

Tri-City Mayor's Joint Task Force on Homelessness
Council Chambers, Somersworth, NH
June 7, 2018
6:01pm

MAYORS

Mayor McCarley (excused)
Mayor Hilliard (attended second half)
Mayor Weston

DOVER MEMBERS

Betsey Andrews Parker
Dave Carpenter
Marcia Gasses (Vice-chair)
Andrew Howard
Lena Nichols
Lindsey Williams (Alternate)
Phyllis Woods

ROCHESTER MEMBERS

Elizabeth Atwood
Rev. Eliza Buchakjian- Tweedy
Jeremy Hutchinson (Chair, excused)
T.J. Jean (not present)

SOMERSWORTH MEMBERS

Dina Gagnon
Laura Hogan
Todd Marsh
Rick Michaud

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Vice Chair Gasses called the meeting to order at 6:01pm as the Chair was unable to attend. Attendance was recorded via sign in (documented above).

2. Public Input (3-minute maximum and/or submit a statement)

- Mandy Lancaster from the non-profit Child and Family Services of New Hampshire noted that she was attending to help represent the youth voice.
- Paige Farmer from the Greater Seacoast Coalition to End Homelessness note that she was attending to listen and learn more about the master planning processes.
- Sandra Beaudry from Crossroads House noted that she was here to listen and help as she very much supports these efforts.
- Cheryl Huckins of Straight Street Outreach noted that their organization can bring to this committee knowledge of the people the committee is trying to help.

3. Minutes of May 10, 2018 Task Force meeting.

Minutes were sent out May 22 by Chair Jeremy Hutchinson. Betsey Andrews Parker Motion to approve minutes as presented (Betsy) Deana seconded. All approved.

4. Updates

Neither subcommittee was able to meet.

Todd Marsh provided a summary of information from the Rochester Welfare Department per the Chair's request for demographic information. The Department has some further information, but it has identifiable information so was not provided to the group at this time.

Lena Nichols noted that Dover has similar numbers and that from Jan 1- today the Dover Welfare Department spent \$13,000 on hotels. Almost all of for families. Almost all of them can pay part of it, but need some help.

Dina Gagnon noted that she has some questions about the next steps and the structure of the subcommittees relative to the charge to the overall committee. She would like to see more time in meetings spent building the master plan and needed task lists.

Vice-chair Gasses noted that the two subcommittees are how people have agreed to break out to cover the two areas of most interest – the overall plan and a component focused on cold-weather. The Vice Chair suggested that at the meeting today the two groups break out for further subgroup discussion.

Laura Hogan noted that there are so many different pieces to this issue and asked whether the group can further break it down into parts? There are so many people here who are experts. Pieces of the master plan might include – warming center, housing, food, skills training. There are so many different reasons why we're facing what we're facing.

Vice-chair Gasses noted that the master plan group can break it up further into the specific areas. She also reiterated the value of having a group like the Stafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) to help facilitate the work. The document is not going to solve the problem, it's going to set the steps for many to work together to make progress.

Betsey Andrews Parker noted that she felt that a contribution of about \$5,000 per community would facilitate hiring support staff to help the group make progress. They can facilitate those discussions. She also recommended that the warming shelter subcommittee not dictate how to run a warming shelter given that there is a lot of expertise out there on these topics. Her suggestion was to seek some resources to help coordinate and marshal efforts. She suggested a future agenda item on discussing whether the cities will be willing to pay the overtime, etc. that would likely be needed in a future cold weather event like last winter.

Dave Carpenter note that he also liked the idea of having someone who can go to all these different groups and pull together the plans, looking at causes, symptoms, etc. That way each committee member can participate with their own expertise.

Vice-chair Gasses suggested that the Committee put together a request for a proposal from SRPC?

Mayor Weston underscored that each City has just passed their budgets so it might be a process to find funding. She agreed that the first step would be to see the proposal from SRPC.

Vice-Chair Gasses offered to contact SRPC to request a proposal and to have the Dover delegation on the committee help coordinate discussions with SRPC.

Several agreed that the value of someone to coordinate is to help connect with all the relevant groups who have expertise in these topics both on and off the committee.

Betsey Andrews Parker noted that one of the larger discussions is going to come when it's questions on who is going to pay for the different items? What can we do with what we have available instead of building something new? She noted that there's got to be a way to connect. She also noted that on the

topic of the Congressional delegation interest in the work of the Committee, it is critical that existing resources don't get diverted away from those working in this area. Discussion followed around the need to ensure that the Congressional support would be focused on accessing new resources, not diverting existing funding support to different efforts. The value of a master plan is that all groups have forewarning about where the future is headed and can help plan within their organizations.

Phyllis Woods shared her interest in better understanding the current resources spent on these issues by each City. Presumably the Committee will present the plan to each Council to seek additional funding so we should know how much is currently being spent.

