**MAINE STATEWIDE HOMELESS COUNCIL**

**March 14, 2023**

**9:30-12:30**

**Minutes**

**Attendance:** A complete list of attendees and the agencies they represent is attached.

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

**Welcome:** Shawn Yardley, SHC Chair, opened today’s meeting by welcoming everyone in attendance. *Cullen Ryan motioned to approve February’s minutes as written. Tracey Hair seconded. February’s minutes will be amended to correct the spelling of Tracey Hair’s name and to clarify under the Region II update “Margaret Cushing from MEMA was at today’s meeting” meant at the 2/14/23 SHC meeting and not the Regional II meeting. February’s minutes were unanimously approved*. A moment of silence wasobserved in honor of those who have passed away while experiencing homelessness and for those suffering living in outdoor conditions.

**Questions and Answer Session on Updates:** In response to feedback requesting the meeting format to be engagement-focused with less reporting out, Committee, Regional, CoC, Housing, Opioid Response and System updates were posted on the Maine Homeless Planning website and sent to all contacts on the SHC mailing list. 20 minutes on the agenda were dedicated to a question and answer dialogue on updates and comments on the new meeting format resulting in the following remarks:

* Space needs to be provided for people who cannot access meeting documents prior to meeting, in particular P.W.L.E. It was suggested to have people log on early, at nine, to give people time to review updates.
* In order to review specifics on Sharing Housing updates will be sent with next month’s meeting packet.
* How can people who cannot attend meetings have their voices heard? If through Regional meetings, how can this be made possible? Concerns to be brought to the SHC is a standing item on regional agendas. Anyone interested in attending Regional meetings should reach out to Regional chairs for assistance. If someone is unable to attend a regional meeting they should email matters of concern to the chairs and they will be placed on the agenda. Moving forward, Chair’s contact information will be placed on all agendas. [\*the Regional Reps that attend SHC are not necessarily Regional Chairs]

The Regional Chairs are RI-Jenny Stasio and Jim Devine

RII-Alice Preble and Giff Jamison

RIII-Tracey Hair

**Greg Payne Governor’s Senior Advisor on Housing Policy:** Greg Payne provided clarification on the current Bill in motion to address the need to house chronically homeless individuals. Applying the site based Housing First Model, the Bill aims to provide funding for 24 hour onsite services to be subsidized by a portion of the State’s Real Estate Transaction tax. DHHS will administer the funding with the stipulation any unused funding will be shifted to MSHA for the purpose of building Housing First projects. In response to concerns raised over the viability of the Housing First Model throughout the state as well as concerns with the possible splintering and loss of homeless community needs outlined in LD2, *Emily F.* *put forth a motion to draft a letter of support bulleting specifics of LD2 and recommendations on how to best frame a Housing First Model statewide. Dave M. seconded. Through discussion it was noted LD2 is a concept bill and all Legislatures have not read it therefore reinforcement of needs and definition of homeless terminology are necessary. The motion was amended to” empower the Homeless Policy Committee to draft a sign on letter of support of LD2 and recommend how best to implement Housing First funding. The committee will draft language and send to council attendees for the purpose of providing them with a sign on option that will be sent to legislature.” The members voted to approve the motion with no one against and MSHA abstaining.*

**Breakout Sessions:** Two breakout sessions were conducted during today’s council meeting. After each session the council convened and a representative from each group submitted the following recaps: **Session 1:** What do you see as your role within SHC? What do see as the role of the SHC?

* There is confusion around the difference between the MCoC and SHC and how does MaineHousing fit. Recommends that there be some sort of training about the confusion about the difference between SHC, RHC, and CoC – sometimes there is an unspoken tension in the room
* Reasons for attending/your role: Representing their agencies. It would be helpful to have an “organizational” chart that illustrates the relationship between the Regional HC, SHC, and CoC. For example: Explain that MCoC is federally mandated, but the SHC and RHC are separate. Here trying to help bridge the gap regarding communications to and from SHC & CoC. Getting feedback from the community – mostly Portland and Bangor, not as many other areas of the state.
* SHC was created so others who cared about the state vs their own region has a voice. Advocate for policy change and resources – what happens at the SHC goes into the communities & regions – for example Hubs & Built for Zero. SHC has a bigger reach and is effective to advocate for research, data collection, & policy change. More democracy at the RHCs, when you show up the first time you can participate!

