

Steering Committee for Concord's Plan to End Homelessness

Meeting Notes

Sept. 21, 2021

Meeting held at Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce 2:00-

3:30 pm

Draft

Steering Committee Members Present: Byron Champlin, Tim Sink, Karen Emis-Williams, Greg Lessard, Ellen Fries, Ruth Perencevich, Kara Wyman (late)

Absent: Claudia Walker, Lew Feldstein, Linda Lorden

Additional: Ellen Groh, CCEH Executive Director

Call to Order: Meeting called to order by Byron Champlin, Chair, at 2:01pm

Welcome to new Steering Committee member: Greg Lessard, CCEH Director of Housing Initiatives

Visitors Introduced: Steve Smagula, Deputy Chief CPD; Tom Aspell, Concord City Manager; Connor Spenn - new Outreach Services Coordinator for CCEH to connect all agencies that are working together to end homelessness and make a by name list of those experiencing chronic homelessness; Cassidy Jensen, City Hall reporter for Concord Monitor.

Approval of June Meeting Minutes: Moved and Seconded. Call for vote. Passed

Update on other potential Steering Committee members (Byron): working to get representation from Riverbend. Replace Jason Wells with another member of the Faith Community. Byron reaching out to people suggested by Jason. Byron has also asked Mayor and City Manager to assign a member of CPD to the Committee. Public safety issues come up frequently.

Discussion with Guest: Steve Smagula, Deputy Chief - Field Operations Bureau, Concord Police Department, on the public safety issues the department is addressing around homeless encampments and other issues related to this population. Working for CPD for more than 24 years and as Deputy Chief for a year and a half. Has dealt with folks who are homeless all this time, and some remain the same all these years later. Difficult and complex issues. *Would suggest a recovery specialist for the board as well.* Solution is permanent housing, but, some will need a lot of encouragement, management and assistance in order to be able to remain housed.

Skills needed to live in housing are very different from those for living in an encampment.

The Anaheim Model - coordinated services model - what we're trying to do. Excited to work with Connor. (Post meeting note: here is [a link](#) to the Anaheim model of addressing homelessness, which including adding several hundred shelter beds for people who had been living on the streets, in response to a lawsuit.)

The CPD officers are not seeking out homeless people to arrest. They are trying to help people get to services, get housed. A call/complaint is usually what gets PD involved. Where are emergency beds? How get in? Children as well as adults... During COVID did not want to proactively displace anyone.

Four large encampments have been actively addressed this year:

1: Market Basket - most visible. Brixmore, the property owner, sought assistance. PD played their role as needed. 30 tons of trash removed. Many volunteers involved. But, just displaced these people to other places.

Discussed how wonderful Julie Green, of CCEH, is at assisting people without making them feel endangered in any way. A safe, caring, helpful person.

Dep.Chief Smagula prefers not to force people to move without a process in which they can claim their stuff and move on. Provided notice ahead of time.

2: Unitil - off 393 near CAVES, towards NHTI. Smaller group - 6 or so.

3: Kimball Jenkins - basically an extension of the Market Basket site. The folks moved north... Kept consistent with all parties. Let people move off ahead of time.

4: Now at the area to be developed at the old Drive In. Process: Soft messaging 30 days, 10 day official notice, then arrived for final eviction of anyone still there. 10 officers participated because it's a large, spread out area. 8 people still encamped there. 4 got summonses who had received warnings 10 days ahead. A couple of those being evicted were very difficult. Officers were very good in responding.

Every day there are issues with this population. Some more serious than others. And issues within the homeless community are often the same as those that other folks have, who are not homeless. Plenty of crime and domestic issues in the community at large. All these locations are "communities", but in the wrong place.

People asked questions:

Most common calls? Thefts reported by local businesses; drugs/drug production.

Anything to make job of PD easier? Property storage (super challenging) Look into Anaheim Model. Coordinating resources is key.

Working on basic flow chart of Vets stories (to work with the case worker who has resources for housing for Veterans).

Impact of Bail Reform?: Huge. Can make arrest, person back out right away.

Many thanks all around for the work Deputy Chief Smagula is doing and the way he tries to keep it calm and respectful at all times.

Update on meeting with Public Safety Advisory Board (Byron Champlin)

On June 28, Ellen Groh and Byron appeared at the request of Public Safety Advisory Board Chair Councilor Amanda Grady-Sexton. Issues around people experiencing homelessness have come up and the committee was seeking info/communication. Lots of questions. Can we measure community cost of homelessness? What happens when someone suddenly finds themselves displaced? How are things coordinated? Sanctioned campsite? Where could it be located? Who runs it? How? Byron and Ellen emphasized the need for permanent housing solutions for people, the need for more available and affordable housing.

We need to message more to all possibly involved in the issue—who and what CCEH and the Steering Committee are. Communication gap.

Brief update from City of Concord Human Services (Karen Emis-Williams)

Human Services providers have seen 33 clients who are homeless since July. Their primary focus has been on monitoring evictions. A CAP (Community Action Program) and legal assistance person will be present at all eviction hearings. They will be able to process the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) applications immediately. Concord Human Services has helped clients apply and it has been successful. They are working to get back-rent assistance to people.

In Merrimack County almost \$5 Million has been received in assistance from ERAP funds. This covers largely rent, as well as utilities, heat, hotels and security deposits. ERAP 1 will end 9/30. ERAP 2 will run from 10/1/21 to 9/30/25. ERAP 2 will be less restrictive and therefore easier for households to qualify.

Awaiting American Rescue Plan \$ for mortgage assistance.

10,000 apps processed for ERAP funds thus far

The money must be spent or it will go elsewhere.

For more info on ERAP spending in NH see this link:

<https://www.goferr.nh.gov/transparency/nherap-dashboard>

The date to expend the \$200M rental assistance funds has been extended, which was originally ending in December.

People get subsidies and can't find a rental. Fewer shelter spaces due to COVID.

Brief update from CCEH (Ellen Groh)

Melissa Hatfield at Bureau of Housing Supports says supportive housing funding from Medicaid may be used beginning 10/1/21, but no processes in place yet, and many smaller agencies do not have the capacity to bill Medicaid. Info session coming up. We need the supportive services.

Greg – CCEH’s document—Paths Towards Housing Solutions—on CCEH website. CCEH will close soon on triplex with 2 vacant units, so homeless clients can move in very soon. Tenant-based rental assistance vouchers make this possible. As well as donors who provided the seed money so CCEH could act quickly to purchase the property.

Working with a Resident Owned Community (ROC) to see if CCEH could own 2 manufactured homes in the community and sublet them to people coming from homelessness. Still in negotiations with the ROC Board. Each path is hitting its own snags. Smaller duplex/triplexes may be the best option for now.

Path of working with existing large multifamily properties coming along as well. But often, the rent is higher than a person’s rental assistance voucher can pay.

Are there others to have come speak to us? Riverbend - Byron reaching out. Addiction/Recovery people? The Doorway? Riverbend again. Better Life Partners—go out to camps, to RC.

Motion to Adjourn: Moved and Seconded. Roll call vote unanimous.

Meeting Adjourned 3:30pm

Reminder: Dates for upcoming quarterly meetings: (Third Tuesdays, 2:00-3:30 pm)

- December 21, 2021
- March 15, 2022
- June 21, 2022

For questions, contact: Ellen Groh
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