# **Approval of Minutes and Moment of Silence:** Vickey welcomed everyone to today’s meeting. MCOC Minutes from the May meeting were posted on the Maine Homeless Planning website. *Laura B. motioned to approve minutes as written. Rich R. seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved as written.* A moment of silence to honor the passing of people experiencing homelessness was observed.

Disclaimer: These notes are not intended to represent direct quotes, things may not be in chronological order, and ideas may not always be accurately attributed. If you have corrections or comments, please email [blabua@mainehousing.org](mailto:blabua@mainehousing.org) to let Betty know and she will edit accordingly.

**Attending via GoToMeeting:** Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing), Jerry Botta (HOME Inc.), Donna Kelley (Waldo CAP), Donna Alger (BFAH), Jace Farris (Hub 8), Kate Easter (MCEDV), Matthew Wyman (YAB), Bill Higgins (HA4A), Ray Michaud (Vet Inc.), Aaron Geyer (CoP), Norm Maze (Shalom), Kari Bradstreet (HSA), Noelle Coyne(Safe Voices), Tracy Allen (KBH), Tara Hembree(MSHA), Rich Romero(OHI), Ginny Dill (DHHS), Sarah Kasun (CHCS Rental Services), Tony Giarratano (Shalom House), Keely LeBlanc (H&JP), Erin Kelly (Preble Street), David McCluskey (Community Care), Rebekah Paredes (NHMC), Marcie Dean (Next Step), Joe Locke (MSHA), Elaine Grade (KCHC), Nicole Frydrych (Hub 6), Melissa McEntee (RGH), Susan Giambalvo (CU), Jennifer Weatherbee (Hub7), Julia Kimball (Hub 4), Vickey Merrill (CHOM), Melody Fitch (FVP), Abigail Smallwood (Hub 1), Awa Conteh (CoB), Mike Merrill (VOA), Nickie Cohen (CHCS), Emily Meade (Hub 5), Laura Briggs (BOL), Mike Shaughnessy (MSHA), Dan Hodgkins (Preble Street), Nickie Cohen (CHCS), Sara Wade (DHHS), Betty LaBua (MMHS), Ken Capron (Hope Harbor), Dianne Small (Sanford Housing), Nakesha Warren Colbry (Hub 2), Theresa Dow (ACAP), Ann Martin (HUD), Janice Daku (RCAM), Danielle Triffitt (Tedford Housing), Katie Spencer White (MMHS), Johnnie Walker (Partners for Peace), Boyd Kronholm (BAHS), Mike Tuller (BFAH), Amy Holland (Hub 3), Tom Michaud (Milbrige Harbor Apts.), Kobi Perry (WMCA), Kelly Watson (MSHA), Cheryl Harkins (HVJ), Victoria Morales (QHI), Melissa Tabak (QHI), Sarah Derosier (CHCS), Ayn Hanselmann (Sanford City Councilor), Karessa Grenier (Hope and Justice Project), Jennifer Needham (New Beginnings) and Sara Denson (DHHS)

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and

Stephonie Gregg (YCSPI) and Kari Bradstreet (FVP).

[Reminder – If you call in, please email [blabua@mainehousing.org](mailto:blabua@mainehousing.org) to let us know you were there!]

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**Maine**

**Continuum of Care**

**Meeting Minutes: Maine CoC**

**Date: June 15, 2023, 1:00 – 3:00 PM**

**Location: Zoom**

1. **Big Thinking Topic:**

* **Overview of General Assistance (GA):**

Sara Denson, GA Program Manager, Office for Family Independence, DHHS, attended today’s meeting to provide both an overview of General Assistance and to answer any questions attendees have. First, Sharon shared how each town, city and territory in Maine are required to have a GA program available to support individuals in need. All GA applicants are required to provide information necessary to determine eligibility. Basic needs include but are not limited to: rent/mortgage, food, personal/household supplies/utilities/medication and non-prescription medications. Specific application guidelines and an explanation of eligibilities were spelled out and will be posted on the Maine Homeless Planning website. The following questions were submitted and answered:

Q: Will GA help pay for specialty baby formula? I know about WIC but just curious if GA will pay for emergent need A: GA can assist with formula but may require client to check w/ WIC or other local agencies 1rst.

