

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



Interagency Council on Homelessness

Notes from the Meeting of the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH)

Date and Time of Meeting: December 13, 2007; Noon to 1:30 pm
Location of Meeting: N Street Village, 1333 N Street, NW; Washington, DC 20005
Number of Attendees: Approximately 75

Welcome and Introductions by Dan Tangherlini, City Administrator and ICH Chair

- Mr. Tangherlini welcomed the attendees and announced that the Fenty Administration has recently proposed funding in the amount of \$49.9 million to be spent on permanent supportive housing.
- Mr. Tangherlini thanked Schroeder Stribling and the N Street Village family for hosting the meeting and for the services that are offered there. He said that N Street Village represents the “best of the best” in many ways.
- He continued by noting that permanent housing represents a core commitment of this administration, and we would like to appropriate the \$49.9 million available to the city for housing. He believes we can create 500 units of affordable housing this year, and 400 of these units would be for the chronically homeless. The remaining 100 units would be for homeless families in the city. The vote on this initiative is next Tuesday, December 18.

Public Comment

- A representative from an organization announced that on Friday, December 21 from 5 to 5:30 pm the National Homeless Persons Memorial Day event will be held at McPherson Square Park to honor homeless people who died during the past year.
- The Homeless Veterans Stand Down will take place on January 12, 2008. Organizations can sign up to provide services for veterans during the event.
- A speaker said that it was a positive development that people are coming together and that the government agencies are working together. The speaker continued by saying that we cannot solve homelessness, but we can put a dent in it. Homelessness can affect anyone.
- A speaker had no complaints, but just wanted to give the ICH kudos at this time.
- According to one speaker, a problem is created when vans drop people off at 5:30 am at day programs that do not open until later. This means that people are waiting outside in the freezing cold and rain.
- The final speaker at this opening round of public comments wanted to know what Fannie Mae does with the money raised at the Walkathon.¹ The speaker said that no results were evident, and she wondered if it was a conspiracy. She continued by saying that better programs and better food are needed. She concluded by stating that people are eating out of trashcans.

Update on the Implementation of the Winter Plan by Fred Swan, FSA Administrator

- To date, there have been nine hypothermia alerts, and we have been able to accommodate all individuals.
- Personnel from DHS’ Homeless Services program and The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness (TCP) visited the National Weather Service in Sterling, Virginia to gain a better understanding of snow forecasting and winter weather advisories. The trip was sponsored by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

¹ The Fannie Mae Foundation held the 20th Annual Help the Homeless Walkathon on November 17, 2007.

- The family shelter at DC General (DCG) is now operational, and we are renovating the 5th floor to provide more accommodations.
- Building 9 at DCG is operational for 100 men. The day program will open in January.
- The hypothermia media campaign is ongoing.
- Challenges include the placement of families after hours and transportation issues. We will address the practice of dropping off clients before day programs open.
- The Family Resource Center relocation to 920 Rhode Island Avenue is scheduled for February 18th.
 - Comment: Cheryl Barnes reiterated the problem with the van system stating that it is dangerous for people to be out when it is dark. This is an urgent matter, according to Ms. Barnes.
 - Comment: There was a question about whether or not there had been a change in family intake numbers compared to other years, and Mr. Swan said that we will be comparing numbers as we go on. Sue Marshall, Executive Director of TCP, said that they are developing data on families.

ICH Committee Reports

Steering Committee, reported by Scott McNeilly, Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless

- The ICH schedule has been established so that the body will meet every other month, and committees will meet in the periods between ICH meetings. ICH meetings currently are scheduled for 2/14/08, 4/10/08, and 6/12/08 from 11:30 am until 1:00 pm. We want to have the meetings in the community at the sites of service providers. Mr. Tangherlini stated that the Mayor is committed to the practice of community-based meetings. The last cabinet meeting was at the New York Avenue shelter.
- Applications for ICH membership are still being solicited. For a membership application packet or if there are questions, interested parties may get in touch with Scott McNeilly.
- The public ICH website should be launched soon with minutes, dates, and a blog where people can comment on services. Laura Zeilinger is coordinating this effort.
- We also want to focus on how to get information flowing among members.

Operations and Logistics Committee, reported by Chapman Todd, Catholic Charities

- A public hearing will be held on Monday, December 17th from 3:30 to 5:30 pm at the MLK library. There is a requirement in the HSRA for annual public hearings, and this committee has expanded it to every quarter. The meetings will be open to anyone who would like to comment on homelessness in the District. The quarterly meetings will be held at different locations, and information from the hearings will be transcribed and made available to the ICH and on the website when it is established.
- A review of the fair hearing process will be a future agenda item for this committee.
- This committee will also work on an emergency response plan for providers in cooperation with TCP and the District's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA). This is open to the public.

Strategic Planning Committee, reported by Clarence Carter, DHS Director

- We were developing a request for proposal (RFP) for case management services, but it is now on hold until we decide what the RFP should look like. We want to review existing case management services and practices and develop an optimal approach. Short term case management opportunities will be available, and we will make sure that information is distributed.
- We want to develop a quality service initiative, and to do this we must look at best practices to fashion our service delivery system. Our customer base has every right to world class service.
- Recently, we submitted a proposal to Fannie Mae for resources to serve residents who are homeless. We will have an update at the next meeting.
 - Comment: Cheryl Barnes raised the issue of seniors and disabled residents in the shelter system and the fact that they are in shelters that have not been configured to meet their needs. She wants to have a dialogue with Mr. Carter regarding this.

