

Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness

November 20, 2019

Hartford Town Hall - Room 317

In attendance: Dan Fraser - Selectboard, Michelle Kersey – Twin Pines Housing, Mike Chamness - UV Gear, Karl Ebbighausen - Hartford PD, Roger King, Brian Luikart - UV Gear, Georgia Hanchett-Dean - LISTEN, Brandy, Michael Redmond - Upper Valley Haven (joined the meeting at 5:05 pm), Sheila Young - Turning Point (joined the meeting at 5:20 pm), Lori Hirshfield - Town of Hartford (joined the meeting at 5:35 pm)

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 4:58 pm.

2. Public Comment:

Brandy, a member of the homeless community, shared about her experiences living out of her truck since January 25, 2019. In the fall of 2018, her landlord in South Royalton, evicted her over less than \$100. She experienced several major expenses at the same time that totalled approximately \$11,000. She utilizes the Haven seasonal shelter and hotel vouchers, and hopes to find permanent housing once she starts work. As someone who lives out of her car, issues that are important to her include:

- A safe form of heat in her truck during the winter months;
- A safe place to park overnight;
- Dehydration (lack of access to a bathroom causes her to restrict her fluid intake);
- Stock of canned goods freezes and needs to be discarded during winter months;
- Access to gift cards for gas;
- A friend who lives out of her car and has medical issues struggles to find care for her dog, and needs a safe, dry place to sort through the belongings she stores in her car.

3. Minutes: Chamness made a motion to accept the minutes from the 11/6/19 meeting. The motion was seconded by Fraser and approved.

4. Announcements:

Mike Chamness shared that several members of the homeless community attended the November 19 Selectboard meeting and shared some of the challenges they face. Much of the focus was on car camping. Challenges discussed include:

- Difficulty staying dry;
- Challenges of having an animal;

- Having cars impounded and dealing with accumulating fees
- Access to bathrooms and showers
- Safe places to park
- Issues of theft

Sheila Young from Turning Point shared that approximately six people who are members of the homeless community use Turning Point's services. She receives a lot of calls from people preparing to leave residential treatment and don't have a place to go.

Roger King left the meeting at 5:30 pm

Georgia Hanchett-Dean from LISTEN shared that she interacts with 4-5 people from the homeless community each day. LISTEN helps people locate housing and offers grants for hotel stays and rental down payments. Short-term solutions are the most difficult.

Karl Ebbighausen shared that his primary role is as CIT (Crisis Intervention Techniques) Coordinator, and that Whitney Hussong is a social worker who attends crisis calls and actively works with partner agencies.

5. Subgroup Reports:

There were no updates from the subgroups.

6. New Business:

Lori Hirshfield shared that the Selectboard would like a draft report with specific goals for the budget planning process, but also would like to hear about emergency needs for this winter. The committee discussed the following ideas:

- Funding for emergency resources to cover the gap created by reduction of VT 211 services to cover gas cards, cash cards, motel vouchers, emergency supplies (batteries, lights, burner phones, phone chargers, medical needs) to be administered by a local nonprofit.
- Year-round storage options.
- Safe location for car camping.
- Bathroom options - either public facilities or port-o-potties.

Meeting adjourned at 6:23 pm.