

Steering Committee for Concord's Plan to End Homelessness

Meeting Notes December 15, 2020

Held Via Zoom 2:00 - 3:30 pm

DRAFT

Steering Committee Members Present: Byron Champlin, Ellen Fries, Jason Wells, Linda Lorden, Karen Emis-Williams, Ruth Perencevich, Claudia Walker

Absent: Rosemary Heard, Lew Feldstein, Tim Sink,

Visitors: Greg Lessard, Kathi Connors, Don Chase, Peter Venne, Rebecca Carlman, Mayor Bouley, Rebecca Prichard, Matthew Knee, Mark Salas

Additional: Ellen Groh, CCEH Executive Director

Call to Order: Meeting called to order by Byron Champlin, Chair, at 2:08pm

Approval of June Meeting Minutes: Moved by Jason and seconded by Karen. Roll call vote. Passed.

Introductions all around. Visitors are:

Don Chase, founder of Homeless in Concord and Homeless Resources

Rebecca Carlman, FaceBook Group page, "Homeless in Concord", Admin and Street Outreach worker

Kathi Connors, group of 5 concerned citizens called 5 Friends. Looking to identify gaps in services and help by matching with resources.

Brief Update from City of Concord Human Services - Karen Emis-Williams, Concord Human Services Department

The City of Concord Welfare Department continues to offer basic living assistance – housing, food, prescriptions, utilities.

With the Covid pandemic they have seen more homeless cases. In March of FY '19 they were spending less than \$3000. After Covid hit \$15,000 was spent in March 2020 alone.

FY 19 July 1-June 30 60% of homeless cases from Concord. Others from others parts of state or out of state. Under RSA obligated to serve whoever shows up.

28 Concord cases from July to now. Plus 5 other NH towns/ 4 from out of state

July-Nov. \$15,200 spent on motel rooms If no shelter, must "House". Hotel room allowed. Covid had big impact - lost vendors. Now hotels available again, but high cost.

Have seen fewer rental evictions due to CARES Act \$ for rental assistance.

When CARES Act funding stops 12/31 what happens? Evictions, fewer shelter spaces.

Kathi: Is any funding going towards housing/security deposits to get people housed? Or just for preventing eviction?

\$ can be used for security deposits, but there is a lack of affordable units, many have eviction records. Rent subsidies available but few units. Concord has a less than 1% availability.

Section 8 vouchers needed, but long waiting list.

Housing First very helpful, but, very limited numbers.

If CARES Act \$ not spent by Jan.1 it must be returned. Unfortunately, these funds have been under-utilized. MUST keep people housed.

Don- suggests two focuses – 1 – keep people from *becoming* homeless. 2 – Those already homeless need a legal place to camp.

Brief update from CCEH on Concord-area homeless service providers' responses to COVID-19

– Ellen Groh

CCEH has completed the purchase of a building to move Shelter to for more space! At current location, shelter did go over capacity already a couple of times. Resource Center moving to First Church also – more capacity. 30-40 for daytime, with social distancing. Working to increase staff for extended daytime hours and add weekends if we can. Challenging to find people. NEED STAFFING!!!! Not using volunteers to limit the number of different people interacting – Covid. Also, many former volunteers were elderly so they do not want exposure to Covid.

What if someone tests positive? Have rapid testing on site – 15 mins. Must be symptomatic for it to work. HANH/UNH working on another test for asymptomatic – 1x week – hoping to have.

What if positive? – isolation location in Laconia has capacity of 18 – currently have 14. Need a local solution. Could use CCEH shelter space once operations move, but have no staff for this. What about needs, addiction, withdrawal, etc.?? Thinking through.

CARES funding is specifically for decompression of shelter space, not to **expand** capacity of current shelter. Could give current shelter space to State to use as isolation site.

Goal is to keep everyone alive and provide a warm place. Normal RC hours open to 1pm. Other places where people go to stay warm not open now: Library, Friendly Kitchen, etc.

Byron asks if we are seeing changes in clients? Is it a different population?

Ellen reports that Jeff Stewart, Project 1st, says they are seeing maybe 10 new faces from Manchester area. And definitely more substance use issues.

Karen reports that people who are chronically homeless are now coming in – used to be all newly homeless. During this pandemic they are experiencing fear, violence in camps, want out.

Kathi requests that meetings be recorded in the future. The Mayor came on late and may have missed anecdotal input.

In response to questions, Ellen reports that CCEH does not have one dedicated Volunteer Coordinator, a different staff person typically coordinates volunteers for either the shelter or Resource Center. Shelter not currently using vols. – too much risk. RC needs volunteers for tasks at a distance from guests.

Due to extra covid tasks for staff, there is less time for case management.

Question: Push legislatively to get volunteers higher on que for vaccines?

Have not heard of this. Good question for State DHHS.

Shelters and Staff high on list for vaccines. May include volunteers. Ellen will look into.

Ellen will share link to job description for CCEH Staffing. [Link to CCEH website- job opportunities.](#)

Discussion: Invite other Homeless Services Providers to present at future Steering Committee meetings? YES, general agreement.

Discussion on document: Ending Chronic Homelessness in Concord (sent by Ellen Groh, will be posted to City website.)

This is CCEH's current focus: How to get people housed fastest. **(see doc.)**

CCEH working to create a “by name list ourselves,” rather than waiting for the State to complete their process to do this. Keep track. See size of issue and who most vulnerable. Use full team of providers to work on it.

To get someone housed affordably, finding a willing landlord is tough. Pilot incentive program – CCEH offering \$500 to landlords. No landlord has responded to incentive so far.

Create new affordable and Permanent Supportive Housing. So few vacancies in Concord now. Work with developers to create! Talking with many different orgs./partners. Need to create more housing, using different models.

Busy with Covid so hard to work on this too much right now.

Discussion:

State legislation good to keep eye on? [Housing Action NH housingactionnh.org](http://housingactionnh.org) keeps eye on it.

Attached accessory dwelling units are allowed in Concord. Moving towards new codes that would allow *detached dwelling units*. City half way there....

Peter: asks why homeless camps on RR property or City property are not removed.

PanAm RR responsible for own land. Other property belongs to State. Owners can contact Police if they want to.

The CDC is currently recommending that encampments NOT be broken up to keep Covid in pods. Also, it's like Whack-a-Mole – if folks are moved they will be in a new place shortly. Complex situation.

Matt Knee: suggests placing dumpsters near camps to help with the mess.

Motion to Adjourn: Claudia moves, Karen seconds Roll call vote unanimous.

Meeting Adjourned 3:30pm

Thanks to visitors for being here.

Confirm dates for 2021 quarterly meetings: Third Tuesdays

- March 16, 2021
- June 15, 2021
- September 21, 2021
- December 21, 2021