

Homelessness Task Force Minutes

January 8, 2020

DRAFT

Guests

Sally DeCicco, Bethany Warming Committee
Sunny Leporati, Another Way
Besty Parrah, Bethany Warming Committee
Mary Alice Bisbee, Vermont Interfaith Action
Matthew Nunnely

Members

Ericka Reil
Rick De Angelis
Zachary Hughes
Will Eberle
Morgan Brown
Ken Russell
Dawn Little

Cameron Niedermeyer

Minutes

Members need more time to review 12/18 minutes.

Introductions and Agenda

Go around circle, and all introduce.

Go over Agenda

Homelessness Awareness Day at State House next Wednesday, 1/15/20

Public Comments

Betsy Parrah, Bethany Shelter Committee, regarding Amy Pitton who said that Bethany might well not host shelter after this year.

Sally, we need help at clean-up.

Work Crew

Members of the shelter

Morgan to Sally: it gives people more inside time, and gives people sense of contribution.

Sally, reiterate what Betsy said, the church wants the community to know that the shelter is a band-aid. It takes a great amount of money, energy and time.

Is there an effort to open another shelter?

Rick: not sure what the best solution is. Satellite is a very challenging model. Quality of the services. No privacy, marginal bottom line shelter, at best. From our POV, our mission is to provide shelter. It is very challenging. We have a bare bones staff.

I intend to meet with Amy Pitton and are thinking about next year.

Morgan long opposed to a shelter in Montpelier.

Shelters are not a home.

Limited resources.

Need for a conversation soon with the right people and sensitivities to institutional relationships.

Ericka: let's table this for now but put on agenda for next time.

Mary Alice Bisbee, representing Vermont Interfaith Action Committee speaks regarding 1/15 statehouse: signs etc., free coffee and donuts at 9 AM, sit in on committee hearings on housing.

Thank Morgan for sharing WGDR program. Great conversation. One of our members, Susan, who is on Good Sam board, was there.

Maybe transitional housing, maybe through the housing authority, or through the city, or maybe in Berlin.

MSAC Support Group, parklet concern. Complete Streets been to City Council.

Perhaps a shelter done outside of Good Samaritan.

Minutes

Funding Requests

Bathroom

Locations.

Dawn wants this connected to camping discussion. Cameron asks to have this set aside.

Near Taylor Street. Maybe consensus.

Morgan moves. Zack seconds.

Ties into concern about shelter.

Co-location with outlets?

Will: cost-benefit of porta-potties vs. staffing existing bathrooms inside buildings.

Mary Alice: regarding charging for bathrooms.

Will: put an aspiration in there for a more permanent solution.

Recommendation to place one near Taylor Street: Motion passes.

Second Location:

City Hall Complex Area.

AW has bathrooms, and more facilities coming.

Cameron: we already have bathrooms.

Dawn: Cemetery, or down Barre Street by Sabin's Pasture.

Motion:

Accessible Bathroom by Taylor St.

Second Bathroom: Underpass by Green Mountain Cemetery.

Add aspirational statement about desire for more facilities.

Also a popular fishing spot.

Group agrees that Dawn will work with Cameron on second location before council meeting.

Locker Budget:

Based on a group called Think Dignity

Liability question: we think it's covered.

Ken moves to approve Cameron's Memo

Rick seconds

Morgan: we need an effort to provide notice.

Cameron: How about on the locker itself

Morgan: we can collect contact information.

Any available contact information.

Will: can we provide an alternative to medication.

Dawn: primarily used to provide vital supplies for warmth, but not meant for valuables. Store at own risk.

Cameron: let's take medication off.

Sunny: once a month notice too restrictive?

Cameron: limited space. If someone isn't using and tying up lockers.

Dawn: Good point about tying up lockers.

Group approves with amendments that Cameron notated.

Cameron: my location of choice is behind fire escape on back of city hall, built in cameras, easy to locate, bathrooms available close-by. No immediate push-back.

SW vs Peer Support Workers

Cameron reads from Memo.

Morgan: likes memo

Dawn: also important able to establish trust that police institutions would not be able to do.

Spent a whole night with someone who is suicidal who would never work with police or social worker.

Element of trust is incredibly important.

By nature, the people who are outside have already fallen through the cracks, and haven't been able to work with existing agencies.

Mandated Reporter?

De-escalation techniques.

Intervene at a different time: Save time and resources from other institutions: police, psych ward, hospitals

Flexible in their approach.

Training in trauma.

Our case management support for vouchers is very low.

Lot of people have difficulty completing housing applications for themselves.

Morgan: I had issues interacting with officialdom. I did better working with a peer.

People would blame me for not seeking help.

People took over my life.

They made decisions for me.

Often a struggle asking for assistance.

When you ask, you get more than you want.

Work with you, not on top of you, it's a very different result.

Re: seeking housing.

What got me housed was they happened to know somebody, who picked me up.

They were a housing professional.

I got housed.

This got housed.

Dawn:

People had no confidence in the process

Doing it because of “you”

Business of peer support, to do what works, not to tell people what they want, what they are able to use, to be more flexible. To meet at the point where they’re at.

I’ve been in a similar place

Didn’t fit through any of the hoops I was supposed to jump into

Only because there were individuals there willing to work outside of the system

Will: tie to Continuum of Care

Dawn: important to be a peer

Zack: People ask: “Can’t they get services?”

Many folks on the street: “I want to be left alone.”

More than one outreach worker.

Have to respond to what’s actually happening. Flexibility.

Morgan moves to vote

Rick: Who does the peer support person work for?

Cameron: in our proposal, we don’t know yet. Proposals are a bit nebulous. Good opportunity to be a relationship building for the city.

Morgan: I’d rather it be an organization. But Another Way bans people.

Dawn: in the past, AW was able to provide outreach services to folks who aren’t banned.

Ken seconds

Motion passes.

Consensus to trust Cameron to take it forward.

Chair

Rick makes motion that we have a chair.

Dawn: would this inhibit Ken’s ability to function?

Group approves

Will nominates Morgan as Vice-Chair, Rick seconded

Morgan wouldn't refuse.

The Group Agrees.

Regarding Next steps

Cameron: Yvonne set an Aggressive Agenda

Outstanding issues:

Policy for donations

Bethany Church discussion

Camping, public property

Transportation

Shelter

Networking, volunteers,

Will:

Permanent supportive housing

Zack:

Thank you to everyone who made efforts over Christmas

Should we meet next week?

Ken, as new chair, says we could meet in two weeks to allow time for lobby day at the State House. The group agrees.

Minutes compiled by Ken Russell

