



**Tri-City Joint Mayors' Task Force on Homelessness**  
**Rochester City Hall Annex, Cocheco Room**  
**33 Wakefield Street**  
**July 12, 2018**  
**6:00 PM**

**MAYORS**

Mayor Caroline McCarley  
Mayor Karen Weston  
Mayor Dana Hilliard

**Chairman**

Jeremy Hutchinson

**Vice Chair**

Marcia Gasses

**Rochester Members**

Elizabeth Atwood  
  
Rev. Eliza Buchakjian-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:**

Lindsey Williams

<b>Survival Shelter Sub-Task Group</b>	<b>Master Plan Sub-Task Group</b>

## MINUTES

### **1. Call to Order**

Chairman Hutchinson called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM. Cassie Givara, Deputy City Clerk for the City of Rochester, took a silent roll call. Mayor Hilliard of Somersworth, Betsey Parker and Andrew Howard of Dover, and TJ Jean of Rochester were all excused.

### **2. Public Input**

Eric, homeless Rochester resident, spoke of the difficulties he has encountered since becoming homeless in January; chief amongst them the lack of affordable housing and the need for homeless residents such as himself to camp or tent.

Dennis Winship, homeless Veteran and resident of Rochester, discussed the problems members of the homeless community encounter with local law enforcement; being trespassed from businesses and properties, being asked to leave “private” land, being moved from one location to another. Mr. Winship suggested that the City of Rochester could consider designating a piece of land where the homeless population could be allowed to stay.

Mr. Winship also spoke about homeless residents being relocated to other communities. These residents become familiar with the support systems and resources in their home communities and it is a hindrance for them to be relocated to new locations where they are unfamiliar with the resources.

Dennis, homeless resident, inquired about the building at the end of Charles Street in Rochester which was reported to be under construction to house homeless residents. Dennis stated it didn’t appear there was any progress being made at this location. Mayor McCarley of Rochester stated that this was a Department of Housing and Urban Development project which is a federal agency and unfortunately the City of Rochester does not have any authority to expedite the process.

Cheryl Huckins, Straight Street Outreach, spoke about the positive impact she felt her organization had made on homeless residents, especially those with substance use issues. Ms. Huckins indicated that Straight Street Outreach would need supplemental funding from the City of Rochester to continue the work they are doing.

Martha Stone, Crossroads House Portsmouth, NH, said that Crossroads currently houses 80 residents. The problems of the homeless are exacerbated during winter, but it is not a seasonal issue. She concurred with Mr. Winship that it is important for homeless residents to be able to stay in their own communities where they are familiar with the resources and can readily access assistance. Ms. Stone stated that this area needs another homeless shelter, but this will just be a Band-Aid, not a solution. Ms. Stone offered to share her experiences and input with the Chairman.

human, Rochester resident, inquired about the proposed appointment of a member of the homeless community to serve on the Task Force. human said that his understanding was that there would be one homeless resident from each of the three cities serving, but now it appeared that the task force was looking for a single appointee. human inquired when this appointee would be recognized and appointed?

Chairman Hutchinson stated that the discussion regarding appointing a member or members of the homeless community would be covered on the agenda later during the meeting.

Ms. Huckins of Straight Street Outreach spoke about the lack of resources for residents following substance use recovery, such as access to a halfway house.

Chairman Hutchinson closed public input at 6:20 PM.

### **3. Approval of Minutes**

#### **3.1 Tri-City Task Force Meeting June 7, 2018, consideration for approval**

Phyllis Woods, Dover, indicated there were some amendments which needed to be made to the minutes prior to approval. Ms. Woods stated that there are only 4 voting members of the Committee from Dover as opposed to the 7 members listed on the June minutes. Chairman Hutchinson noted that this correction didn't need a formal amendment but could rather be made as a clerical correction in the next set of minutes. Phyllis Woods **MOVED** to accept the amended minutes from June 7, 2018. Vice Chair Gasses seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous voice vote.

A discussion was held on how to best disseminate the Task Force agendas, meeting minutes and backup information throughout the three cities. Chairman Hutchinson reported that

the Committee is working on improving clarity, and if it is agreeable to all three communities, the minutes and agendas could be posted in a central location, likely the Rochesternh.net website, and all other communities could pull information from that single location. After a brief discussion, it was decided that the acting secretary at each meeting would supply the minutes to each of the Clerks from the three participating cities. The Clerks of each city would then post the information on their respective City's website.

#### **4. Report of Data**

Mayor Weston of Dover requested a flow chart listing all the organizations offering resources for the homeless community in order to more easily determine which organizations offered which services and to whom (e.g. single women, women with children, veterans, etc.)

The Committee held a discussion regarding access and ease of this information. It was stated that the information is already out there in varying forms, but it is not necessarily known to the individual communities how this information can be accessed and how to decipher which resources should be offered in which circumstances. Mayor Weston indicated that it would be helpful to have a single page chart listing each organization with check boxes showing what services they offer for a quick reference guide.