- Response: Mr. Carter said that he would be pleased to have a direct conversation about this with Ms. Barnes. He will bring the issue of seniors before the Strategic Planning Committee. He is not sure that a shelter is the best place to serve seniors. Also, we need to be strategic about serving people with disabilities now that we are being more thoughtful about how we serve our clients in the aggregate.
- Comment: Cheryl Barnes expressed the need to bring social workers back into the system.
- Response: Mr. Tangherlini said that the recent permanent supportive housing proposal supported by the \$49.9 million in funding includes social workers among other services.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Work Group, reported by Laura Zeilinger, Office of the City Administrator

- The mandate in the Homeless No More (HNM) plan is for 2500 units of PSH, 2000 of which are for chronically homeless individuals and 500 of which are for families.
- This group is working on development of a production plan for these units. They must decide how many units are targeted to certain populations as well as timelines and a funding strategy. DHS has the lead on PSH.
- The mayor's proposal puts us in a much better place, and we will be contacting different programs about successes and about what works for certain populations.
- A three page handout describing the plan was distributed, and it was emphasized that the funding would be controlled by DHS, and that Director Carter will be the lead in carrying out the plan. This is not about real estate, but about permanent supportive housing for our neighbors. This is a work group, not a "talk group."
- Ms. Zeilinger referred to a table on page 2 of the handout that contained cost estimates for creating 2,500 units over six years. She said that the group had to make some assumptions and that the numbers are not yet definite.

HSRA Regulations, reported by Sakina Thompson

- DHS is in process of rule making for HSRA.
- Rules have been published in emergency format, and the stakeholders have convened and are giving input. There are three stakeholder subcommittees, namely Standards and Client Rights and Responsibilities, Monitoring and Enforcement, and Legal Issues. Ms. Thompson passed out an information sheet. Scott McNeilly encouraged everyone to attend the meetings.

Update on the Family System Transformation Initiative, reported by Clarence Carter, DHS Director

- When Mayor Fenty closed DC Village (DCV), he wanted not only to find permanent housing for families, but also to get at the root causes that put families in these circumstances.
- The "easy" part is finding housing. That has been accomplished.
- The more difficult part is understanding the challenges that families face and connecting the customer to services. We need to develop an understanding of what sister organizations are doing, and we need to understand the core service providers and how they work.
- This is a rich public policy and customer service undertaking.

N Street Village Presentation by Schroeder Stribling and Members of the N Street Staff

- N Street Village (NSV) was founded in 1973 by an ecumenical group that decided to use Luther Place for provision of food and shelter.
- Hospitality and welcome-for-all are core principles of the work at NSV, and the mission is to serve and empower homeless and low-income women so that they are able to attain the highest quality of life possible.
- There is a Day Center at NSV that serves breakfast, lunch, and a snack. Also, clients may do their laundry, choose clothing from a clothing room, and have a safe place to build community. The hours are from 7:30 am until 4 pm on weekdays.
- Social services that are available include case management and crisis management.
- Luther Place Night Shelter is a safe place where residents may work on goals, including financial, housing, mental health, and those that are community oriented.

- Employment and educational services, learning lab, soft skills training, partnerships with employers, and various training programs are also offered.
- Clinical services include on-site mental health services and therapy so that clients may claim the highest quality of life possible after they define what that is for them.
- Residential programs include group homes (permanent supportive housing), transitional housing, and recovery housing.
- The Executive Director, Mary Funke, recently won the Gellman Award for Leadership.

Public Comment

- Cheryl Barnes addressed the issue of opening the shelters when the temperature is in dispute or borderline during hypothermia. Mr. Carter responded that HSEMA calls the alert based on a weather forecast. When the alert is “on,” we take action to open the shelters. Mr. Tangherlini said that we have asked for the head of HSEMA to involve agencies at an earlier stage in the alert process.
- David Pirtle asked about the housing plan and about how many of the units are PSH (answer=2500) and how many are affordable (answer=6000). He asked about how to get a disability voucher for housing, and the response was that these are available through the DCHA Section 8 program. Leila Edmonds, DCHA Director, said that there is a proposal out now for affordable housing.
- Dr. Diane Brown, CCNV case manager, stated that the issue of the elderly in shelter needs to be addressed. In some shelters, it appears that they are “running a nursing home.” She said that people without citizenship papers and clients with medical problems also are not being served. She thanked Mr. Swan for his assistance that has enabled them to be in a position to hire ten case managers.
- There was a question raised about whether the \$50 million dollars that comes before the council will cover services for 500 units of housing, and this was not answered. Also, the question was posed about when more units will be funded, and the response was that this will happen in FY 2009 and beyond. The Deputy Mayor for Economic Development is responsible for this.
- Ms. Eve Hill from the Office of Disability Rights introduced herself and announced her telephone number, 202-724-7525.

Adjournment

- After the public comment period, Mr. Tangherlini adjourned the meeting.

This concludes the notes from the session.

The invaluable assistance of Lindsay Barnett, Case Manager and MSW Intern from N Street Village, is gratefully acknowledged.

The next scheduled 2008 meetings of the ICH will be on Thursday, February 14; Thursday, April 10; and Thursday, June 12.

Date of this document: February 6, 2008