

Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness

October 23, 2019

Hartford Town Hall - Room 312

In attendance: Michael Redmond – Upper Valley Haven, Whitney Hussong- Hartford PD SW, Dan Fraser - Selectboard, Michelle Kersey – Twin Pines Housing, Noel Bryant– Board of Education, Mike Chamness - UV Gear, Lori Hirschfield - Town of Hartford, Jesse Vazzano -Resident (by phone), Roger King, Scott Fletcher - resident

Members: Mike Chamness, Scott Fletcher, Michelle Kersey, Michael Redmond, Jesse Vazzano, Renee Weeks, Joie Finley

Ex Officio: Whitney Hussong, Sgt Karl Ebbinghausen, Tom DeBalsi, Lori Hirshfield, Noel Bryant

Selectboard Liaison: Dan Fraser

1. Call to order/Introductions - The meeting was called to order at 5:05 pm. Fletcher joined the meeting at 5:11 pm.
2. Public Comment - Roger King, a member of the homeless community, shared his background and current living situation. He indicated that the shortage of low-income housing is an issue. King shared the following thoughts:
 - There are some in the community who know each other well enough to rent together, and a Connection Board could be a helpful tool to connect potential roommates.
 - More places like the seasonal shelter at the Haven could help, but is not ideal. It's hard to get a good night's sleep in the seasonal shelter because of the tight living quarters.
 - The listen dinners are very helpful and many in the homeless community take advantage of this resource. The Haven food shelf is helpful, but it can be difficult to prepare meals and keep food from freezing while living in a tent.
 - There has been lots of help from community organizations this year, but it appears that the number of people needing assistance is on the rise.
 - It would be helpful to develop a sense of community and trust within the homeless population. The substance use issue make this difficult.

- There is a lack of belief that anyone will do anything to solve the problem, people within the homeless community are skeptical.
 - It would be very helpful to have a sizeable space with rules for overnight stays. The Haven's seasonal shelter isn't enough.
3. Minutes: Kersey made a motion to accept the minutes from the 10/9/19 meeting. Vazzano and Hirschfield abstained. The motion was seconded by Chamness and approved.
 4. Announcements: The committee has been asked to make a presentation at the October 31 Upper Valley Continuum of Care Forum on Homelessness. Chamness and Redmond will coordinate.
 5. Subgroup Reports:
 - a. Data: Hussong shared that the outreach conducted by Ebbighausen and Gwen from the Haven made contact with 9 people living under the Urban Bridge, and 3 living on the riverbank. There will be another outreach conducted. Redmond shared that he participated in an outreach over the summer that made contact with 5 or 6 people at another location. King offered to help with administering the census, he believes that there are more people.

Redmond shared data from the Coordinated Entry master list for the North Windsor/Orange County region. The list of 97 people who have reached out for support includes those who are living in hotels, emergency shelters, treatment facilities, or jail. It also includes people who are couch surfing, or are at risk of losing their current housing. He also shared data from the City of Lebanon's recent PIT count. The data from the two reports is obtained differently, and can help give a better understanding of the scope of the problem. The Lebanon group will be presenting their findings at the October 31 COC meeting, which could help provide a framework for this group. Representatives from Norwich and Hanover will also be attending the COC meeting.

- b. Resources/Stakeholders/Partners: No further progress.
- c. Process & Goals: Will evaluate HUDs 4 point framework for preventing homelessness and solidify how to move forward.
- d. Issues & Concerns: No further progress.
- e. Funding Sources: Fletcher has begun conversations with neighboring towns to see what they budget for services. Fraser shared that Norwich has nothing in their town budget. The subgroup is specifically looking at what towns budget to support the homeless committee. It would be helpful to determine what towns spend on costs associated with homelessness (policing, school services, etc.) This information would be difficult to quantify.

6. New Business: The committee set the following timelines

Before Nov. 6: Meet with Town Manager on budget submission deadline

Nov. 6: Committee Draft budget request

Determine framework for final report to Selectboard

Nov 6-20: Meet with Town Manager for feedback

Nov. 20: Budget request finalized

Outline of report for Selectboard to include best practices and recommendations (due Feb. 7)

Nov. 22: Final deadline for budget # to Town Manager (date to be confirmed). If budget request, review by Selectboard Dec. 3-17

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.