



**Fidelity Committee
of the
Tri-City Joint Mayors' Task Force on Homelessness
Remote Meeting Via Microsoft Teams
November 18, 2021
6:00 PM**

MAYORS

Mayor Elaine Lauterborn
Mayor Robert Carrier
Mayor Dana Hilliard

Rochester Members

Jeremy Hutchinson
(Chairman)

Barbara Holstein

Dover Members

Charles Reynolds

Betsey Andrews Parker

Somersworth Members

Todd Marsh
(Vice Chairman)

Dina Gagnon

Others Present. Dave Balian, Dover Welfare. Jenne Holmes, Somersworth. Ashley Desrochers, Community Health Network.

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Vice Chairman Marsh called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

Cassie Givara, Deputy City Clerk of Rochester, took a visual roll call. All members were present except for Chairman Hutchinson, who was absent. Additionally, Mayor Carrier of Dover was present.

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

Ashley Desrochers, Rochester City Councilor elect, expressed excitement in the successes that had been made over the prior week [in regards to the City Councils approving funding for the Willand Center].

3. Communications from the Mayors

Jenne Holmes, Somersworth, read a statement on behalf of Mayor Dana Hilliard in which he expressed optimism for the agreement made by the Tri-Cities to fund the Willand Warming Center. Mayor Hilliard emphasized the need for a permanent cold weather shelter and committed to continued discussions for a future solution.

Mayor Carrier, Dover, stated that the passing of the warming center funding simultaneously through all three city councils had been a large undertaking. He spoke about the potential that the Willand property will be sold in Spring and briefly discussed future plans and potential use for sale revenue if the property is sold. Mayor Carrier reported that the City of Dover was in talks with an existing food truck owner to utilize the food trailer purchased this past year with COVID relief funds to feed the homeless population.

4. Communications from the Chairs

Vice Chair Marsh praised Community Action Partnership, SOS, and the other service agencies who had taken part in the disbursement of the Willand Homeless encampment and the compassion, skill, and respect that was used in assisting the residents in finding care and services.

5. Update: Willand Warming Center plan

Betsey Andrews Parker gave an update on the opening of the Willand Warming Center. She stated that there had been 18 people attend their most recent volunteer training with an additional 25 trainees scheduled for the following week. She reported that they are almost fully staffed at this stage; and if /when Rochester passes the agreement, they will be able to complete staffing. She stated that the NH Emergency Rental Assistance Program would reimburse for bed nights per person, and in order to process this reimbursement, clients will be required to fill out brief, basic applications prior to their first night, which is a new process this year.

Ms. Andrews Parker clarified that the Willand Center will be low barrier. Patrons will not be turned away for substance misuse or intoxication and residents will be permitted to come and go as they please. She stated that this year, patrons' sleeping areas will be separated by gender to recognize and account for potential trauma experienced by residents; couples will not be allowed to push their cots together. Families with children under 18-years old will not be sheltered at the Willand Center and will be supplied with a hotel option. Ms. Andrews Parker reviewed the COVID regulations in place; the warming center will require masking and will not allow groups to congregate. She spoke about how the situation would be handled if there are positive cases of COVID identified in the center and the steps being taken to reduce the risks. She said that the Warming Center will be a starting point for these clients to be able to gain access to additional services and find more permanent shelter.

Mayor Carrier stated that the Good Vibes food truck had inquired about the potential of visiting the warming center to provide food. Ms. Andrews Parker said that would be beneficial and spoke about organizing a rotation schedule with the multiple volunteers so the Center would be able to determine who would be providing food on which days and accommodate for the gaps in the schedule.

Vice Chair Marsh asked for an example of a behavior or circumstance that might cause a client to be removed from the warming center or for alternate sheltering to be offered. Ms. Andrews Parker stated that there are varying degrees of infractions that could cause a client to be removed from the shelter for a short period of time or indefinitely. Violence, sexual harassment, restraining order between residents within the warming center, and repeat incidents of causing trouble within the center could cause clients to be banned from the shelter for indeterminate lengths of time.

