

STEERING COMMITTEE
Concord's Plan to End Homelessness
Tuesday, August 25, 2015
2 pm to 4 pm
Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce
49 S. Main Street, Concord

Minutes
APPROVED

Present: Ron White, Lew Feldstein, Tim Sink, Jackie Whatmough, Robert Hirschfeld, Claudia Walker, Ruth Perencevich, J. St. Hilaire, Ellen Groh (CCEH), Maggie Fogarty (CCEH)

Absent: Steve Duprey, Byron Champlin, Pam Puleo, Peter Evers, Nicole Schultz-Price, Bill Davis

Ellen Groh called the meeting to order at 2:05 pm.

Minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

Review of CCEH Director's Report

Ellen Groh welcomed members and reviewed highlights from her CCEH Update to the Steering Committee report. Recent news includes a funding award from Lincoln Financial Foundation (LFF) for Housing First Concord. Riverbend also received funding from LFF to support a mental health worker at the Concord Homeless Resource Center. Ellen also described an upcoming opportunity for new state funding for chronically homeless people which comes from the closing of Franklin Falls Farm. There will likely be many applicants.

Developing Partnerships with Landlords

Success with Housing First Concord depends initially on the partnership with the Concord Housing and Redevelopment, but will be strengthened by partnerships with private landlords as well. Can Steering Committee members assist with developing relationships with private landlords who will partner with CCEH for Housing First?

Several Steering Committee members offered to reach out to their own contacts to invite these landlords to meet with Ellen. CCEH wants to hear from private landlords about what is needed for a good partnership to house people who have been homeless for a long time.

Another suggestion was made to contact owners of manufactured housing parks who may have vacant units or vacant lots.

County Funding for Homeless Services:

Ellen Groh reported on the initial data gathering done to assess how much the individual towns in Merrimack County are paying each year for homeless services. Many thanks to Jackie Whatmough for doing a report on behalf of Concord Human Services. This research project will be continued by the CCEH VISTA volunteer who will be starting soon. When the data is collected, Steering Committee members will prepare to approach County Commissioners with a proposal. Ron pointed out that most states do all of these types of services on a county level rather than a town level. At the Merrimack County level, it may not just be direct funds we are seeking, but other resources such as buildings. The State is building a new courthouse, and the county is studying what to do with the current court building, as well as the Registry of Deeds building and county attorney's building.

There is much to be done at the county level (and with state institutions based in Concord) to prevent people from being discharged to homelessness. When people exit jail or prison, it may be to a supervised release, in which case they must have a plan for where they are going to live, or unsupervised (sentence is complete), in which case they are just given the clothes they had when they entered.

Ron White recommends that Concord Homeless Resource Center staff familiarize themselves with the Thinking for Change program which provides re-education for those transitioning back to the community from incarceration. It is a two day class; Resource Center staff could take this class.

Can we make the case to the state and the county that the creation of housing vouchers for homeless ex-offenders is more cost effective than recidivism?

It was recommended that CCEH meet with Helen Hanks, Assistant Commissioner for the Department of Corrections, and/or NH Dept of Corrections Commissioner William Wrenn. Also Bob McCleod, Director of the State Hospital (we can ask Peter Evers to initiate this connection.) It was also suggested that CCEH reach out to Andrea Goldberg who works on re-entry needs at the state DOC.

Next Meetings: October 20 and December 15.

Steering Committee members agreed to renew their one year terms. And offered suggestions for additional members (to be approved and invited by the Mayor), including someone representing regional transportation and private landlords.

*Submitted by Maggie Fogarty
August 25, 2015*