

Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness

November 6, 2019

Hartford Town Hall - Room 312

In attendance: Whitney Hussong- Hartford PD SW, Dan Fraser - Selectboard, Michelle Kersey – Twin Pines Housing, Mike Chamness - UV Gear, Lori Hirshfield - Town of Hartford, Scott Fletcher - resident, Karl Ebbighausen - Hartford PD, Lynne Goodwin - City of Lebanon Human Services

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

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

Selectboard Liaison: Dan Fraser

1. Call to order/Introductions - The meeting was called to order at 8:04 am. Hirschfield joined the meeting at 8:10 am.
2. Public Comment - Lynne Goodwin, Director of Human Services for the City of Lebanon, shared the history of the Housing First group, which came out of the 2017 no-camping ordinance passed in Lebanon. The creation of 10 Parkhurst St in Lebanon, supportive housing for the chronically homeless, came out of this group, and was created through a partnership between the Haven and Twin Pines Housing. Currently, the group is looking to create a homeless shelter in Lebanon, but there is a lack of capacity among area nonprofits. Currently, when the Haven is full, Lebanon has to send people to Claremont. For those with jobs, this often isn't a workable solution. There appears to be community wide energy towards creating a solution among the 4 core towns. A recent meeting of town and city managers discussed the current homeless situation. A December meeting of the group will discuss creating a mission statement with goals for dealing with the issue. There is an awareness among town leadership that they will need to make a commitment to the solution, both symbolically and financially. The group looks forward to seeing the report that comes out of the Hartford Committee on Homelessness. 10 Parkhurst was filled as soon as it opened, it would be great to see another similar project. There is an immediate, critical need for seasonal shelters in the 4 core towns. Seasonal shelters are unfortunately a huge undertaking - while there are buildings available that could be suitable, many of these buildings have zoning and code issues against overnight stays.

The committee again discussed the Brookside Nursing Home, which is currently unoccupied. If the core towns came together to provide funding to staff the building as a shelter, it could be a possibility. Hirshfield agreed to look into the current owner of the property. Advance Transit has a stop nearby on Bugbee Street, approximately 0.3 miles from Brookside.

The committee also discussed resources to help facilitate possible roommate situations. LISTEN was able to connect several single, sober men for a roommate situation with mixed results. Chamness shared that a member of the homeless community who is a programmer has discussed the idea of an inter-encampment communications system using a mesh network.

There is a need among the homeless for phones. UV Gear is seeing more families, and more people who are living out of their cars due to the cold weather.

The committee would like to see some immediate solutions. Chamness reiterated the need for storage lockers where the homeless could secure essentials and valuables for several months. The group discussed the lockers being used by companies like West Lebanon Feed & Supply and Amazon for after hours pick up and deliveries.

The committee discussed the impact of SUD on the homeless community. Hussong will ask Sheila Young from Turning Point to attend a future meeting.

3. Minutes: Fraser made a motion to accept the minutes from the 10/23/19 meeting. The motion was seconded by Chamness and approved.
4. Announcements: There were no announcements.
5. Subgroup Reports:
 - a. Data: Ebbighausen shared that the plan to visit encampments on November 1 was postponed due to the storm that day. The visits will be rescheduled for some time during the next few weeks, and the group will report back at the December 4 meeting. Ebbighausen shared that the visits were to encampments and do not include those who live in cars as that population tends to be transient. Hirshfield suggested that the report include anecdotal info about overnight parking in the numbers as this appears to be a significant group. Ebbighausen indicated that the number of campers shared at the last meeting (approximately 15 people) is much too low. Now that the trees have lost their leaves, encampments that were well hidden have become visible. In addition to the four encampments identified earlier, there are camps clustered around the Haven, the State offices on Prospect Street, Olcott Park, and Turning Point. Camps tend to develop near services.

Chamness left the meeting at 8:42 am.
 - b. Resources/Stakeholders/Partners: No further progress. Kersey will send the link for the resource document to committee members to make additions.
 - c. Process & Goals: Hesser shared a draft report with the committee. The draft provides an excellent framework and starting point for the committee to build upon. The report needs information from the schools and the VA.
 - d. Issues & Concerns: Nothing to report.
 - e. Funding Sources: Nothing to report.
6. New Business: No new business

Meeting adjourned at 8:49 am.