



Fidelity Committee
of the
Tri-City Joint Mayors' Task Force on Homelessness
Somersworth Middle School, Media Room
Somersworth, NH 03878
January 9, 2020
6:00 PM

MAYORS

Mayor Caroline McCarley
 Mayor Bob 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 Carpenter, Dover Community Development Planner. Dave Abbott, Knights of Columbus. Tory Jennison, Integrated Delivery Network. Rev. Matthew Mirabile, Trinity Church

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Chairman Hutchinson called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM. Secretary Cassie Givara took a silent roll call. All committee members were present except for Mayor Caroline McCarley of Rochester and Mayor Bob Carrier of Dover.

2. Public Input

Martha Haley, Dover, spoke about her experience volunteering at the Dover warming shelter and expressed interest in getting more information on the Fidelity Committee and its mission.

3. Communications from the Mayors

Mayor Dana Hilliard, Somersworth, addressed the Committee regarding the developing permit processes in the Tri-Cities; with all three cities having introduced temporary permits to allow non-profits and private organizations to operate warming shelters. Mayor Hilliard stated his concern in ensuring that these temporary shelters are a collaboration between the City and the organization operating the shelter, with the liability being shared.

4. Communications from the Chair

Chairman Hutchinson clarified that the Fidelity Committee meetings would take place on the second Thursday of each month or, in the case of inclement weather, the third Thursday of the month. Any changes to the scheduled meeting time will be posted on the Cities' websites and sent out via the committee distribution email.

5. Discussion: Experience Operating Dover Cold Weather Shelter – Dave Abbott , Knights of Columbus

Dave Abbott, Dover Knights of Columbus, spoke to the Committee about the recent opening of temporary cold weather warming centers in the Dover area and his experiences volunteering at these centers.

Mr. Abbott gave an overview of what is required to establish a temporary shelter; there must be an inspection by the Fire Chief, there needs to be carbon monoxide detectors present, and if there is not already a sprinkler system in place the property is required to have smoke detectors installed. There needs to be an evacuation plan posted within the property and finally there needs to be a primary contact person listed for the temporary shelter.

Mr. Abbott dispelled some of the common myths and concerns regarding running a shelter and reported that in his experience the temporary residents have not caused any issues or been cause for real concern. If there are residents staying at the shelter who need additional help or services, there is staff on hand from IDN who is available to assist with issues as they arise.

There was a discussion in Committee regarding the process of organizing for a shelter opening and how the volunteers are sourced. Tory Jennison stated that if an organization would like to open, they need to first speak to the EMDs, get the appropriate permits from the municipality, and then finally if needed the site can ask the IDN for volunteers and/or technical assistance with shelter operations. There is then a Sign Up Genius request that goes out for volunteers as well as social media notifications.

It was clarified that a private entity opening a shelter is not required to have trained volunteers. The organization can deal directly with the fire chief if desired. If there were a shelter being opened with assistance from a municipality, trained volunteers would be required. There needs to be a

minimum of two volunteers per shift, although Mr. Abbott stated that there has been at least 3 if not more on every available shift.

It was stated that there does not need to be a specific temperature trigger for a private entity to open a shelter.

The Committee discussed the pool of volunteers, which has been the same core group for the recent shelter openings in Dover. There was concern of volunteer burnout if more volunteers are not trained and utilized.

The Committee discussed the possibility of the Tri-Cities coordinating for shelter openings. There was a consensus that it would be preferable for each City to encourage the opening of a shelter within their municipality so there would be easier access for the homeless population regardless of where they reside and so one community would not become the sole provider of warming centers.

Barbara Holstein inquired about the Knights of Columbus building on Columbus Avenue in Rochester and suggested that this might be a viable property for a warming shelter due to the large size and infrequent use. Mr. Abbott stated that he has an upcoming meeting to discuss this possibility.

Vice Chair Marsh clarified that the Cities are not looking for an organization to take on the responsibility of being the one and only shelter, but rather to start the process and hopefully spur others to step up. Dina Gagnon stated that warming shelters are a step closer in the process to having a permanent shelter.

Ms. Jennison stated that there were upcoming volunteer trainings and these would be announced by the Mayors, distribution list and also noticed on social media.

