**MAINE STATEWIDE HOMELESS COUNCIL**

**June 13, 2023**

**9:30-12:30**

**Minutes**

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

**Minutes:** Betty LaBua (MaineHousing)

**Welcome:** Shawn Yardley, SHC Chair, opened today’s meeting by welcoming everyone in attendance*.* ***Cullen Ryan motioned to approve May’s minutes as written. Emily Flinkstrom seconded. May’s minutes were unanimously approved, noting the spelling of Emily Flinkstrom’s name will be corrected.*** A moment of silence wasobserved in honor of those who have passed away while experiencing homelessness and for those suffering living in outdoor conditions.

**Call of other Business:**

* **SHC and Statewide Strategy Team:** With the contract with Community Solutions ending in June, the role and responsibilities of the SHC with the continuation of the Statewide Teams goals with Built for Zero were conversed. After a brief historical context of the ongoing connectivity between the SHC and the SST, it was determined the flow of information would continue for the Hubs reporting current trends and issues at the regional level and the regions providing information to the SHC clearing the path to where strategizing and problem solving can occur for allocation of resources. ***Cullen put forth the motion for SHC to assume the role of the Statewide Strategy Team and to develop scope for the integration in the near future. Tracey H. seconded. All voting members in attendance voted in favor. None against. No one abstained. Motioned passed.***
* **General Assistance Listening Sessions:** Dean Klein, DHHS, presented a synopsis of the Listening Sessions currently being held on General Assistance. DHHS is convening 13 listening sessions to hear input from municipal leaders, advocates, shelter providers, G.A. consumers and PWLE on how best to improve G.A. Dean noted an improved statewide data base as well as the greater cost in needs driven by the higher costs of housing and costs unrelated to housing as two reoccurring themes. Dean mentioned the space for learning sessions is limited however, he provided his contact information and welcomed people to email him input.

Regional Updates

* Region I: Emily F. started this month’s update by mentioning the region is rapidly approaching a crisis with the ending of ERA and hotel payments. The growing number of encampments and the increase of people seeking asylum needs to be addressed.
* Region II: Cullen provided this month’s update. The numbers of ayslee seekers continues to rise as does the number of single adults and the number of encampments. How to delineate asylum seekers from being super imposed into the homeless system is an ongoing topic of concern. HVJ presented a training for the cadets at the State Police Academy and continues to work on addressing food insecurity. HVJ is also voicing the need for a metro bus stop at the homeless service center.
* Region III: Tracy H. reported the regional council had a robust conversation on the system redesign and the role of the SHC. The number of families experiencing homelessness across the region is rising at an alarming rate.

Hub Updates: Tara H. announced, with the hiring of Anna Robinson in Hub 9, all Hubs have Coordinators. Hub Coordinators gave the following updates:

Hub 1: The Hub is creating a big picture list on how to engage with healthcare, police and the criminal justice system. Also there is collaboration in progress to learn gaps in transportation and how best to record people not wanting to enter into HMIS.

**Hub 2:** In addition to working with HUD TA on the encampments and getting folks connected to CES, the HC is collectively working to help find places for individuals and families seeking asylum currently housed at the Portland Expo and connecting 211 with CES.

**Hub 3:** The piloting of CES is going well with 21 people accessed and 7 access points on boarded. Over the next couple of months the HC will work with frontline staff to identify barriers and test for solutions.Also, there is work being done on testing the phone referral process with 211.

**Hub 4:** The HC is working with providers to use HMIS as a data collection tool as well as working with providers to become access points.

**Hub 5:** A robust community stake holder support group has been formed. The group designed a *Through the Night* pamphlet to give to people and local police departments listing available resources.

**Hub 6:** Case conferencing continues, 47 people have been accessed, 13 matched and 3 housed. The HC is working to get Maine General onboard as an access point. Also, a one page triage form to share with hospitals and first responders is under construction.

**Hub 7:** Since October, 500 people have been accessed and 108 people housed.Work is being done to close the remaining encampment in Bangor.

**Hub 8:** Meetings are being conducted with stakeholders to collaborate on pressing issues, for example warming/cooling centers. Case conferencing has started. There are 26 people on the byname list. Developing 221 as an access point is under way.