Chairman Hutchinson suggested that a volunteer from each City could compile a list of their local organizations with the relevant information. He stated he would work on a template to be distributed.

#### **5. Report of Scope of Agencies**

Todd Marsh, Somersworth, reported that the Warming/Survival Center Sub Task Force met on June 28, 2018. They discussed the scope of options for upcoming centers; One large shelter versus several small shelters throughout the area. The Pros and Cons of each option were discussed.

Vice Chair Gasses indicated that she felt one large facility was not the best option for the needs of the homeless community in the Tri-City area. Mr. Marsh said that a "low barrier" setting with ease of access would be best.

Elizabeth Atwood, Rochester, suggested identifying other social service agencies which could be added to the warming/survival shelter list.

John Huckins, Straight Street Outreach, inquired what the trigger would be for opening a survival shelter; Temperature? Type of Weather? Duration of poor weather? Vice Chair Gasses responded that it was an emergency management issue which was not black and white. They would not go based on the amount of people needing assistance or the type of weather. The decision would be made on a case by case basis.

Mr. Winship spoke about how the term “survival shelter” was being used to show that winter is not the only season with harsh elements affecting the homeless community. He suggested it would be a good idea to have a medical team or medical personnel to help determine when a survival shelter should be opened. Mr. Winship also suggested the focus should be more on what the homeless community needs and how to best assist, and less on the administrative issues involved.

Don McCullough, Rochester, said that he had done a study in the past which compiled data in regards to trigger points for long duration emergency or disaster including weather. The study didn’t specifically take the homeless population into account, but the information would still be relevant and Mr. McCullough indicated he would be happy to share this information with the committee.

A discussion was held regarding cooling shelters in the area. Mayor McCarley of Rochester reported that the Rochester Public Library is the designated cooling area for the City. Vice Chair Gasses said that those in need of assistance can always go to the fire department or police department in their respective cities.

## **6. Report from Sub-Task Groups**

Lena Nichols, Dover, reported that the Master Plan Sub-Task group could benefit from some outside help, perhaps someone who is a planner or an organizer. The majority of the people on the sub group do not have any experience writing or preparing Master Plans and they find themselves becoming bogged down trying to develop a plan which will work for all three cities involved.

Chairman Hutchinson agreed that the Master Plan is a huge project to be undertaken which will include the councils for all three cities to vote on budgetary items. He suggested adjusting the agenda to move the Master plan discussion up and to allow the representative from Strafford Regional Planning Commission to speak.

Jenn Csysz, Regional Director of Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC), gave a summary of the proposal which her organization is presenting to the Task Force. The idea is for SRPC to come in and use their expertise to supplement what the Task Force is already accomplishing and to tie everything together. Ms. Csysz said that the major areas which they felt they'd be able to assist would be data gathering, interviews behind the scenes and compiling information, as well as in-house GIS and data resources, and with meeting transportation. They would also assist with meeting facilitation; integrating topical presentations which could be built on with educational components and public input. All of this would be a starting point to generate the Master Plan content. They have developed a plan for the next 5 meetings, but this is fast tracking the Master Plan process which usually takes significantly longer. They normally start by determining the main goals and what the group wishes to accomplish. They then identify strategic actions in order to implement these goals, and then prioritize, determining where to start the process. A draft Plan would then be developed by December.

There was a discussion held regarding SRPC role in meeting facilitation. Ms. Csysz reported that her organization would have a staff member to help identify goals and lead the meetings, as well as organizing topical speakers and presentations.

Phyllis Woods, Dover, inquired about the timeframe laid out at the first Task Force meeting which called for the Master Plan to be completed by the end of August. It was then pushed out to November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018. The SRPC plan calls for working on the plan throughout November and December essentially doubling the original timeframe. Ms. Woods inquired if there was any way to expedite the process. Could the Task Force meet twice a month as opposed to once in order to speed the process along?

Vice Chair Gasses indicated that those who had suggested the original proposal to have the Master Plan drafted by August or November had no prior experience with Master Plans and didn't understand what was entailed or how involved and complex the process would be. The original timeframe was unrealistic. A discussion was held by the committee in regards to the benefit of taking adequate time. The Master Plan is such an integral, and important part of this process that it should not be rushed. Ms. Csysz also said that much of the process relies on staff time and volunteer hours. It is beneficial to have time between meetings to think about what was discussed and develop and tweak the plan based on those meetings. There is a possibility that in December, the Committee may realize that more time is needed and request an extension on the drafting of the Master Plan.

It was clarified that there are two separate and distinct projects happening in the Task Force simultaneously. There is the Master Plan sub task group as well as the Survival Shelter sub

task group. The survival shelter would be presented to the Cities as a separate budget request and that would be pushed forward regardless on the readiness of the Master Plan.

