**MAINE STATEWIDE HOMELESS COUNCIL**

**May 9, 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 April’s minutes as written. Emily Flinksrom seconded. April’s minutes were unanimously approved* *as written.* 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 Hub Breakout Session and Discussion:**

The first half hour of this month’s meeting was allocated to dividing the meeting into 9 Hub Breakout rooms for the purpose of conversing issues within Hubs, common themes, unique themes and statewide concerns. Upon convening, the following recaps were shared:

* **Hub 1**: Abigail Smallwood
* York County is starting to see increased numbers of asylum seekers (over 100 arrived in Sanford in less than a week)
* Need an organized response to homelessness and asylum seekers – right now, they compete for resources even though each population needs different things
* Improve communication between various partners (local, regional, and state), and out to the public
* Don’t have enough emergency shelter or affordable housing to genuinely address homelessness
* Discussed atypical solutions – e.g. tiny homes, pallet housing, etc.
* **Hub 2:**Nakesha Warren-Colby
* Encampments-Growing
* Unsheltered Population-How are we going to support the disturbance and get those people added into C.E.?
  + There are a growing number of families that are situationally homeless and could utilize diversion support
  + Asylum Seekers-They want to work but the laws make it difficult for them to get the permits that would allow them to. Housing is difficult, even though they can get vouchers for housing, finding housing that will accept someone is a struggle.
  + Lack of resources-Participates request supports like a case worker or substance abuse and the known available options are few.
  + Lack of Affordable Housing-The housing price continue to rise, and the amount of money covered in the vouchers remains the same. A lot of landlords are changing their requirements to avoid having to rent to lower income individuals. For example the need to have an income of 3-4 times the amount of the rent.
* **Hub 3:**Amy Holland
* There is an increase of asylum seekers and refugees to the Midcoast and the area is not feeling equipped with the resources needed to address this new population of people.
* There is a high probability of an increase in people experiencing unsheltered homelessness this summer.
* Are seeing an increase in substance use in the community and shelters trying to find capacity for harm reduction training and services.
* **Hub 4:** Julia Kimball
* Group focused on the strengths within the community of a strong collaborative nature among programs. Especially in the outreach community.
* A unique community barrier is the lack of a low barrier singles shelter in the county.
* There is a shortage of affordable housing.
* **Hub 5:** Emily Meade
* Basically things are going well in the hub. No big issues to address besides the usual lack of resources (housing, shelter beds, etc.).
* It was brought up that there is some confusion around the housing problem solving program. They talked about wanting more clarification on spending the dollars, and specific shorter trainings that they can send their staff to that are skill based as opposed to topic based.
* Members also said they enjoy having a hub coordinator as it helps bring clarity and unity to their hub and thanked their hub coordinator for being clear and responsive.
* **Hub 6**: Nicole Frydrych
* Lack of affordable housing and need for creative ways to house people
* Outreach workers have it hard due to lack of resources available.
* Rental Cap needed people with fixed incomes can’t afford FMRs.
* Discussed encampments and how to assist, for example trash removal
* **Hub 7**: Jenifer Weatherbee
* Lack of affordable housing.
* Large Encampments closures.
* Outreach teams and providers/boots on the ground worked to find placement (Permanent housing, shelter, transitional) for folks on Kenduskeag Ave.  They are starting next week on apartment 2 (Corporate Drive)
* Some of the discussions were around some of the press around it, new encampments popping up. We discussed in the group some of the reasoning for new encampments- numbers increasing in the summertime, and that this is a complicated issue.
* Nimbyism
* Data Quality- how HUB;s are working on getting quality data and are unable to provide a reliable number of folks experiencing homelessness.  We discussed how the process works, how we have been spent the last few months identifying folks and are now looking at the data collected and determining whether it is reliable.  We discussed the benefits of having a by name list and being able to track the progress of folks housed and in encampments.  We discussed how PIT is the number that we are using at this time.
* **Hub 8:** Jace Farris
* Looked at the question as what is structurally working/not working with the hub system. Hub 8 is great so we did not see anything structurally wrong.
* We have a good correspondence group.
* Norm shared that they (Shalom) has figured out how to allow HMIS users into Case Conferencing, however there currently is no work around for Domestic Violence centers. There was discussion on coordinated entry and how we are just beginning to pilot so there is no data or information about that.
* Hub 8 is experiencing lack of affordable housing and lack of Supportive housing. We have found there have been a lot of high needs mental health and medical concerns coming through our homeless response systems.
* **Hub 9:** Mike Shaughnessy(reporting due to lack of HC)
* How to best gather and report data
* Importance of functional byname list-how is it formed and reported?
* Shortage f affordable housing
* Applicable lessons learned in Bangor with HUD’s TA had how to apply them to alleviating unsheltered throughout the Hub
* Need for change of mind set and need to seek new solutions