Q: Is it possible to get the reference sheet for individual areas/towns if you don't work for the town? A: Reference sheets are made for municipal administrators but are also posted by the Maine Welfare Directors on their website at [www.mainewelfaredirectors.org](http://www.mainewelfaredirectors.org). Otherwise, the Department posts copies of the GA Rules, Statute, Ordinance and Appendices on it’s website at <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ofi/programs-services/general-assistance>

Q: What is standard for determining false misrepresentation? I could picture a "feeling" the person may have to not believe the person. Can you appeal? A: Clients can always appeal a decision. Each decision sheet has directions for clients to request a fair hearing within 5 days of receipt of their decision. Municipalities must have evidence to justify a disqualification for false representation. They cannot disqualify on a feeling.

Q: Is the GA hotline available 24/7? A: The GA hotline is only available during regular business hours Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm.

Q: How are income limits set to qualify for GA? A: GA maximums are based on county/metropolitan area. An applicant who has income will be expected to use that income for basic necessities. Income will reduce the amount of assistance a person can receive. For example, a person with a $1,000 maximum who also has $100 in income will only be eligible to receive the remainder of $900 in assistance.

Q: What about towns that say GA funds are expended? A: Budgeting for GA is incredibly difficult on municipalities. They must give their best “guestimate” for the following year’s budget numbers with only the previous years’ expenditures to go by. Numbers are due for the next tax year before changes from legislation and annual maximums come into effect each year. Some towns may not budget enough for certain categories of assistance through GA. We appreciate the technicality and struggle towns have in creating a budget for GA, however state law requires that towns assist all eligible applicants for assistance, even if the municipality has exceeded their GA budget. The state also reimburses for 70% of all assistance issued.

Q: Is there a place we could reference a list of what GA will assist with payment of? If so, is this the same for every City/Town? A: There is not a comprehensive list, but the rules, statute and ordinance summarize the types of items that are considered basic necessities. For instance, the GA Ordinance (available to view on the DHHS website) states:

Basic Necessities. Food, clothing, shelter, fuel, electricity, potable water, non-elective essential medical services as prescribed by a physician, nonprescription drugs, basic telephone service where it is necessary for medical or work-related reasons, property taxes when a tax lien placed on the property threatens the loss of the applicant’s place of residence, and any other commodity or service determined essential by the municipality.

Q: Will GA help a single person who is homeless and only source of income is SSI which is 914/month? A: It depends on the municipality the person is living in and whether they have received assistance previously. The maximum allowances vary depending on community.

For example, the 1 person maximum in Bangor is $816, but the 1 person maximum in Waldo County is $970. This means that a person in Bangor would be “over income” by $98, but a person in Belfast might be eligible for $56 ($970 max-$914 income).

Additionally, when someone is a repeat applicant, they are required to document how their money was spent in the 30 days prior to application. If someone received $914 from SSI and had $900 in receipts, but was missing the remaining $14 in receipts, the individual would only be eligible for $42 in assistance ($970 max-$914 income - $14 unaccounted for = $42).

Q: There was some conversation in homeless meetings that LD459 allows GA to go over the 30 days? Can you speak to what that means? A: I’m not sure exactly what that refers to. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Governor Mills issued emergency rules. One of those emergency rules allowed a maximum eligibility period of 60 days (versus the original 30). This rule ended 30 days following the termination of the Maine State of Emergency in 2022 (ended approx. August 2022).

Q: Will the State reimburse towns at 70% if their maximums are higher than the model ordinance prescribes? A: YES. As long as they were submitted with justification for the changes and then approved by the GA Program Manager with the Department.

* **Point in Time Update:**

In 2023, the “Night of the Count” in Maine was conducted on January 24. Information from emergency shelters and other service providers was primarily collected through HMIS. This year, Hub Coordinators organized the unsheltered portion of the count in each of the nine Homeless Service Hubs. Information from those who were unsheltered on the night of the count, as well as from those shelters or programs that do not participate in HMIS, was collected by volunteers in the field and outreach staff at encampments. Scott T. provided an overview of this year’s count as well explanations to major differences with previous years.

* Total: 4,258 people experienced homelessness in Maine on January 24, 2023.

For many years, our PIT numbers were pretty consistent. In 2022 and 2023, we included ERA and GA Hotel/Motel numbers. In southern Maine, many of those assisted by these resources were Asylum Seekers. TH was added this year so these totals would match HUD numbers. TH has averaged around 1000 beds.

* Youth and Families: 55% of all households who experienced homelessness have at least one child.

Last year 55% were households without children and in prior years households without children were an even larger portion of the total.

* Gender & Race: Survey respondents were more likely to be non-white as compared to Maine’s population, which is 93% white. The 2023 PIT was comprised of 50% females (vs. 42% in 2022) and 52% racial minorities (vs. 40% in 2022) with Black or African American making up 47% of the PIT. In 2022, White =66%, Black/African American=28% 2016 to 2022 W=75% to 88% B= 5% to 18%.