Mayor Weston said that when the Mayors originally discussed forming this committee, the idea was to prepare for upcoming winter and be prepared, there was not a specific milestone or timeframe in mind. They were more concerned with the quality of the project they were presenting and ensuring that the members of the committee were able to commit adequate time to assist. Mayor Weston reported that Dover's City Manager estimated the Master Plan would cost \$15,000. She suggested each of the three cities draft a funding Resolution to be presented to their respective Councils for this cost to be split three-ways. Mayor Weston said that a single Resolution could be drafted and distributed to each City with minor wording changes to reflect the Council which will be voting.

Ms. Csyz suggested that one of the three Municipalities included in the Commission take the lead on the contracting aspect of working with SRPC. This will allow one point of contact making it easier to draw up the contract and get necessary signatures. Chris Parker, Dover, stated that if a single Municipality was going to be contracted with the organization, the Resolution would be asking for a \$15,000 appropriation for retaining Strafford Regional Planning Commission on behalf of the Tri City Mayor's Task Force with \$5,000 being reimbursed by each of the other two Cities.

There was a brief discussion held regarding the 4 original goals which were laid out in the mission statement of the Task Force. It was determined that all of these items were included in a Master Plan and all tied in together. It was asked of the two Mayors present if they had originally envisioned a Master Plan which would address all 4 goals. Mayor McCarley, Rochester, said that the Mayors wanted to develop a Committee and task them with a huge challenge to see what they could come up with and how they could help in their communities.

Lena Nichols **MOVED** to have each City draft a Resolution to be presented to their Councils for funding to contract with Strafford Regional Planning Commission. Laura Hogan seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous voice vote.

## **7. Assignment of New Sub-Task Groups**

No Discussion.

## **8. Discussion: Adding Task Force Member from Homeless Community**

A discussion was held regarding how the process would be handled to submit nominees for a member of the homeless community to join the task force. It was questioned whether or not the new member had to be actively homeless or if someone would be considered who had been homeless in the past. Chairman Hutchinson indicated he felt the new member's perspective was far more important than their current housing status.

It was clarified that the Committee was looking for a single member as opposed to one member of the homeless community from each of the three cities. Mayor McCarley reported that the Task Force was a Mayor Ad Hoc committee, and ultimately it would be the responsibility of the three mayors to appoint the new member. Both Mayor Weston and Mayor McCarley reported that they had not received any nominees as of this meeting.

Chairman Hutchinson asked that all nominees be submitted directly to him and he would pass them on to the appropriate Mayors. He asked that anyone submitting names for nomination take no more than one week to provide their information. Transportation to and from the meetings for the new member would be provided either through Uber or Community Action Partnership.

Mr. Winship volunteered himself as a potential committee member. Mr. McCullough verbally submitted Tara Stewart.

It was stated that public input is always welcome. Regardless of whether or not someone is appointed as a voting member of the Task Force, they are always welcome to attend the meetings, take part and have their voice heard.

## **9. Master Plan Writing Proposal Document Review**

Discussion was held earlier in the meeting (see agenda item 6)

## **10. Other**

Mayor Weston spoke about an email from the Community of Bradenton Florida regarding a model for assisting with the homeless community. Mayor Weston reached out to someone in Bradenton to ask about their experience with this situation and discussed things the Tri City area could consider based on the experiences in Bradenton. Mayor Weston shared that aside from the weather, the experiences and problems of the homeless community and the municipalities in dealing with this issue are very similar regardless of the geographical location. A big take away



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from the conversation was allowing the homeless access to showers. Mayor Weston stated that was a goal that all three communities could work toward.

Chairman Hutchinson announced that the next meeting of the Tri-City Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness would take place in Dover on August 9, 2018 at 6:00 PM at The McConnell Center in Room 305.

There will be a Survival Shelter Sub Task Group meeting on Thursday July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at the Barrington Town Offices, 333 Calef Highway at 5:30 PM.

Mayor Dana Hilliard's aide read a statement on behalf of the Mayor.

**Chairman Hutchinson opened the floor for closing public comment:**

John Huckins spoke about the items that he felt should be focused on in the Master Plan; zero homelessness, affordable housing, and transitional housing following recovery. Mr. Huckins felt the Plan should also touch on mental health issues as well, which sometimes contribute to or exacerbate issues with homelessness.

human, Rochester resident, nominated Monica Nagle of Dover as a homeless representative of the Task Force.

Christina, employee of a downtown Rochester business and volunteer at the warming shelter, said she was leaving the meeting with a positive outlook on the progress being made by the Task Force and the sub committees.

Cheryl Huckins, Straight Street Outreach, shared her experience working with and assisting members of the homeless community.

**11. Adjournment**

Chairman Hutchinson **ADJOURNED** the meeting at 8:01 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara  
Deputy City Clerk, Rochester