**Intersection of SHC Regional Councils and Hubs:**

The rest of today’s meeting consisted of a robust conversion on the current state of the SHC, Regional Councils and Hubs. The following comments, clarifications and concerns were voiced:

* Hubs and SHC are complimentary but distinct. The structure of the Hubs provide the right forum to do work on the ground and collect quality data in real time to use for allocating resources with a laser focus. The SHC was designed to provide strategic planning and policy expertise to the state legislature.
* How can it be communicated to the general public to attend all meetings? It was clarified that SHC meets monthly with state wide participants is open to the general public. The Hub meetings are practitioner level meetings and are not open to the public. The best place for the public to attend at local levels are the three regional meetings.
* Its great 60 plus people attend meetings, how can we best speak with one voice, it is confusing for the legislature when they receive a variety of opinions.
* Hubs are not as narrow as being about the by name list and Coordinated Entry.
* Information at the local level and statewide level are necessary to show what we can do to advocate as a state as well to include both rural and urban areas making Hub discussions important at the SHC meetings.
* The roles of the SHC and the Hubs needs to be clearly defined and explained.
* Regional councils captures the local granular voice. Hubs fold into the regional agendas.
* Concerned over the lack of accomplishments over the last three months and sees duplicating work of the Hubs and regions at the SHC problematic.
* Regional challenges need to be discussed at every meeting.
* Worried about how the new roll out was made without the voice of members.
* Confused about what has changed.
* The power structure did not give a voice to everyone.
* There is not enough report out time in meetings.
* An org chart is needed to visually show HUBS/Regional and SHC how they fit together and how the work trickles down to the boots on the ground.
* What is the transition? *The coordination and consolidation of the State Team’s Built for Zero work with the SHC. It is combining the work not replacing the work.*
* Was not aware of the direction al change and consolidation, when did this happen? *It was discussed at the April meeting.*
* April’s meeting was a feedback meeting not a decisional meeting. The voting members did not vote on it.
* SHC is an advisory council, advisory councils shouldn’t be directed.
* As a member, I feel deflated.
* Worried that in an effort to change tract by changing the process of meetings was discussed as a format change and not a decision by the group.
* Breakout sessions loses the voices of colleagues and waters down the big vision picture.
* I’m appreciative of those who speak at meetings and I process what is said and am not always ready to give feedback. I don’t feel comfortable speaking and have left the meeting twice because I felt forced to speak.
* As someone with lived experience, I don’t always feel comfortable speaking.
* Clarifying goals of meeting and information seeking will give people a reason to share.
* People who attend are advocates and people we are serving depend on us. The people who are not sitting in our seats depend on us to have their voices heard.
* Recommend using the CoC and Coc Board structure. A retreat is needed. Everyone in the room is a leader.
* Homeless Policy Committee updates should be shared during meetings.
* Regional meetings are on the ground level. They are an integral part of the SHC structure.
* Breakouts bring more voices to the table but how can SHC members participate equitably in each group?
* Council needs to start thinking outside the box and set goals.
* It’s imperfect and there is room for growth.
* Council has been speaking existentially over the last three months and have not voted on anything and have made no policy recommendations. Last year a six month strategic plan was created which led the ground work for LD3, RRH and Diversion and a sub-committee was formed to address the encampment crisis.
* It’s the structural thing that needs to be addressed. Regional Council recommendations are important in every meeting. A process is needed to structurally set the meeting making it a balance between discussions and updates.
* Need to figure out a way to raise awareness, combat NIMBY and have input from the local level.
* Want to leave meetings not just hearing updates put with plans of action.
* Thankful for the SHC during the pandemic. People came to the SHC starved for information during a constantly changing crisis. We need to praise what we did and now we are in transition and need to take a moment to regroup and decide where to go from here.
* Homeless crisis in state is 40 years in the making and can’t be solved quickly which is where the policy committee comes in.
* SHC has no staffing or funding, and exists without a lobbyists in Augusta to report back where advocacy is needed.
* A balance is needed between update and action discussions. The 9 appointed members and chair should go into an executive session to look at the process of what has happened previously, what does the council need to do connected to the mandate of the council and if the mandate of purpose needs to be updated then it should be brought to legislature.
* Leaving the meeting very confused and unsettled about the direction of the SHC.
* The SHC is an advisory council and independent. There was not a vote on joining with MHSA instead of being an independent council. *The system redesign came through advisement of CSH and continues with Community Solutions and not an MSHA initiative.*
* As a regional chair, and small sized provider, would like the meetings to be informative with think regional council’s reporting key issues is effective.
* In the storming phase of norming that will move us toward preforming.
* The amount of feedback today is reflective of the commitment of all present.

**Meeting ended with the following two action steps:**

1. Shawn will attend as many Regional Meetings as possible
2. An executive session will be scheduled before June’s meeting to process today’s conversation and plan next steps. The nine appointed members, regional chairs and Shawn will be invited