Homelessness Task Force
September 23, 2019

Will Eberle
Zach Hughes
Glen Coburn Hutcheson
Erika Reil
Travis Hill
Stephen Whitaker
Dawn Little
Jodi Kelly

Guests:
Mary Alice Bisbee
Seth Collins
Casey Jones
Bryce "Ace" Weatherwax
Keren Ascenio

Public Comments

Bryce spoke of his experiences being homeless and living in a car. He believes that he got sick because of these conditions, in particular because of how cold it was. He noted concern for limited number of slots in Good Samaritan shelter and his desire not to displace others in the shelter. He talked about the need for a waypoint for making things available to those in need. He emphasized the urgency in the situation.

Seth Collins spoke, expressed hope for permanent solutions including affordable housing and temporary shelters.

Casey Jones also expressed support for affordable housing and disappointment that earlier hopes of producing affordable housing did not come through.

Mary Alice: A member of Vermont Interfaith Action Network that has a goal of ending homelessness by 2030. Involved with the Citizen's Housing Summit.

Introduction
Task force members shared personal stories and thoughts on Task Force work:
Glen: will serve as a conduit to City Council and seeks to keep the conversation moving forward.
Zach: in Montpelier since early 1990's, served on Taser group, and currently on street team of volunteers.

Will: a citizen of the world, not here as part of his day job. Has been homeless. Formerly with Another Way, now a Field Director for AHS.
Ken: from Brandon, Vermont, worked in Bay Area on homelessness issues for ACLU, working against laws to criminalize homelessness.
Jodi: new business owner, has a brother who is homeless, wants to make a difference.
Dawn: has been homeless, Another Way peer support. Does outreach to folks on the street.
Steve: advocacy for housing issues, wants to get folks into shelters and to persuade the city to act. Wants action not talk.
Travis: Born in Vermont, 5th generation, has been homeless, just recently found housing. Talks of issues of drug abuse, violence, trauma, mental health among homeless population and need for folks to take responsibility for what they are doing, for their own salvation.
Erika: Vermont Center for Independent Living, mental health diagnosis, need housing to be both affordable and accessible.

Decision Making
Will suggested modified consensus making where group has a limited about of time, maybe 10 minutes, to reach consensus. If that fails, then majority rule would hold. Ken suggested that with big decisions, dissenting opinions would be made known.

Aspire to consensus, note dissenting opinions

How to ensure that all voices are heard
Go around the table, make circle complete.
Empower the facilitator.
With significant decisions, facilitator might divide speaking time into equal portions for each participant.

Facilitator
For now Yvonne will continue to facilitate. The group might take another look at that arrangement in time.

Minutes
Posted within 5 calendar days of the meeting.

Posting of Minutes and Setting of Agenda
Create overall, "global" agenda that can be modified and fine-tuned for each meeting.
Can add additional items, can create an Urgent Needs section for items that need quick attention.

Timing, close agenda 48 hours before meeting.

Consider Conference calls in between meetings
Special meetings need notification, Steve W. thinks
Telephone meetings require a place for public to access

Meeting Schedule

Will try to do Monday 4:30-6:00, every week. One member needs to double check work schedule.

Spokesperson

Will table for now.

Group Guidelines:

Glen speaks about group guidelines: Assume positive intention.

Inclusion of meetings guests. Keep on focused on work to be done.

Email communications policy need to adhere to Open Meeting Law:

Emails
Glen: if we have a group conversation in a quorum -- more than half of us.
Can talk about schedule meeting.
Can share information not requiring a response.
Do not have a conversation by email.

Identification of issues that need to be addressed by the Task Force

Census or not? If so, privacy issues.
Not enough room at overflow shelter as cold approaches.
Need for warming spaces regardless of sobriety. Concern for population not eligible or appropriate for shelter and warming day space criteria
    i.e. Another Way as a dry shelter
Benchmarks/deadlines for short, medium, and long term goals.
Issues with staffing personal and relationship to Task Force work
Feedback to Good Samaritan
24 hour toilets, shower, laundry, telephone charging, vouchers, camping
Transportation to these services
Place for Strike Force supplies to be staged
Secure place for belongings
Overnight shelter and warming spaces are both needed.
Responsibility of homeless population to take care of what is provided
Partners with state, who have RFPs to provide services: how does Task Force communicate with these stakeholders.

Motion

Motion by Steve Whitaker: Task Fund makes a recommendation that the City take any action necessary, including identifying available funds, to open-up the Bethany shelter as soon as possible and staff it until the Good Samaritan contact begins.

Motion passes unanimously.

Glenn to contact Good Samaritan.
Ken to present at City Council.

The task force anticipated having council discuss the recommendation and then have staff follow-up as needed.

Will meet next Monday September 30, 2019, 4:30-6:00.

Minutes submitted by Ken Russell, 9/24/19.