**MAINE STATEWIDE HOMELESS COUNCIL**

**September 14, 2021**

**9:30-12:30**

**Minutes**

**Virtual Location** [**https://meetings.ringcentral.com/j/1494236342?pwd=MHE2NW9vMnV6WWhrNjEzZjlodzZ6dz09**](https://meetings.ringcentral.com/j/1494236342?pwd=MHE2NW9vMnV6WWhrNjEzZjlodzZ6dz09) **Or Telephone: 1(646)3573664**

**Members:** Cullen Ryan (CHOM, RII), Cheryl Harkins (HVJ, RI), Lauren Bustard (MaineHousing), Alice Preble, (DHHS/OCFS), Emily Flinkstrom (Fair Tide, RI), Tracey Hair, (HOME Inc. RIII), Josh D’Alessio (PCHC, RIII), Donna Kelley (Waldo CAP, RIII), David McCluskey (Community Care, RIII) and Donna Yellen (Preble Street, RI)

**Guests:** Betty LaBua (MaineHousing), Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing), Rota Knott (Tedford), Bill Higgins (Homeless Advocacy for All), Sara Wade (OBH/DHHS), Vickey Rand (CHOM), Erin Kelly (Preble Street), Norm Maze (Shalom House), Boyd Kronholm (BAHS), Noelle Coyne (Safe Voices), Richard Hooks Wayman (VOA), Kate Easter (MCEDV), Kelly Watson (MaineHousing), Ginny Dill ( OBH/DHHS), Mike Shaughnessy (MaineHousing), Rindy Fogler (City of Bangor), Aaron Geyer (COP), Tara Hembree (MaineHousing), Awa Conteh (City of Bangor), Erin Healy (Community Solutions), Meredith Pesce (Amistad), Christina Dingus (MaineHousing), Emily Meade (WMCA), Wes Phinney (YCSPI), Jennifer Edwards (City of Auborn), Lisa McLaughlin (HSA), Kelly Watson (MaineHousing), Amelia Lyons (Dept. of Ed.), Tracy Allen (KBH), Katie Spencer-White (MMHS), Mike Shaughnessy (MaineHousing), Theresa Dow-O’Leary (ACAP), Beverly Ebersold (USICH), Juanita Carbone (WMCA), Lisa Letourneau (Maine CDC), Joe McNally (Milestone), Jenny Stasio (TTD), Kobi Perry (WMCA) and Bob Wright (Pantareiglobal)

**Minutes:** Betty LaBua (MaineHousing) and Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing)

**Welcome:** Scott opened today’s meeting by welcoming everyone in attendance. Cullen motioned to approve July’s minutes. Tracy H. seconded the motion. No Discussion. July’s minutes were unanimously approved. A moment of silence was observed in honor of those who have passed away while experiencing homelessness.

**CES Update:** Mike reported the EHV process is successfully up and running with several referrals submitted. The committee is now focusing on the assessment portion of coordinated entry with a deep dive into reviewing assessment tool choices. The committee has been evaluating both phased out and housing barrier based options. A meeting will be held on September 16th with the leadership of the SHC, COC, MSHA (as CES lead operator), CES committee, and Built for Zero to make sure all are on the same page and decide upon what a coherent road map to a unified CES should look like.

**Concerns with the Redesign:** Josh led a robust conversation integrating the following bulleted topics:

* **The impact of Portland’s additional shelter beds on our ecosystem**
* **Credentialing/experience of homeless systems experts and the need for a “czar” at the state level**
* **The need for a municipal homeless summit.**

After clarifying Portland’s 100 bed shelter will have a net result of 19 additional beds to the system, the ESHAP funding formula was discussed to answer the question: ‘*If a big shelter is built how can they be brought into the system without significantly reducing the funding of other shelters*?’ Mike S. noted the ESHAP funding is discussed yearly and the SHC is part of that process. In order for the SHC to have an increased voice in the process, *Josh moved for the SHC to form a sub-committee to address the impact of additional shelter beds on the system, utilize MSN as the sub-committee and have the MSN report suggestions on the process to the SHC. Tracy H. seconded the motion. During discussion the point, that shelter directors have a vested interest in terms of funding was addressed by the general consensus the group will be able to manage the duality of roles. No one opposed. No one abstained. Motion carried.*

Josh recommended for all to replace the word “czar” with “expert” The conversation started with Josh stating there is not a homeless expert at the table representing the needs at the state or municipal levels and by asking how will the design approach cover everyone’s concerns if everyone isn’t represented at the table. Erin H. explained the ground for zero campaign works as a team at the local levels with stakeholders and with this team- based governing structure the state and local teams are collective experts working with live data versus hypotheticals to help clear barriers to housing. Erin mentioned localized data in real time will assist in raising awareness statewide and locally which in turn will help everyone become part of the solution.

