**MAINE STATEWIDE HOMELESS COUNCIL**

**April 11, 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. *Tracey Hair motioned to approve March’s minutes as written. Cheryl Harkins seconded. March’s minutes will be amended to clarify that the Letter of Support covers not just Housing First but all initiatives supported by the SHC. March’s minutes were unanimously approved* *as amended*. A moment of silence wasobserved in honor of those who have passed away while experiencing homelessness and for those suffering living in outdoor conditions.

**Recap of March’s Breakout Sessions:**

During today’s recap it was noted there is generally a good understanding of the roles and purpose of the SHC however further clarification on the voting process will need to be continued in future meetings.

**System Redesign:**

With Community Solutions 2 year contract coming to an end in June 2023, Erin Healy attended today’s meeting to both update the SHC on the status of Maine’s System Redesign and provide a frame work for future system wide improvement. Maine is the second state to adopt Built for Zero. The State team, comprised mostly of people active in the SHC, launched its 1st Action Cycle in June 2022 with the aims of reaching quality data statewide, streamlining access to housing, addressing racial disproportionality and accessing Medicaid services and support. In order to create local pathways to a Statewide approach, the nine Hub Coordinators assist as direct resources in empowering communities to build local, multi-agency homelessness reduction systems, rooted in shared, real-time, population-level data. At this point of the System Redesign conversation, Shawn, introduced the concept of migrating the SST work to Statewide Homeless Council, starting July 2023, as a means of moving forward to actively reach the following goals:

By June 30, 2026 (4 years): Reach Functional Zero statewide for chronic homelessness, Reduce homelessness for all single adults by 25% which must include significant reduction in Greater Portland

By June 30, 2025 (3 years): Reach Functional Zero statewide for Veterans

By June 30, 2024 (2 years): Reach quality data statewide for youth and families (building path to FZ)

By June 30, 2023: X of 9 Hubs are at Quality Data

In order to gain fruitful feedback from all attendees on morphing the SST Action Team into a SHC Action Team, the meeting took on a break out session format to answer these questions:

What do you like about this idea? What are your concerns about this idea? What questions do you have? What tweaks would you make to the proposed idea? Any alternative ideas? How else might we design a transition process that: ○ Sustains the momentum of the SST action teams and goals, aligns best with SHC form and function and is complementary to SHC’s policy and advocacy mission.

During today’s first break out session the following feedback was provided:

* Overlap makes sense.
* It provides an action-based group feeling.
* What are we ﬁxing?
* What are the challenges already?
* How would the differences play out?
* Would it be the same people?
* What would be the governance structure outlining and defining the process?
* Where do the RHCs fit into this? They are basically the arrow between the Hubs and the SHC – they are not going away.
* Communication is critical with so many stakeholders operating at so many levels, we need to make that happen without everyone having to go to every meeting.
* Bringing the SST work into the SHC is a good way to keep everyone informed but we need to stay focused on action, not updates.
* Everyone needs to take ownership of the outcomes, from communities, to agencies, to individuals, everyone has stake in this.
* The re-design has set all these changes in motion, how do we keep it going? And keep it evolving not just maintaining a new status quo?
* Need to remind people that the work they do every day is part of the ‘system’ and if the system is changing, they may need to change something too.
* We have lots of new people participating at SHC. They bring new ideas, new perspectives, new energy and we need to encourage that not bore them or silence them.
* We need to recognize different Hubs have different needs, resources, concerns and there is no one simple solution that will work everywhere for everyone.
* It would be helpful to hear from current committee members on the workload.
* Are there other committees already in place that would fit? Such as the COC Lived Experience committee.
* Streamlined efficiency/meetings needed, with Information flow in both directions: state policy & communication to Hubs
* Re meetings, Agenda with targeted reports by Hubs (may include: Pilots/ Ideas Successes/Barriers/Strategies/State Policy feedback/Needs)
* Hubs share regional info with liaison
* Advocacy work at local level/Planning Boards to implement state's initiatives in communities.
* The focus on actions / goals / measurable data is appropriate.
* SHC may not be the body to add leadership liaison with state and Hubs. It's a small all-volunteer staff who are politically appointed, as opposed to paid DHHS.
* What is CS / Build40 ongoing role
* It puts us all on the same page, we are all working toward the same endgame, eliminates overlap (de-duplicate), lifts up the voices of frontline staff who have a different interaction with system, keeps the work moving forward and not stop, many of the same people are members of the Statewide Strategy Team and SHC, moves things into action start solving problems, provides structure to SHC – becomes less of a “report out” meeting and there is a history of a lot of time spent in meetings with little action as an outcome - excited to have a greater focus on action
* How will we keep this [SST work]going without staffing support (in place of CS [Erin, Sandy]
* Things to Consider
* keeping track of the work plan
* How do HUB coordinators fit into this?
* Does MaineHousing have the capacity to provide this staffing?
* Meeting facilitation
* Action Team meetings
* Need to make sure we keep the voices of frontline workers in the forefront; they are experts on the system (what is working and what is not
* We need to make sure we can keep a nimble/responsive approach – and somehow protect the Action lane work from getting too formalized or bogged down in process.
* The work of the state strategy team does align with the SHC mission, but had many questions and some concerns.  How does communication work so that we are sure the issues on the ground are making their way up to the SHC to inform the state strategy work?  What happens with the information that is shared - what power does the SHC have to make decisions on resource allocation, system change, etc.? The SST is currently small - will it be more difficult to do the work with a much larger group?  One alternative idea is for the SST to still exist, with more communication with SHC and involve more folks in the action teams.
* Currently a small group, will it be more difficult to have a large group? Could the Statewide Team remain intact and report back to the SHC? Or add additional action teams to include more voices from the SHC?
* Moves towards SHC being more action focused and collaborative with needs at the local level

