Region II Homeless Council

March 11, 2022

Those present: Giff Jamison, Tedford Housing; Cullen Ryan, CHOM; Alice Preble, DHHS/OCFS; Janice Daku, RCAM; Hannah Harter-Ives, New Hope Midcoast; Michelle B, SafeVoices; Jeff Tardif, City of Auburn, GA; Mike Roy, Preble Street; Heather Dyer, MaineHouisng; Tracy Alen, KBH; Donna Kelley, WCAP; Lacey Donle, EAIME; Kobi Perry, WMCA; Katie White, Mid Maine Homeless Shelter and Services

Alice made a motion to approve the minutes from the February meeting, Cullen seconded, and motion passed.

Cullen provided State and Federal updates. These will be sent out with the meeting minutes for March. Some of the items Cullen did share.

* FEMA hotels are extended to July 1, 2022
* THUD looks good
* Built Back Better Act doesn’t look good
* Housing for All is with the Senate, this boosts the Housing Trust Fund
* There is a bill to change the time asylum seekers need to be living in Maine before they can work from 365 days to 30 days.
* LD1995 contains all the supplemental budgets

Cullen also provided a Statewide Homeless Council update of things discussed at the last meeting:

* Coordinated Entry, the group is incorporating the feedback collected into the process
* Emergency Housing Vouchers- 40% have been used to lease up Statewide and the remaining are still looking for housing or waiting to move in
* Hubs, work is being done to onboard coordinators
* He discussed regional updates
* There is conversation in Lewiston about opening a low barrier shelter
* There was also a conversation about leadership moving forward for Statewide Homeless Council. There has been conversation about a co-chair, specifically someone with lived experience in homelessness.

Some of the items that were shared from the regional homeless council updates were

* 165 were reported unsheltered in Bangor
* In Lewiston, there are conversations happening about a low barrier shelter
* The quarantine and overflow hotels in Scarborough and Portland will be closing.
* There were 400 unique individuals seen at the Bangor Area Homeless Shelter warming center, which has closed for the winter.
* The HOME ARP money should be on the street by 3/15
* In the next month and a half there will be 300-400 of the initial ARP leased individuals displaced as their time will be expired.

Dr. Lisa Letourneau came for part of the meeting. She shared that she is cautiously optimistic about the virus and that all 16 counties in the state right now are at medium risk level.

Maine CoC, the outflow system is slow and there is work being done to enter everyone in HMIS. The PIT information will be out soon

Topics to bring forward to the Statewide Homeless Council:

1. GA Uniformity
2. Evictions of the aging/elderly population
3. People who are over income for help are struggling to get housed
4. Lack of affordable housing
5. Hotels requiring credit card on file and/or security deposit for people to stay
6. Lack of case management and support services in some area.

The past topic of people having vouchers and hotels not accepting those vouchers anymore was brought up again. Cullen encouraged folks to bring denials to hotels to Pine Tree Legal. Giff also shared that anecdotally, motel owners get a few people in hotels without a lot of services and in some instances, it has resulted in damage to the rooms. People do much better when followed by the organization that places them there.

Training updates: April 8, 2022 from 9-11 there will be training titled, Learning from People with lived experience about equity and service provision. The resource committee did not meet last month due to a PIT review meeting and they will be meeting today.

Agency Updates:

Heather- Volunteered to take minutes next month as Alice will not be at the meeting. MaineHousing has some Coffee Talk sessions coming up on 3/17, 3/21, and 3/30. The last session will be April 6 and will be an open discussion. The three things that will be discussed are data quality, chronic fields, and housing move in date as well as ARP updates.

Jeff shared he has been busy connecting people with the ERA program. They are caught up on ERA now. GA in Auburn is going well. It is difficult for all GA offices to do things all the same. There is a lack of case managers in the Auburn area. The shelter system is hard to get folks into, if you miss 1 night you cannot come back in for a whole year.

Lacey-She shared that she tends to get a different response at each housing authority when she is looking for information. She also asked who the lead agencies are for the hub coordinators. Alice shared that information as well as agreed to forward the press release with the minutes of today’s meeting.

Kobi- shared there was a zoning board meeting in Farmington last night and it went really well. She walked away with almost all of the recommendations agreed to. She said it was a very collaborative meeting.

Donna shared that Waldo County CAP is working on a homeless model. They have no shelter in Waldo County and there is a group working on a model to support and partner with Knox County.

Mike had no updates for Preble Street. He said he is always looking to support veterans experiencing homelessness. He agrees that the housing market is not good and that people with vouchers have been trying to find housing for months. He shared also that for folks on the registry, it is extremely hard to find housing. He also shared that it can be difficult as case management agencies have a 3-strike protocol for people who miss appointments. Preble Street tries for 90 days before they have to close. During this conversation, Alice shared that with the Mainecare IAP program, that was last in rulemaking, that 3 strike protocol will not exist. This prompted a discussion around the need for an interface between DHHS funded services and case management programs and the need for a system where shelters say they can provide services around housing and the need for trauma informed support and services.

Katie-shared that MMHC winter warming center will remain open until 3/31. They have averaged 10 people a night. They have a great partnership with the City of Waterville. They will have 200 unique individuals support at the warming center by the time it closes. The FEMA shelter in Augusta is up and running and they have had a lot of success and will continue taking referrals until the end of the month. They will have to close to new intakes after April 1. They are targeting the older population with health challenges and families. Katie also shared that with their work, they have seen folks staying in the hotel for 115 days and the shelter for 57 days, average stays. She also shared information about a new state law that was in effect on 3/1/22. Related to calls regarding people experiencing homelessness, the first offense is to b a referral to crisis/services.

Hannah shared that New Hope has received their NOFA funding and have housed 11 additional families. The are using a scattered site model to include Vinelhaven. They have housed 4 and have some still waiting. They do have a wait list presently.

Michelle- SafeVoices presently has 2 open positions: Housing Navigator and Shelter case manager. They have done interviews and want to ensure the right fit for the program. They have a change in their policy where they now can shelter males in the actual shelter building. They have a focus on inclusivity.

Janice had no specific updates. They are looking to hire a part time person to be HMIS certified to help with those tasks. They are in the process of cleaning a unit in the senior shelter for occupancy. They had flooding due to the sprinkler system being set off.

Tracy shared that KBH has partnered with Rumford Group Homes and they will now be covering the PATH program in Franklin and Oxford Counties in limited capacity. She shared that the Augusta GA office is amazing and that they think outside of the box. The City of Augusta has pulled service providers together and they have been meeting a lot. They are looking at a warming center for next year.

Alice shared that she is presently working on new contracts for the YHCoC as a result of the RFP process.

Giff shared that Tedford has an opening for a full time Homeless Prevention and Outreach Case Manager and a part time per diem Shelter Attendant.

The next meeting will be Friday April 8, 2022 from 11am-noon.