Ms. Andrews Parker stated that the warming center would be opening on Monday, November 29th at 5:00 PM. COAST is offering free transportations for clients traveling to the warming center and will also provide no cost transportation to CAP for continuing services the morning following a stay at the center. She reported that the warming center will be focused on client-centered needs and how to best meet these needs.

Charlie Reynolds praised the work being done by Ms. Andrews Parker and other community resource agencies to assist the homeless and offer services; however, he said that he felt there were services lacking to help in preventing homelessness in the first place. He spoke about funding being approved by City Councils towards homeless services and stated he felt this money was facilitating homelessness as opposed to trying to discourage and prevent it in the first place. He emphasized the importance of identifying the causes of homelessness such as substance misuse or mental health issues and aiming to treat them before they lead to homelessness, as well as providing services to homeless individuals to treat these causes to prevent homelessness from reoccurring.

Ms. Andrews Parker disagreed that CAP and other agencies are helping to facilitate homelessness. She detailed the great amount of work and effort that is continuously being undertaken to offer services to homeless individuals in order to assist them in finding housing and remaining sheltered, but clarified that some people are not ready or able to receive help. She spoke of the frustration and thankless hours of unpaid after-hours work by herself and others in going above and beyond to assist the homeless with the limited options available. Mr. Reynolds clarified that “facilitating” was not the correct term, but felt that the homelessness issue keeps getting worse and he felt that was a need to provide more preemptive services to prevent the problem from occurring.

Ms. Andrews Parker stated again that none of the Tri-Cities want a permanent shelter in their municipality and there has been a struggle for many years to establish a permanent shelter. Mr. Reynolds stated that he felt there should be more services available to prevent the need for such a shelter to begin with. Ms. Andrews Parker encouraged Mr. Reynolds and others in positions of influence to actively advocate for these services, to appear at meetings and to speak out and use their connections and influence to help make change. Dave Balian, Dover Welfare, agreed with Ms. Andrews Parker and said there is no magic bullet to end homelessness. He stated that

individuals need to be ready to respond to assistance and it is not a simple situation to solve. There was a discussion about the need for affordable housing, recovery services, mental health services, and attention to other economic factors in order to prevent homelessness. Vice Chair Marsh outlined preventative services that are already in place.

Dina Gagnon pointed out that one of the missions included within the Master Plan developed by the Task Force on Homelessness is to develop affordable housing and stated that this is a goal which will continue to be worked on. Barbara Holstein spoke about the resistance encountered in assisting some members of the homeless population and agreed that not all individuals are ready or able to receive services. She also addressed the stumbling blocks encountered with the available services and complications in navigating each individual process. However, she expressed optimism regarding emerging funding and services towards mental health services within the State. Vice Chair Marsh said that the City of Dover is hiring a social worker for the police department, which he felt, was a positive step. The City of Rochester has a similar proposal moving through the approval process.

6. Report from Local Welfare

Vice Chair Marsh stated that all three local welfare departments participated in the warming center triage. He said that requests for service in Rochester have remained steady with a slight increase. However, he thought that the child tax credits and additional COVID relief funding has helped keep requests for service and assistance lower than they might be.

7. Regional data/statistics

No discussion.

8. Other

Barbara Holstein suggested a subcommittee meeting to review the Master Plan, determine what has been accomplished, and identify potential goals on which to focus. She stated that she had seen discussion about what the Fidelity Committee had completed and if any headway had been made. She suggested that while there is still relief money available the committee could find uses for these funds and continue to get things accomplished within the Master Plan.

Vice Chair Marsh asked for a Master Plan review to be added to the next agenda so the committee can cover the plan item by item to determine potential projects and initiatives.

9. Closing Public Input

No discussion.

10. Adjournment

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Fidelity Committee TCMF
November 18, 2021

Betsey Andrews Parker **MOVED** to **ADJOURN** the Fidelity Committee meeting at 7:04 PM. Barbara Holstein seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara
Deputy City Clerk, Rochester