**No Homeless Veteran’s Challenge:** Dan Hodgkins from Preble Street’sVeterans Housing Services attended today’s meeting to present an overview of this year’s House 100 Vets Challenge: “*The way Maine can be.”* The challenge will start on August 4th and run through Veteran’s Day with the goal of housing 100 vets in 100 days by engaging these five key components into the challenge: community relations, fundraising, landlord engagement, a data dash board and unit matching.Dan asked for all agencies to assist by amplifying the message of the challenge on their social media platforms, to assist in reducing the negative stigmas attached to homeless vets and by signing a partner pledge. Both the slide deck from today’s presentation and a partner pledge form will be posted on the Maine Home Planning website: mainehomelessplanning.org

## **Housing Policy Update:** Greg Payne Governor’s Senior Advisor on Housing Policy brought the Council up-to-date on legislation focusing on housing and homelessness. The budget is currently with the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. The proposed budget earmarks 80 million for housing (35 million for rural rental housing, 35 million to subsidize 4% tax credits for LIHTC and 10 million to fund innovated attainable housing projects.) There is also 12 million in funding under the Emergency Housing First Bill. LD 1706(An Act to Clarify Statewide Laws Regarding Affordable Housing and Accessory Dwelling Units) has been approved. LD 619 (prohibiting application fees for housing) will be voted on today.

**Opioid Response:** Gordon Smith joined today’s meeting to give an update on data relating to Maine’s monthly overdose report. April showed a small decline in morality and there has been a 4% overall decline (201 people) when data is compared to the first five months of 2022 (215 people). The Fatal overdoses this year to date where “un-domiciled or transient” was indicated equaled 21 individuals, representing 10% of all fatal overdoses. The largest number of ODs (38%) occurred in Cumberland County. Additional data can found by looking on the <https://mainedrugdata.org> site. The update ended with an invitation to attend The Intersection of SUD and Unstable Housing: Opioid Response Summit on Thursday, July 20, 2023 at the Cross Insurance Arena in Portland. Admission fees can be waived for people in recovery and for recovery allies.

An hour of the meeting was dedicated to Breakout Sessions (4 rooms-3 for regions and 1 for voting members) followed by a group discussion on the Structure of SHC Meetings and on Burning Issues within Regions and Statewide. The following are comments from the sessions:

Region I: There was an overarching agreement relating to the length of meetings. Generally, it’s felt the council meetings should run for 11/2 -2 hours, since it’s difficult for people to attend an entire 3 hour meeting. Attention during the meetings should focus on the processing of information and call for action steps through the hubs and the regions. The SHC response to topics could potentially be better if made at a higher level of the council. There should be a balance of in person and zoom options, specifically quarterly and yearly in person meetings.

Region II: The length of time of the meetings should be shortened by an hour. The regional councils should be utilized in ways for better feedback. One suggestion is for the regional meetings to have an agreed upon action item for the three regions and for the regions to bring back recommendations to the council. Another suggestion was to use the end of the meeting to create action items for the regions. Big picture topic presenters, for example Gordon Smith should continue with time allotted for questions and answers. Work of sub committees is important but they don’t allow everyone to share their voice. In terms of the break out rooms, it was suggested to keep them short and solution focused.

**Region III:** There should be more topic Oriented Sessions/Specific solutions. (Drugs, Mental Health, Homelessness) Maybe permanent members do some of this work offline. Break it down to smaller segments to make it easier to focus on specific topics at specific times. To help support folks with time constraints know when they can leave/come. More meetings that are specific to topics Example- McKinney Vento/youth specific meetings, Substance use specific meetings. In terms of structure, would like meetings on specific issues and subcommittee work! Break out rooms maybe by topic for the hour breakout and people can potentially hop from group to group? Have a mural that is up in each breakout room to help facilitate the conversation. There should be an orientation breakout group with flow charts and the ability to sign on earlier in the meeting to orient. It seems duplicative to have a breakout room of Region 3 when there is Region 3 meeting tomorrow. The topics noted were:

Housing and building landlord relationships in rural areas.

Struggling a lot with once folks get into shelter finding them affordable housing.

Primary Care and not being able to get in/get their medications filled, especially if they are leaving a DV situation.

Untreated mental health/substance use concerns.

Also the region discussed what comes first housing or treatment? It was discussed that this needs to be Client driven and the Client has a right to choose which resource they want.

Voting Members: Shawn reported there was consensus on the need to do a better job framing the meetings. The session discussed how best to navigate meetings, how to add last minute items to the agenda, how to filter items from regions and add them to the agenda, clarification of the voting structure and ways to maintain transparency too insure the benefit of broad perspectives. The suggestion of an annotated agenda will be explored. Katie, Cheryl, Cullen, Alice and Shawn will draft a council process document.

Burning Issues:

Time was allocated at the end of the meeting for attendees to share burning issues. Issues shared are bulleted below:

* NAEH visited Maine last week. The shelter system resources available during the pandemic are quickly going way resulting in the forecast of significant budget issues for shelters over the next year.
* 75% of the shelter space in the Portland areas is occupied by asylum seekers.

July’s Agenda:

* Unsheltered Homelessness
* All were invited to email Betty or Shawn suggestions for July’s agenda

The voting members meet in a private session for last ten minutes of the meeting.

The next SHC meeting will be on Tuesday, July 11th from 9:30-12:30. There will not be a meeting held in August.