Several noted that it is very difficult to track that with the range of organizations involved (not all City Departments). Todd Marsh noted that in Somersworth, 90% of the Welfare Department budget is spent on efforts to prevent homelessness.

Mayor Karen Weston shared an article she came across by Mr. David Bornstein - <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/05/opinion/homelessness-built-for-zero.html>. She noted that this is a problem that is multi-layered and that cold weather is not that far off again. Capturing the data is so key. She noted that it is difficult to know what each organization does. The way the article discusses grouping efforts around veterans, or children, was really valuable.

Vice-chair Gasses noted that part of the plan is about identifying the resources and aligning them.

Betsey Andrews Parker noted that we also need to be clear about what the municipalities can and can't do. This is not an easy system to navigate. We need to think about lowering the barriers to entry to get help. Having to bare your soul in five different locations to try to get help, becomes a barrier.

Vice-chair Gasses shared an example from South Carolina where a transitional housing effort had commercial kitchens places for work experience.

Betsey Andrews Parker noted that there are funding opportunities right now looking at things like ways to coordinate where housing openings are. There are challenges getting low income housing options within communities. She felt that communities should be requiring new developments to have a requirement for below market rate housing too. We need housing options, there is not affordable housing. If we want to be on the map, we need to be considering planning/building codes.

Eliza Tweedy noted an example in North Carolina focused on building community. The opposite of homelessness is not housing, it's community. Those who have community can connect and get access to transportation, etc. There is also resistance in some communities so we need connect with those who build community. It's not only about resources for housing, it's also about building these dialogs so that when these issues come up for decision, the communities will support them.

Mayor Weston shared her agreement but noted the challenges in getting developers to build when there are any sort of restrictions or requirements.

Discussion followed about the process to seek help through 211 as the single point of entry within the state to have an assessment and send individuals to the appropriate services. There are challenges with access to housing, legal definitions of homeless impact on who is eligible for services, etc.

Dave Carpenter noted that part of this process is also about all the committee members becoming more aware about these issues. A master plan identifies all these issues and sets out where we want to go generally, and then the specifics are developed to actually meet those goals. The plan would be able to be a source that someone could go to that would have identified resources, issues, current data/state of the issues (unemployment rate, vacancy rates, etc.). At the end of each chapter there will be implementation actions, any number of them categorized in different ways. This master plan will not necessarily have the answer, but what will be good about it will be that it will be a regional look. He noted that many groups already know these issues, but it provides opportunities for those who don't know about the issues, to try to effect change. It creates opportunities to show other funders that we have a joint plan and that we'd like to seek out resources. For example, regionalization in HUD is a big deal, no guarantee of funding, but it's a possible step. HUD would like to find out about these efforts. Then if we have our plan and for example we need help improving transportation, we can seek support. What do we have? What are the holes? It shows a path of where to go to. So much already exists, so much is already being done. It also lets people know what the parts of the net are there. Maybe the mesh is too wide, or parts are missing. Many people don't know and this plan will be able to help those who don't know tap in and advocate.

Mayor Weston noted the need to invite the County Commissioners too as this is a Strafford County issue, not just the tri-city area.

Paige Farmer from the Greater Seacoast Coalition to End Homelessness noted that they just went through an effort to compile much of this data and they have an asset map in the works. The Coalition can perhaps share some with the committee even though it's not fully complete.

Sandra Beaudry of Crossroads House noted that in keeping with the idea that the mesh is too wide, it's really all about community, the organizations can't do it alone. Other members of the community are needed to help fill in that mesh.

Todd Marsh underscored that there was a time when people could come to the Welfare Department and find a place that same day. Right now there is so little housing that this is no longer possible.

Dave Carpenter noted that another place where this group can come in to help is that there are also cases where state and federal funds can't be co-mingled. Knowing the different road blocks, etc. places to ask for help from Congressional delegation to help remove barriers (i.e. with grant funds). Planning Dept. staff in Dover is already having these conversations about how do we get these units built. We are talking about incentives too.

A discussion of the role and impact of impact fees on accessory dwelling units ensued.

Mayor Hillard arrived at 7:15pm and the Vice-Chair updated him on discussions so far. At this point the group broke out into the subcommittees with the goal of regrouping at 7:45pm.

5. Sub-Task Groups Break Out Discussions

a. Cold Weather Shelter/Station

b. Foundation of the Tri-City Task Force Master Plan on Homelessness

From 7:15 to 7:55, the two sub-groups met separately.

6. Complete Calendar for the Joint Tri-City Task Force on Homelessness

The vice-chair confirmed the next meeting as July 12 in Rochester from 6-8pm. The shelter subcommittee will also meet June 28 at 6pm in Barrington.

7. Closing Public Comment

John Huckins of Straight Street Outreach noted that he appreciated the article that Mayor Weston shared. The goal is zero homelessness, then you need to identify your strengths and weaknesses, then map out where you want to go. He also noted that he fully supported the discussion about hiring SRPC.

8. Other

None

9. Adjournment