



**Tri-City Joint Mayors' Task Force on Homelessness**  
**McConnell Center, Room 232**  
**32 St. Thomas Street**  
**Dover, NH 03820**  
**November 15, 2018**  
**5:00 PM**

**MAYORS**

**Chairman**

Jeremy Hutchinson

Mayor Caroline McCarley

Mayor Karen Weston

Mayor Dana Hilliard

**Vice Chair**

Marcia Gasses

**Rochester Members**

Elizabeth Atwood

Rev. Eliza Tweedy

Jeremy Hutchinson

T.J. Jean

**Dover Members**

Phyllis Woods

Betsey Andrews Parker

Andrew Howard

Marcia Gasses

**Somersworth Members**

Todd Marsh

Laura Hogan

Rick Michaud

Dina Gagnon

**Alternate (Dover):**

Lindsey Williams

**Homeless Liaison**

Terra Stewart

<b>Survival Shelter Sub-Task Group</b>	<b>Master Plan Sub-Task Group</b>
Marcia Gasses	Betsey Andrews-Parker
Todd Marsh	Todd Marsh
Elizabeth Atwood	Dina Gagnon
Andrew Howard	Eliza Tweedy
	Phyllis Woods
	Lena Nichols
	Laura Hogan
	Rich Michaud

**MINUTES****1. Call to Order**

Chairman Hutchinson called the meeting to order at 5:12 PM.

**2. Roll Call**

Deputy City Clerk of Rochester Cassie Givara took the roll call. The following members were present: Chairman Hutchinson, Vice Chair Gasses, Betsey Andrews-Parker, Laura Hogan, Lindsey Williams, Todd Marsh, Rick Michaud, Andrew Howard, Terra Stewart, Eliza Tweedy, Phyllis Woods, Mayor Weston and Mayor McCarley.

The following members were excused/absent: Dina Gagnon, TJ Jean, Elizabeth Atwood, and Mayor Hilliard.

**3. Public Input**

Chairman Hutchinson invited members of the public to come forward and address the committee.

Deb Calabro, Dover resident, spoke about her past experience working with the Americorp Vista program and some of the stumbling blocks that the homeless might run into finding temporary shelter in the area. Ms. Calabro offered her assistance and expertise to the Task Force if needed.

**4. Approval of Minutes****4.1 Tri-City Task Force Meeting October 18, 2018, consideration for approval**

Chairman Hutchinson stated that the minutes from the October 18, 2018 Task Force meeting would be approved in conjunction with the November meeting minutes at the December meeting following several revisions being made.

**5. Communications from the Mayors**

Mayor Weston expressed that she was pleased that the Task Force was working toward a conclusion on housing.

Mayor McCarley addressed the committee regarding the effort they have put forward in working towards an emergency cold weather shelter and expressed regret at the confusion and potential duplication of efforts with Emergency Services.

## **6. Communications from the Task Force Chairs**

Chairman Hutchinson stated that he had given an update on the Task Force's progress to the Rochester City Council, which had generated some questions and feedback.

There was a question from Council in regard to the Salvation Army in Rochester having the sole shelter and why shelters were not being opened further south or midway between the cities in order to assist the homeless residents in those areas. Chairman Hutchinson had reported that the Salvation Army had volunteered their space and services, there were no other options coming forward from the other cities.

The Council had wanted assurance that the welfare departments of each City had an agreement in regards to financial obligations towards homeless residents and ensuring that these obligations weren't all transferred to Rochester where the shelter would be located.

Chairman Hutchinson requested that each member of the Task Force take a moment to state the main goal which they hope to accomplish with their work on the Committee.

Discussion began in regards to ensuring the homeless community has the education and support they need in order to secure housing and to remain in housing; Teaching life skills, budgeting and home skills and then offering follow-up services to reduce recidivism rates. This goal was echoed by multiple Task Force Members. There was also a need expressed for assisted living type facilities or resources for those in the community who need mental health support.

Betsey Andrews-Parker and Mayor McCarley both stressed the need for a comprehensive "roadmap" of available resources. It was stated that there are a great deal of resources available and significant funding which goes toward these resources, but they risk not being identified and accessed without a roadmap in place.

There was discussion of the need for improved and consolidated communication between agencies, resources and the counties.

Chairman Hutchinson expressed the need to raise awareness of the plight of the homeless population and their struggles so it is not a hidden issue. The committee also stated that education of available resources is not only important to the housing insecure, but to the general public so that they will know what can be done to sustain these resources.

Changes within the municipalities' Zoning, Planning, Codes, and regulations to facilitate the availability of affordable housing was mentioned.

Eliza Tweedy stated the hope that there could be acknowledgment that homelessness is not an "us vs them" issue; that when part of our community is suffering we all suffer as a result.

Several Task Force members spoke about the need to find a permanent solution for a homeless shelter that doesn't rely on extreme cold weather to open, while also having a plan in place for an extreme cold weather shelter so it is not being thrown together last minute when it becomes necessary.

Chairman Hutchinson closed the discussion by stating that all these goals the Task Force discussed pointed toward the seven strategies which had been identified in the draft Master Plan and suggesting that the Task Force members invest that energy and passion into those strategies.

- **Salvation Army – Lieutenant Jeremiah Easley**

Lt. Jeremiah Easley of the Salvation Army spoke about the organization's plans to open a cold weather shelter starting in January. The Salvation Army hosts a food drive and toy campaign for the holidays. The gymnasium which will be used as the shelter will be in use as a sorting floor and storage area while these campaigns are ongoing. Lt. Easley said the Salvation Army had hoped to find another location to use as a sorting/storage area, but the other locations had not panned out.

