

Homelessness Task Force Meeting Minutes DRAFT December 4, 2019

Facilitator: Ken Russell • Minutes: Glen Hutcheson

- Task Force Members Present: Jodi Kelly, Will Eberle (present by speaker-phone), Rick DeAngelis, Ken Russell, Ericka Reil, Glen Hutcheson, Zach Hughes, Travis Hill, Sophia Clark (arrived 11:40), Dawn Little (arrived 11:47)
- Members of the Public: Sunni Leporati, Stephen Whitaker, Matthew Nunnelley, Betsy Parrah (arrived 11:42), Mary Alice Bisbee (arrived 12:07)

Meeting Begun: 11:32

INTRODUCTIONS AND AGENDA

1. intros

2 .Additional Agenda Requests:

Zach: add update about outreach (#8)

Rick—add follow-up recommendations from preliminary report to upcoming Council presentation

Glen—GMT updates

Agenda approved 11:34am

PUBLIC COMMENT 11:35

3. comments

-Stephen Whitaker spoke about the alternate agenda he sent to certain members, including Ken, asked why it had not been accepted; brought up several issues he felt were missing from the approved agenda: 1.)Casey's destroyed property 2: plan to get people not served by existing shelter off the street.

-Sunni announced that Another Way was granted 300K to improve interior ADA bathroom, update kitchen, update community room, starting in the spring/summer of 2020. Members of the task force offered congratulations.

MINUTES

4. minutes from 11/27 meeting approved as presented at 11:39

BUDGET FOR FY '21 11:45

5. *Discuss and decide on needs and a budget request from the Council for next fiscal year 2021, planning to present to Council in December*

from Cameron Niedermeyer (submitted in writing):

- Request a budget allocation of \$15K split:
 - \$5K for porta-johns (2, rented over several months)
 - \$10K for emergency shelter expanded schedule as in this year

from Ken:

1. The Housing Task Force requests that the City of Montpelier earmark \$xxxx to be used as seed money for innovative solutions that bring the city towards the goal of having every homeless person off the street at night and moving towards being housed. This money could be used as matching funds with other partners seeking to address homelessness, including the Federal Government, the State of Vermont, Foundations, business groups, or non-profits. We recognize that while city funds might be limited, there is a strong desire to tackle this problem using innovation and relationship building. We see a strong interest in this issue in many sectors, and believe that with a strong vision and active work on all of our parts, that solutions will continue to come.
2. Fund two part-time street outreach positions, and fund an incidentals fund.
3. Fund a solution to the lack of accessible downtown 24-hour bathrooms.
4. Fund storage lockers for homelessness medical supplies and immediate needs, such as sleeping bags.
5. Continue to fund the expanded fall and springtime time frames at the Bethany overflow shelter, and allocate resources to support lack of full shelter coverage, in an environment where the churches hosting shelters and meals are under financial pressure, and where resources from the state are under their own pressures.

Discussion followed:

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Zach: Montpelier Police have talked about hiring a social worker, which could overlap or replace “Street Outreach”

Ericka: Brattleboro and Burlington: street outreach is overseen/funded by DA

Travis: #2 needs tweaking.

Rick: Uncertain about Ken’s “#1.” This sort of program exists already at the state level. Not sure what the city of Montpelier could do in terms of seed money. Supports #2. Wants REGIONAL outreach positions—through Continuum of Care. Supports #3, #4, #5 but asks on #5: is this going to work for the churches? How much money are they getting in the budget?

Dawn: #5: are we talking about expanding time, or expanding services to people who aren’t currently served?—

Ken: Both time gaps and population gaps.

Dawn: peripheral expenses should also be addressed (eg transportation to better use 211 services)

Jodi: concurs with earlier. Ken’s proposal seems broad. Wants to focus on mental health counseling and transportation TO town (more presence on the street).

Zach: outreach ALREADY covers larger area, but it’s all volunteer. There WILL be transportation issues.

Ericka: first item is currently broad and needs more thought. #2 needs to steer clear of case management or social work and toward peer support and street outreach to avoid alienating, making people fearful. 3 in favor. 4 in favor. 5 in favor but fearful of stressing out resources like churches. Alarmed at possible end of partnership with Bethany.

Glen: #1 may be broad but can be useful for spurring discussion at Council level. Otherwise support.

