on encampment, whether there could be street outreach teams focused on specific areas?

Mr. O'Connell further responded to Ms. Fey's point about sharing of new information. He said Green Street Church was pursuing a pretty significant model for tiny houses, which was directly related to outcomes from the encampment task force. He said if it was successful, it could be a model to look at.

Lastly, Mr. O'Connell shared that MDHA has posted an opening for a VASH VA support outreach position. This staff would work on homelessness solutions for Veterans.

No more announcements were added.

Liz Allen Fey opened up the second portion of the public hearing:

Howard Allen said that at the last Commission meeting two people were left standing – one formerly homeless and one homeless person. He spoke about freedom never being free. That people must organize and take freedom. He compared the city's tourist dollars of several billions with the \$10 million in the Barnes Fund. Further he said there were four new Council members on the Commission. He said they had a good heart, but nothing would change. Mr. Allen also spoke about the cold weather and that people experiencing homelessness would have to wait and see what degree it is to see whether they could come indoors. Furthermore, there was no Project Homeless Connect. And there were no monthly meetings. He said he himself wants to be proactive. He held several degrees from the streets. He said he comes here to try to fit in, "but we're shut out."

Steve Reiter said it would be really helpful to have more productive meetings if there was an orientation for all commissioners. He said they should not have to figure out what the VI-SPDAT is. When the public comes to these meetings, commissioners should talk about what they plan to do and that's all. Nothing else.

Barry Hobbes encouraged Open Table Nashville and Room In The Inn to get together and figure out how to make the Room In The Inn program year-round. He said he would love to see more homeless people attend the Commission meetings and encouraged the Commission to try to do something with that. Mr. Hobbes further said there was plenty of money out there to address homelessness. We just need to make it to where Metro comes up with \$20 million, the state with \$20 million, the feds with \$20 million, businesses with \$20 million, and the faith-based community with \$20 million. That's \$100 million. "At the end of the day, we need to do more than just chat," Mr. Hobbes said, adding that progress has been made. But winter was coming. Mr. Barry asked how many people would have to die. He encouraged the Commission to do something. "Money talks, BS walks," he said. "Can we please do something about the problem? Please?"

At the end of the public hearing session, Liz Allen Fey asked commissioners what they were talking from the conversation they heard.

Mina Johnson said this was her third Commission meeting. "When I go out the door, when I see a person who is homeless, what can I do personally? I still don't have an answer." She also asked

for specific information on what to say to a group of friends who get together and ask her how they can help. She asked for resources.

Will Connelly encouraged service providers in the room to respond to Ms. Johnson's question. Lindsey Krinks encouraged her and her friends to participate in one of Open Table Nashville's volunteer trainings that also provides information on how people start a conversation, on what to carry to hand out to people (socks, water, etc.). And she encouraged people to take the red resource booklet published by the Contributor, which is called Where to Turn In Nashville. But rather than just hand out the resource guide, Ms. Krinks encouraged people to flip through it and ask people what their needs are and then help them locate a possible organization listed in the resource guide that could help with that.

Samuel Lester said it was powerful to people to stop and listen to their stories. He encouraged people to take the time and listen and have some supplies, like Lindsey said. He added cigarettes were great to help start a conversation.

Steven Samra in response to Steve Reiter said that the Commission may look into creating an orientation package for new members that would give an introduction and address some of the jargon in the language.

Will Connelly addressed Mandy Wood's comment saying he wanted her to know that the Commission staff was in support of increasing HMIS coverage this year.

Mr. Connelly also added that the Commission's staff was looking to increase ways to engage the public in conversation. Thus, he said, Commission staff would be at the Downtown Library on the 3rd floor in one of the study rooms on the first Friday of the months that the full Commission was not meeting. Staff would be there to address questions.

Howard Allen responded to Mina Johnson encouraging her to get involved in Room In The Inn in November where she can meet with people directly and interact with them.

Liz Allen Fey said prior to closing the meeting that the Commission was a decision-making authority, not an implementing authority. "And that is sometimes the frustration. That is the key of having service providers sitting around to really talk about how we can influence and impact that. But we also have to recognize what our role is here." Ms. Fey said she loved the idea of orientation around the culture of homelessness. Furthermore, Ms. Fey said she believes the governance task force would look specifically at the role of the Commission. "How do we structure it? How do we communicate? How do we make sure that it is relevant and moving ahead?"

With that, Ms. Fey adjourned the meeting.

Appendix A

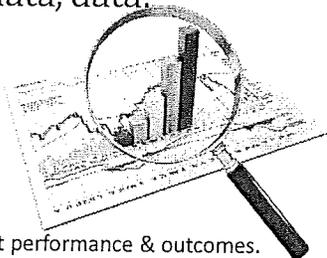
NAEH Conference 2016

What we have learned -
Judith Tackett & Deon Trotter

Norm Suchar:

"I know that so many people say,
'We don't look at the data because the
data we have is not good.'
But if you never look at the data, it will
never be good."

Data, data, data!



It's all about performance & outcomes.

Keys to Successful Diversion



- Coordinated Entry
- Resourceful staff trained in mediation
- Strength-based problem-solving
- Client-driven
- Linkages to mainstream services and natural supports
- Flexible dollars

HUD/HEARTH Performance Measures

- Length of time persons remain homeless
- The extent to which persons who exit to permanent housing return to homelessness
- Number of homeless persons – PIT and Annual counts
- Jobs and income growth for homeless persons
- Number of people who become homeless for the first time
- Number of successful housing placements

Housing Strategies for a Challenging Market

- Housing markets across the nation are being impacted by housing prices
- Utilizing Housing Focused Services
- Improve Landlord Engagement and Strategies
- Rapid Rehousing
- Leverage Resources to create more housing

Best Practices for Housing Resources

5 Keys to Housing

- Housing First
- Immediate and Easy Access
- Housing Focused Services
- Rapid Exits to Housing
- Using Data to be better



Housing Prioritization

- Permanent Supportive Housing In New Mexico
- Statewide System
- Data Stored in HMIS
- Uses the VI-SPDAT
- Access through several agencies (no wrong door)

- Prioritization based on not only VI-SPDAT score but also length of time homeless and prioritized list
- Knowing who is homeless in each community and what their needs are
- Know gaps in system based on data
- Hold agencies accountable