Can we use some of this time to have small groups – as Hubs or Regions? Then we can report out to SHC and make direct recommendations to the Governor’s Office, Legislature, MaineHousing, etc…

* Role within SHC: Statewide system-thinking vs. just representing their agency
* Put on a strategic lens. Not limiting scope of the conversation to what’s just good for their agency. Finding the balance between representing the body as a whole but also specific populations (e.g. group agrees on something but someone speaks up and says that doesn’t work for their population – the group tries to discuss ways to address that)
* Role of SHC: Making connections, Finding out resources to bring back to agency/municipality/etc., Big picture conversations around policy
* How best to involve people who aren’t solely involved in homelessness – meeting can be a bit tough to attend if it’s not helpful to them
* Fully remote means more people – but seems to be more from the core agencies, rather than more overall
* Are there issues with people sharing when they have a dissenting opinion? Regional Homeless Councils are good for this type of conversation, as well as COC (both places where everyone has a vote, and the groups are smaller in RHC)
* The role of the SHC? To hear what is happening across the state. To advocate for policy changes/resources. The tool to get us all to the table to work on a collective voice that has leverage with representatives across the state local and rural. Advocacy to the legislature representing the collective work of all regions. A council to guide providers to get everyone on the same page. Perhaps a role could be to provide guidance to people on engaging landlords etc. and other interactions. The council has always been a strong voice in Augusta, and we are listened to. Going to Augusta and spreading the message. The SHC is strong at networking.
* Individual roles within SHC? Representing your Region/Hub

Representing City of Portland

Representing hub in the region

Role as a hub coordinator to stay informed and help inform providers at a system level.

To help facilitate data sharing to the council. Information sharing. Bridging organizations outside of the scope of homeless services with information and updates.

Gathering information to keep clients informed and share information.

Bringing historical knowledge

Bring front line perspective to the table.

Having a forum where we can advocate for best practice.

To be an exemplar for best practices – a forum where we can hear/learn best practices and a place where we can also challenge status quo.

**Session II:** Why do you attend SHC? How should the SHC arrive at decisions?

* Voting should be by official members. The agenda should have a description of what will be voted on whenever possible. Members will need time to discuss amongst their organizations how they should vote so having time to do that is important.  Breakout rooms could be used to discuss during meetings.  We discussed the importance that the voices of all are heard. Items that come up for vote during a meeting might need to wait a month. We thought that a simple majority of the official members would be sufficient.
* A question was asked about whether or not the SHC has bylaws and it is believed that SHC operates based on the Maine statute with no bylaws.
* The use of sub-committees, as we've done in the past is helpful.
* We like the breakout rooms as it allows for more discussion and conversation.
* In our break out group each shared their perspective on attending the SWHC each month.  Some attended for knowledge and others to advocate and educate from their agencies perspective.  Members in this group shared that they sort of check their agency perspective at the door and listen to the conversations to help make good decisions when it comes to that.
* We talked about how we are there to learn, share, advocate, and represent those that do not have a voice. It helps us to join the collective action.  We see how policies are being effective or non-effective.  This allows us to advocate for changes. We would enjoy an in person meeting once a year. This will help with relationship building.  Maybe in the form of a retreat. Elected officials should have a biannual meeting.  This will allow them to discuss things that are happening with the chair and voting board and make effective change. There was a recommendation to have a voting seat specifically for someone that has lived experience. They can provide a different perspective. Voting members should be the ones to vote.  A simple majority would work.  There are times that an idea may get watered down trying to get everyone on board. However, it is the responsibility of the nonvoting members to share their opinions/facts about the topic so there is a more informed vote.  Maybe also do a poll of the group to see how nonvoting members might be feeling.  To see if there are other solutions or a middle ground. Ask the group to come with questions with the expectation set that documents being sent out prior to the meeting will not be reviewed during the meeting.  This will free up time for other things to be discussed.
* Voting Standard: If you vote no-you need to identify why and come to the table with options or solutions. If you agree with what is being voted on at least to 80% it would be a yes. If you cannot come to an agreement you would abstain
* Miss being in person. The SHC helps with information dissemination. It helps agencies understand the direction we are moving and also hear experiences from other areas in the state – especially a useful bridge for rural areas.