The change in race demographics could be due to the influx of asylum seekers.

* Subpopulations: Adult survivors of Domestic Violence =245

Unaccompanied children (<18) =24

Unaccompanied Young adults (18-24) =145

Adults with a Substance Use Disorder=674

Adults with a Serious Mental Illness=674

Veterans=123

Chronically homeless=1099

The dramatic rise in the number of Chronically Homeless at may at least in part, be explained by the hotel/ motel numbers where many clients have stayed for more than 365 days.

* Location:Hub 1: York County=491

Hub 2: Cumberland County=2,009

Hub 3: Midcoast - Sagadahoc, Knox, Lincoln, Waldo Counties=206

Hub 4: Androscoggin County=170

Hub 5: Western - Oxford and Franklin Counties=29

Hub 6: Central - Somerset and Kennebec Counties=291

Hub 7: Penquis - Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties=390

Hub 8: Downeast - Washington and Hancock Counties= 82

Hub 9:Aroostook County=58

There was no location available for 532 people counted.

Details of this year’s MCOC PIT and HIIC can be found on the Maine Homeless Planning website: [www.mainehomelessplanning.org](http://www.mainehomelessplanning.org)

1. **Legislative Updates:**

All legislative policy updates were posted on the Maine Homeless Planning website: [www.mainehomelessplanning.org](http://www.mainehomelessplanning.org)

1. **Hub Update:**

Tara started today’s update by announcing Coordinated Entry has officially kicked off with case conferencing happening in 5 of the 9 hubs. Hub 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 are currently piloting all parts of CES, Access, Assessment, Prioritization, and Referral. Hub coordinators are facilitating case conferencing meetings with direct service providers to determine how to best match participants to the limited housing resources that are available in the Maine Continuum of Care (MCOC). Currently Hub 7 has City of Bangor Shelter Plus Care vouchers and all hubs have been able to match to the remaining Emergency Housing Vouchers available across the state. Hubs 1, 4, 9 and 2 are preparing to pilot CES later this summer. Hub 2 is working with HUD TA on the encampments and getting folks connected to CES. They are also collectively working to help find places for individuals and families seeking asylum and currently housed at the Portland Expo.

The State Strategy Team meeting in May was postponed. Wrap up will happen at the end of June with Erin Healy closing out the state level work. Hub level work will continue uninterrupted. Access to resources from Community Solutions will continue at the hub level for the five Built for Zero hubs. This essentially allows for the transfer of resources to the remaining 4 hubs through Tara at MaineHousing.

1. **SHC Updates:**

During June’s meeting Greg Payne gave an update on Legislation pertaining to housing issues and homelessness, Gordon Smith gave an update on the State’s overdoses and Opioid Response and Dean Klein gave an overview of GA listening sessions. In addition to Hub and Regional Council updates, the council spent time discussing meeting format (Full minutes of the meeting will be posted on the [www.mainehomelessplanning.org](http://www.mainehomelessplanning.org) website.)

1. **Long Term Stayers Updates:**

Norm, on behalf of the Portland LTS, mentioned the group continues to meet, housing placements have increased and there is a 90% success rate.

1. **COC Updates:**

* **Board:** No updates given. It was noted the Board will not meet in July.
* **CES:** Erin K. provided the continuum with today’s update. She announced consensus was reached for Monday, August 7th as the roll out day of the CE pilot in all remaining Hubs and the referral process in Hub 2. The committee’s focus will next be on how to add additional resources in CE and how best to assist clients to be *document ready*.

1. **Youth Action Board Update:**

Matt W. announced that all of the YAB Board 9 seats are currently occupied with youth representatives from all areas of Maine. YAB is waiting to hear if their proposal to present at the NAEH conference in July has been accepted.

1. **Standing Committee Updates:**

* **Scoring Card:** After explaining the score card committee’s process, Dan H. screen shared drafts of 2023 score card templates for both new projects and renewal projects created by the score card committee. Dan walked the continuum through both scorecards highlighting full and partial changes noting in order to be eligible for funding consideration a project must meet all of the following three thresholds.
  1. Commitment to Housing First Principles
  2. Full Participation in Coordinated Entry
  3. Low barrier implementation plan

Both templates will be posted on the [www.mainehomelessplanning.org](http://www.mainehomelessplanning.org) website.

Motions for approval of templates will be voted upon during the continuum’s July meeting.

Due to time constraints there were no other committee updates.

1. **New Agenda Items:**

* All in attendance were asked to send agenda suggestions to the tri-chairs.

**Next MCOC meeting is scheduled for July 20th from 1:00-3:00 pm on ZOOM!**