Lt. Easley reported that the Salvation Army shelter would be a temporary overnight shelter for cold weather, not a permanent or long-term shelter. He stated that the Salvation Army does not discriminate based on religious standing, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation. All people will be able to obtain services if needed. The Salvation Army hopes to offer breakfast to their temporary resident when donations allow.

There was a discussion about how the Salvation Army would accommodate families as there are no single, locking bathrooms or separate locking bedding areas. They can offer partitions for some privacy, or err on the side of caution and provide a motel room for families seeking shelter.

Todd Marsh, Rochester Welfare Director, stated that the Welfare Departments of the three Cities would work to house families separate from the Salvation Army.

Mr. Marsh said that one of the goals of the Salvation Army shelter is to focus on the immediate region: Rochester, Farmington, Dover, Somersworth, and Barrington. It was clarified that the Salvation Army will not be turning anyone away regardless of the community from which they came, the organization puts no such stipulations on their

services. There will be no residency requirements, the shelter will just not be promoted widely.

Lt. Eisley stated that the maximum number of people they would be comfortable housing would be 20, although if there is a greater need and they reach that maximum, they will accommodate them and find a place for them to be sheltered.

Vice Chair Gasses said she had spoken to Dover City Manager Mike Joyal who indicated that if there were enough homeless Dover residents needing shelter, Dover would open a temporary shelter in the McConnell Center for extreme cold weather.

Betsey Andrews-Parker spoke about the communities to help the process by pushing through zoning variances to facilitate shelters opening if the opportunity presents itself. The Salvation Army is opening this shelter at no cost to the City, the City can assist by ensuring that the shelter is able to operate without compromising safety.

There was a discussion about when the shelter could open due to the already frigid temperatures at night. If the Salvation Army could source another facility for the toy and food drives, they could offer shelter services before January.

Chairman Hutchinson asked Mayor McCarley if the vacant City-owned property at 38 Hanson Street in Rochester could be potentially used as a facility for the Salvation Army to store their food and toy donations. Mayor McCarley stated she would look into the use of this property.

The Committee had a brief discussion in regards to having a list of charitable organizations, churches, and resources which may be able to offer assistance if the Salvation Army is not able. Lt. Eisley said that the Salvation Army has a referral system which their social services provider can access if they are unable to offer assistance. They are also in contact with local welfare. It is unlikely this resource system would need to be used in the circumstances of a warming shelter.

When the shelter is open and operating, the Lieutenant can compile a list of donations and supplies needed which can be provided to the Task Force for distribution.

## **7. Affordable Housing Strategy**

Paige Farmer of the Greater Seacoast Coalition to End Homelessness led a discussion on what defines affordability as well as potential municipal recommendations which can be made to increase affordable housing such as reviewing barriers in zoning and planning ordinances in regards to density and definitions of approved uses.

Ms. Farmer recommended the Committee revisit the contract with Strafford Regional Planning Commission, if not now, to be integrated as part of the Master Plan as

a recommendation to the Municipalities. The SRPC has expertise when it comes to zoning policy and they would be ideal to engage when trying to create something at the Tri-City level.

Tory Jennison, Director of Population Health at Integrated Delivery Network, presented to the committee regarding affordable housing and the varying definitions of the term. Municipalities often use the term "workforce housing" interchangeably with the term affordable housing. The definition differs when it refers to what is affordable for those with employment and income as opposed to the homeless population or those with very low incomes.

Ms. Jennison addressed the Task Force regarding supportive housing and what it defines, what it provides, and permanent versus temporary supportive housing.

Ms. Jennison emphasized that the Mayors' Task Force should put their time and energy into what they personally can do to affect change; changes in zoning in regards to unit types, lot size and density, supportive services for landlords to avoid evictions, etc. There are already organizations and resources available to help the homeless community with education and necessary life-skills to find and retain housing. Ms. Jennison stated that the Task Force should work on developing recommendations for the Municipalities to invest in.

Phyllis Woods spoke about the need to educate property owners and landlords on Section 8 vouchers and other support programs. Ms. Woods also stated that there is not only a need to advertise supportive services for tenants, but to educate landlords that there are supportive services for them as well. These services can provide support and intervention prior to the need for eviction or loss of housing.

## **8. Other**

There was a discussion in committee regarding the triggers for emergency cold weather shelters. Per Ms. Jennison, there is no mechanism in place for reimbursement if a community opens an emergency cold weather shelter. Currently, the Department of Homeland Security does not consider cold weather to be an emergency and there are no specific triggers. If the communities are asked to open emergency shelters, there is going to have to be a funding source for these shelters.

Chairman Hutchinson spoke about municipal restrictions being driven at the State level and asked for a sense of committee as to whether it may be beneficial to invite state representatives to attend the Task Force meetings.

Phyllis Woods referenced the annual legislative service request filing period to which the State Representatives adhere. Ms. Woods suggested trying to contact

representatives prior to the closing of the filing period so if new legislation can be introduced, it will not have to wait a year.

Vice Chair Gasses suggested that if the committee was going to focus on making change at a local level, they should engage the planning departments of each City as opposed to zoning staff. It may be beneficial to have each municipality invite one of their planners to the next meeting for a discussion on what defines housing, approved uses, and potential changes that can be made to help increase affordable housing.

The next meeting of the Tri City Mayors' Task Force on Homelessness will be on November 29, 2018 at Community Action Partnership at 577 Central Avenue in Dover. Per Betsey Andrews-Parker, the meeting will be from 6:00 PM to approximately 9:00 PM and will be a working meeting to develop more thorough drafts of some of the Master Plan Strategies.

The date for the next Regular meeting of the Task Force is yet to be determined. It will be decided upon at the CAP meeting on the November 29.

## 9. **Adjournment**

Chairman Hutchinson **ADJOURNED** the meeting at 7:14 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara  
Deputy City Clerk  
Rochester, NH