The Committee discussed the differences in the temporary permits between each of the three cities. There was also discussion regarding liability and insurance for these temporary shelters and how this issue would be handled. Ms. Jennison stated that most sites already carry insurance for events which would be utilized if needed for shelter purposes. There was concern that if one City's permits are more flexible and less restrictive, it may become a burden on that community where they are continually the one opening warming centers and taking on the responsibility.

Mr. Abbott spoke about the logistics of operating the warming center; it is known as a warming center if there are no beds, although there have been blankets and sleeping bags provided via donation. Mr. Abbott said that there is no law enforcement presence at the shelters and there has not been the need for it, although it was clarified that the police do stop by for check-ins and can be requested to visit periodically. Police departments also offer transportation to the warming centers as needed. Depending on the facility

being used for a warming center, there is often a kitchen available and food services offered to those in need. There are no names taken of residents staying at the shelter, but rather a head count each shift.

The Committee discussed the potential of standardizing the permit process so it is similar and uniform in each City, gathering data to show the definitive need for these warming shelters in each Community, and the logistics of opening shelters in each community. Mayor Hilliard spoke about the differences in process and charters between the three cities and the unique DNA of each governing body which would make it difficult to standardize between the three cities. He cautioned in getting too far ahead, stating that the consistency and logistics should not be considered so carefully until there have actually been organizations stepping forward in each of the three communities to open shelters.

There was a brief discussion on the "Point in Time" count which is coming up in January 29th, 2020 (an annual count to try to determine the amount of sheltered and unsheltered homeless residents within the state).

6. Update: Review of work from December workshop meeting

Betsey Andrews Parker stated that there is a lot of positive progress being made from the Master Plan document accepted by the Cities in May 2019. There is a great deal of good work happening, the Committee just needs to find a better way to figure out what is already being done and where the gaps exist.

Vice Chair Marsh agreed that there was much more going on than the general public might realize and spoke about ways to make this work more evident and to bring light to the progress. Mr. Marsh stated that, at least in Rochester, the budget process was approaching and although there had been an approved line item in the Rochester welfare budget for "Sheltering services," the City Manager would like more solutions on how best to utilize this line item.

There was a discussion in Committee regarding how to best workshop the issue of identifying gaps in coverage and services. It was decided that a subcommittee would be formed to meet in between the full committee meetings and do work on this particular item. The subcommittee will be comprised of Betsey Andrews Parker, Barbara Holstein, Tory Jennison, Dina Gagnon and Todd Marsh.

Mayor Hilliard suggested a presentation be made to each of the three City Councils highlighting the successes which have been achieved, with the presentations being streamed or aired on the government channels if applicable and the local media being invited. Mayor Hilliard emphasized the need to make goals and objectives on which to focus in moving forward to make headway into the New Year; and getting the word out on the work which has already been done with help change the public perception.

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Chairman Hutchinson stated that he would be discussing the issue of zoning and sheltering at the upcoming Rochester Public Safety Committee meeting and this would trigger the discussion to go to the full City Council.

7. Other

The next meeting of the Fidelity Committee will take place on Thursday, February 13, 2020 at 6:00 PM at the Somersworth Middle School.

Ms. Andrews Parker spoke to the Committee regarding available grants which could help the Tri Cities in moving towards the opening of a shelter. Ms. Andrews Parker said there was a planning grant available through CDFA (Community Development Finance Authority) for \$25,000. This grant would not be for a physical shelter or property, but rather to research and discuss such a facility and to collect data; the pre-work which has to be coordinated prior to the inception of a shelter. Ms. Andrews Parker referenced the \$500,000 CDBG grant which had been discussed at previous meetings. She stated that it would not be feasible to be approved for such a grant without a viable plan and infrastructure in place first. This is something which needs to be workshopped further.

8. Closing Public Input

Father Matt Mirabile of Trinity Church asked why there hasn't been a shelter opened in Rochester yet. There was a brief discussion in Committee regarding zoning and variance issues as well as legal and government pushback.

Mr. Carpenter asked if there could be a cover page added to the Master Plan document showing the dates it was accepted by each of the Tri City Councils.

9. Adjournment

Chairman Hutchinson **ADJOURNED** the meeting at 8:02 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara
Deputy City Clerk, Rochester