The advocacy is helpful to form tangible actions. It is time well spent and it helps to be fully informed as organizations and advocates. I leave the meetings feeling really great when I see the people at the table. Feeling like a team rather than isolated

Orientation would be helpful and find value from the regional reports around the state.

The breakout concept is popular. Love the opportunity to meet in person however being mindful of how that impacts attendance.

* Don’t see self-representing agency, but rather experience and connections with other agencies   see self as advocating for all experiencing homelessness. Similarly , not agency, but also representing region as each region has specific needs, making sure those voices are heard, making sure whatever advocacy is done supports the region
* Role of the SHC- Provide a higher level on state wide needs and regional when specific needs are met, Representation of hub, and getting info from hub and support state wide efforts. Representing specific population served, especially with long time service.

Regional rep – advocate for what is best for region as well as what is best for state

Came to meeting based on effort to address discrimination against the homeless and gather resources, disseminate information, not serve any particular group

* Primary responsibility of SHC is to inform state government.  Synthesize that into policy recommendations and to step back and see how system is doing. Hubs and RHC and SHC are good places for this assessment to happen.  Having a Systems level view and change is important.
* Question who makes the agenda, what is the process going forward? No one in group knew the answer.
* Group summary: all come to listen, stay informed, and bring the conversation back to their agencies
* SHC needs to consider whether regular attendees should be able to attend and the Voting Membership can take care of the messaging and detailed votes. Votes don’t need to be unanimous to know that we understand each other. Is there a way to vote – is there a way to model the SHC after the CoC (i.e. 50% attendance, 1 vote per agency, consensus but not unanimous)

Would like have clarity of who is here from the voting body (i.e. DOC, DHHS, etc…) Voting has seemed confusing – need to have collective understanding so everyone comes to the table knowing how they are empowered, if someone has a voice they know how to influence others

Voting – would lean towards a consensus model. Voting mechanism – straw polls of those in attendance and then the voting body can vote based on the opinions of the constituency.

**Meeting Topics for April:**

* **Growth in Asylee Population:**

Portland is facing a growing crisis with the Oxford Street Shelter filling quickly with asylum seeker single adult population displacing the traditional homeless populations which amount to 1700-2200 unduplicated people each year.  By having this facility largely filled or filled entirely with asylum seekers who cannot work for 8-12 months, as much as a quarter of our traditional homeless population in Maine is being displaced which is adding to the growth of encampments in the Portland area. This is an emerging and growing crisis that will affect the entire homeless system. In order to gain a better understanding of the plight of New Mainers, comprehend how subpopulations are defined and how to develop a comprehensive response it was suggested a representative from Catholic Charities should be invited to a council meeting.

* **Changes in Section 13**

This is a concern discussed at the MSN committee. The changes to Section 13 of Targeted Case Management are having large fiscal impacts on shelters. Section 13 case management can now only continue for 90 days after someone becomes housed. The 90 day time span is an insufficient amount of time to carry people into successful housing. This is a delicate time in a person’s life and having intensive ongoing support is crucial to success. It was noted, the option to utilize Section 17 is a huge leap with too many clinical hurdles. It was suggested before making a response statement, people from MaineCare/OBH should be invited to attend the next SHC meeting.

* **Remaining Households in hotels with ERA funds.**

Hotel Funding will be ending on April 30th:

Mary Cook shared that The Opportunity Alliance’s ERA program has 85 adults and 33 children in hotels and that these households do not represent New Mainers.  TOA saw an increase of folks seeking shelter due to the pandemic, the rise of rents and evictions.  These households will all be displaced on April 30th. Prosperity Maine also has households in hotels with ERA that will be impacted and this is just in Cumberland County. There are households across Maine still in hotels with ERA funds.

* Conversations on what is working.

All were invited to email Shawn with any comments, concerns or suggestions for future agenda topics.

**The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 11, 2023.**