Greg Payne, has been appointed by Governor Mills to be the first Senior Advisor for Housing Policy inside the Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. Greg Payne will be invited to SHC and COC meetings and to participate with the implantation of Hubs and Ground for Zero teams.

The possibility of having a municipal summit be part of the MSHA conference was suggested as a way of educating the public on the approaches concerning ending and preventing homelessness.

**Retreat Planning:** Bob Wright and Katie provided an overview of the upcoming retreat and asked for feedback on the drafted agenda. In addition to identifying what has been learned through COVID, developing an “identity statement,” and creating a road-map for the coming year, time on the agenda will be added for discussing hubs and their design. Everyone on the SHC mailing list will be invited.

**CDC UPDATE:** Dr. Letourneau attended to give updates on the current COVID situation in Maine. The CDC is recommending a third dose to all those who are medically compromised. This third shot for those immunocompromised is different from the booster shot. The flu vaccine can be co-administered with COVID vaccines. There are currently sufficient BinaxNOW supplies, anyone interested in more information should contact Sally Weiss. PNMIs not being required to have staff vaccinated is in the rule making stage therefore Dr. Letourneau was unable to state whether or not the policy would change.

**MSN Update:**

**Committee Update-** Noelle Coyne reported that the last MSN meeting had been canceled, however previously the group put forth recommendations regarding LD-1733. MSN proposed for the 10 million in available funding to be bulk distributed using a modified ESHAP formula with one pot for operations and extra weight (if possible) for youth shelters.

**GA Letter-**ConversationTabled.

**Council Updates:**

**Regional Updates Region I**-Emily stated the lack of available, affordable units continues to create a bottle-neck of housing placements. Cheryl mentioned HVJ has been busy with LD-1294 and helping with complaints to the Human Rights Commission on violations towards people who are experiencing homelessness.

**Region II**-Shortage of affordable housing and difficulties hiring staff are both ongoing concerns of the region. There has been an increase in the number of people living outside. **Region III**-Dave reported there continues to struggles with GA through the region. The lack of affordable housing units remains as a major difficulty in leasing folks.

**MSHA:** Lauren started the update by mentioning FEMA hotels will be funded through the end of 2021. However, half of the hotels will be closing with depopulations plans in place. With several referrals submitted, the EHV process is going well, although lack of units remains a substantial hurdle. The first stakeholder meeting pertaining to FUSE was held and three are more scheduled.

**Legislative Updates: Federal-**Cullen shared his screen to give a Federal update on these three items: On 8/16, (USDA) announced a 21.03% increase to SNAP beginning 10/1. The increase is due to updating the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), the average SNAP benefit–will increase by $36.24 per person, per month, or $1.19 per day. On 8/26 the Supreme Court ruled that Congress must act before another nation-wide eviction ban can be put in place. In doing so, the Supreme Court’s ruling invalidates the federal eviction moratorium, eliminating vital eviction protections that have kept millions of households stably housed. States and localities can still prevent and mitigate the harm of evictions by extending or enacting their own eviction moratoriums until Congress is able to act, which advocates hope it will as part of a recovery package. On 8/18 Senate Finance Committee Chair Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) announced the DASH Act, legislation to make a generational investment to house all people experiencing homelessness, tackle the housing affordability crisis, and expand homeownership opportunities for young people by creating a new down payment tax credit for first-time homebuyers. *Cullen motioned for a thank you letter to be sent to Senators King and Collins for their support of DASH. Scott seconded. No discussion. No objections. No one abstained. Motion carried.*

**State-** The Legislature adjourned sine die on 7/19. In January, the Legislature will reconvene for the Second Regular Session, commonly referred to as the short session. Friday, Sept. 24, marks “Cloture,” the final day Maine legislators can file new bills for the coming session. Cullen urges for all in attendance to contact their elected officials in support of bills endorsed by the Maine Homeless Policy Committee.

**The next meeting will be a retreat held on Tuesday, October 12, 2021.**