**Differences between SHC and MCoC:** Donna Alger delivered a presentation to the Council explaining the differences between the SHC and MCoC. To help clarify the dissimilarities she started with the mission of each entity: The MCoC: Was established by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The mission of the Maine Continuum of Care (“MCoC”) is to plan and coordinate an inclusive system that helps Maine people avoid or exit quickly from homelessness, and to address the underlying causes of homelessness. The SHC: Is mandated by State of Maine to make recommendations on homeless matters to the Governor, the Legislature, MaineHousing (MSHA), Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), Department of Corrections (DOC) & Maine Bureau of Veterans Services (MBVS). Its mission is to provide leadership to end homelessness and provide support to the three Regional Homeless Councils, educate people on homeless issues, serve as a coordinator of information, assess statewide needs, identify potential resources and improve access to them and to review, monitor and implement plans to end homelessness in Maine. The MCoC connection to the Statewide Homeless Council was explained as follows: The MCoC participates in planning activities supporting Maine’s Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness in concert with: 1. The MCoC Board 2. The Statewide Homeless Council 3. The Regional Homeless Councils 4. Local groups, alliances, and coalitions.

AND at least one member of Statewide Homeless Council is a member of the MCoC Board. The details of governance, membership and committees of the continuum and council as outlined today can be found directly on Donna’s presentation that was sent to all on the SHC mailing list and posted on the Maine Homeless Planning website.

**Breakout Sessions and Group Discussion: What’s working well what needs to change?** In connection with last month’s conversation on how best to format SHC meetings and what is working and what needs to change, attendees were given the opportunity to voice their opinions in break out rooms. After 30 minutes, the meeting convened and these concerns, questions and comments were shared:

* Sharing information ahead of the meetings is good, but there also needs to be opportunities for people to bring things up for discussion during the meetings.
* Not everyone is going to read everything ahead of time, and just sharing it in writing is not the same as discussing it and getting feedback.
* Some people may only attend SHC or MCOC and may only hear things at those meetings but anyone who attends both, and an RHC, hears it several times.
* There needs to be a balance – a way to make sure everyone hears it/reads it/ has a chance to comment – without just repeating the conversation over and over.
* Regional updates are often too brief and too repetitive – and do not usually go into anything very specific – but even within Regions there can be very different issues.

For example, Region 1 is the smallest, geographically, only two counties – but the differences between what’s happening in Portland and in rural York Co are huge.

* There should be short meeting with just the Regional Reps and other Members to go into more detail on local/specific issues that get lost at the bigger SHC meeting level.
* The Hubs work at a very local level, though even within Hubs there can be very different challenges from one area to another.
* All that needs to be brought to the RHCs, then to SHC – maybe a good use of Break Outs, they can brainstorm, then bring any bigger/tougher questions back to the full group.
* Small breakout rooms allow for more voices to be heard and more people to participate.
* This is what is not working: Lack of communication/follow-up. For example last month we discussed voting and it was not addressed again.
* Language breakdowns. Limit acronyms- remember not everyone has the same history within the system.
* The chat in zoom does not carry over into break out rooms or from breakout rooms.
* Explain things a bit more before breakout rooms. For example no one in our room knew what +Delta is (Even after the meeting I still do not know!)
* Assign a designated facilitator who has a seat on the SHC to each breakout group to help bring information forward and facilitate discussions.
* Include a list or purpose/goals for the agenda items so we are aware of what needs to be happening.
* Be able to get slides before the meetings to prepare/digest.
* Welcome packet for new members and a yearly update packet for other folks to include SHC membership/policies/info from Donna’s slides, etc.
* The group suggested that the regional updates are important – could they be folded back into the meetings?
* Written materials can provide barriers to people more accustomed to oral communication.
* Digital access to written material can be a barrier to people experiencing homelessness.
* How information is gathered and protected needs to change.
* The restructuring is a value add however not leaving space for regional reports is a value loss.
* Record Regional report outs. Incorporate breakout rooms at each meeting for regional report outs.
* Using SHC as a way for agencies to work together and collaborate (e.g. improve understanding between urban and rural areas, particularly how to support rural people where they are, instead of having to come in to a Service Center)
* Better combine SHC/RHC/Hubs and sharing of information, so that people know which meeting is best for them to attend
* If we continue to have breakout sessions: What will be discussed? What happens with the conversations? Identify action items and who they’re assigned to, report back at next meeting
* Meetings too long
* Potentially have a chance to submit questions/things to discuss in advance, then use those as topics for breakout sessions
* Lean towards more action items and less updates
* More communication is needed to community at large, explore creating a utube channel and a face book page
* Acronyms need to be explained
* A separate time should be set aside for new members to be orientated and made to feel welcome. Maybe start ½ earlier for new comers.
* Time should be given for MSHA to provide verbal information and up
* New comers should be encouraged to attend Regional Meetings to learn better on how the Council operates

**Open Discussion:**

Today’s meeting ended with a 30 minute allotment for burning issues, announcements and questions on updates.

* Rich announced there is a public hearing this coming Friday on LD266, which addresses funding for affordable housing. Anyone needing more information or sound bites in support of LD266 can contact Rich at: rich.hookswayman@voanne.org
* Datsy announced the City of Auburn is holding a housing and employment symposium on June 8th from 2-7:00 pm at Festival Plaza. For more information contact her at: daponte@auburnmaine.gov
* Donna volunteered to provide new comers with a half hour introduction to Maine’s Homeless Response System.
* The SHC should focus on broad policy issues for example; as the number of shelter beds increase there needs to be continued increases in funding.

**The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 9, 2023.**