Will: likes the proposal as a whole. How big a bite do we want to take? What’s going for us: lots of current attention, state-level funders; we just have to demonstrate a clear path. Do we want to END homelessness or MANAGE it? We could plant an aspiration, make a model for the state. We don’t need to put “x dollars” to it but can say “This is what is required to structurally end this issue.” Top priorities: peer support outreach through Continuum of Care, bathrooms (Actual, not Port-a-Potties, if possible..

Ken: I don’t hear any hard “no’s”— but tweak and refine everything, #1 especially.

Dawn: another issue: disposal of trash—illegal to dump—no legal outlets.

Travis left at 12.

Glen: follow up with Travis on #2.

Rick: I am NOT in support of #1. Will can speak to VT state funding and plans

Ken: it’s all matching funds—so yes, the state will fund, but we need to be a catalyst for all the agencies, providing ground-level perspective.

Dawn: existing plans—perspective comes from existing agencies. So yes, we have unusual perspective

Ericka: We have to connect the dots for the agencies as if they’re our clients.

Rick to Will: YOU are the representative of AHS. We’re telling you we have gaps that need to be closed. You’re pushing it back on the city of Montpelier, even though it’s the state’s job to figure out how to fill these gaps. Something is being pushed back on the city that should be the state’s responsibility. Why is the city being asked to solve the problem, isn’t that the state’s job?

Will: My role on the Task Force is not as representative for AHS or State, but as private citizen formerly homeless, as I’ve said from the beginning. We just need to articulate the solution, not who’s paying for what.

Rick: doesn’t agree.

Ken: COMMUNITY responsibility. There’s a gap. It needs to be addressed. We’re trying to be a catalyst.

Steve: wants near-term needs distinguished from 2-year 5-year (eg shared microhousing and showers.) Privacy and dignity need to be foundation layer. No plan is gelling here; facets and emergencies, but no plan. The state cannot write a local plan. Any comprehensive local plan will challenge the status quo. That’s an underlying dynamic. We need to write a plan. Get city seed money.

Rick: there is a Continuum of Care, we need those partners, we need to make sure they understand what we’re seeing... we need these partners, we’re not going to create a new shelter system... Will, suggestions how to connect?

Will: bring info on how better to connect HTF and Montpelier to Continuum of Care ←NEXT WEEKS AGENDA

Glen: present budget ask to city, AND identify larger entities that need to be contacted (by city?)

#1: will be further discussed offline by Will, Ericka, Ken, Rick ahead of next week’s meeting

#2: will be further discussed offline by Travis, Dawn, Zach

#3: will be further discussed offline by Cameron, Jodi, Dawn

#4: will be further discussed offline by Cameron, Jodi, Dawn

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#5: will be further discussed offline by Zach, Dawn, Ken, Rick

UPDATES AND ONGOING CONVERSATIONS 12:30

6. *VSECU grant application Glen*
submitted

7. *Ken's Rotary presentation*

presented with Yvonne's language. Spoke with many interested parties, including State Treasurer Beth Pearce and Montpelier City Councilor Dona Bate afterward, also with volunteers at shelters, it was a good meeting.

8. *Burlington and Bennington's street outreach -- Ericka*

Burlington has 4 paid social-outreach people. All donations and policies administrated through Howard Center, Funded through city AND state grants.

Bennington/Brattleboro has volunteer outreach, no real policies on donation, but has a non-profit that sponsors tax deductibility for donations. Small board of governors that keeps books, submits once a year. Want to be more formalized, but currently just peer workers after hours. Rare monetary donations, most donations are sleeping bags, clothes, med supplies

Zach: street outreach is similar to looser Bennington-Brattleboro

9. *xmas and new years shelter/service availability and communication plan*

Dawn—xmas should have a lower impact than Tgiving. We need advance communication to the people who will be affected.

Will leaves at 12:50

Jodi: propose a gap-filling meal sponsored by restaurants if there is a gap in the church. Volunteer servers.

Glen: Steve can share meal calendar with Jodi to determine what gaps exist this season; Jodi to fill gap if possible

Ken: need communication umbrella—could VIA do it? – no, they're a state-wide advocacy group. ← **NEXT**

WEEK'S AGENDA: COMMUNICATION

Steve: Task Force should insist on advance notice of any schedule changes, should BE the know-all communication. Steve has a google calendar including khl and Aldrich.

Dawn: 211 opening 6th. ← **GLITCHES THAT COME UP GETTING PEOPLE TO SHELTER: NEXT WEEK'S AGENDA**
Taxi service....

Zach: overall, we're doing what we can, despite frustration.

Note that Ericka will be absent next week; Glen will be absent through December.

ADJOURN 1:00