**Meeting Minutes: Maine MCoC**

**Date: February 15, 2024, 1:00 – 3:00 PM**

**Location: Zoom**

**Attending via GoToMeeting:** Jerry Botta (HOME Inc.) Joe Locke (MSHA), Vickey Merrill (CHOM), Awa Conteh (CoB), Mike Shaughnessy (MSHA), Dan Hodgkins (Preble Street), Karessa Grenier (Hope and Justice Project), Jessica Lincoln (TNLH), Cullen Ryan (CHOM), Erin Kelly (Preble), Lauren Charon (DHHS OBH), Mike Merrill (VOA), Shirley Caron (ACAP), Norm Maze (Augusta Housing), Scott Tibbitts (MSHA), Julia Kimball, (Hub 4), Abigail Smallwood (Hub 1), Nicole Frydrych(Hub 6), Leanne Pomeroy(Preble), Donna Kelley (WCAP), Donna Alger (BFAH), Rich Romero (OHI), Tracy Allen (KBH), Jace Faris (Hub 8), Joe Locke (MSHA), Kari Bradstreet (H.S.A.), Ray Michaud (Vets Inc), Katie Holzwarth ((MCEDV), Tony Giarratano (Shalom House), Tara Hembree (MaineHousing), Janice Daku (RCAM), Elaine Grade (KCHC), Laura Briggs (BOL), Dave McCluskey ( Community Care), Ken Capron (Hope Harbor), Beverly (YAB), Holly G, Kate White (MMHS), Sarah Kasun, Kelly Watson (MSHA), Aaron Geyer (COP), Melody Fitch (FVP), Marcie Dean (Next Step), Noelle Coyne (WMCA), Jen Weatherbee (HUB 7), Danielle Triffitt (Tedford), Nickie Cohen (CHCS),Andrew Lardie (Tedford), Johanna Buzzell(MSHA), Amands Cost (P for P), Melissa McEntee (RGH), Leah McDonald (Preble Street), Alison Small (Shaw House), Kirk Carlson (Milestone), Jessica Sanfasin (VOA), Cheryl Harkins (HVJ), Julian Sherman (PCHC), Datsy Aponte (CoA), Rebekah Paredes (NHM), Sharon Jordan (WBHW), Emily Richards (Hub 5), Sara Wade (DHHS)*,* Rachel Spencer-Reed (New Beginnings), Doug Dunbar (PCC), Jamie Beck (Dignity First) and Holly Guerette.

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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**

# **Approval of Minutes and Moment of Silence:** Awa welcomed everyone to today’s meeting. MCOC Minutes from the January 2024 meeting were posted on the Maine Homeless Planning website. ***Tong G.*** ***motioned to approve minutes as written. Laura B. seconded. All in favor. No abstentions. Minutes were unanimously approved as written.*** A moment of silence to honor the passing of people experiencing homelessness was observed.

1. **Big Thinking Topics:**

* **Shelter Capacity/Funding:** Katie Spencer-White led today’s discussion. The Joint Select Committee on Housing has combined two Shelter Funding Bills, LD 2136 and LD2138, into one. The combined Bill, LD2136, will provide 12.5 million in funding for shelters. It is currently on the Appropriations Table. The funding Bill, as amended, will allocate assistance to address crisis level operating losses and gaps in funding.
* **Amicus Brief:** Discussion regarding if the MCoC would like to weigh in on the Supreme Court Case *[Johnson v. City of Grants Pass](https://www.supremecourt.gov/docket/docketfiles/html/public/23-175.html?utm_source=NLIHC+All+Subscribers&utm_campaign=94a792714a-memo_011624&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-e95fce62c3-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D&ct=t(memo_011624))* and submit an Amicus Brief started by explaining this is a case that will determine whether people experiencing homelessness have a constitutional right to camp on public property when they do not have a place to sleep. The Supreme Court will decide whether laws regulating camping on public property constitute “cruel and unusual punishment” prohibited by the Eighth Amendment. After a ten minute conversation it was decided it would be better for the CoC to sign on to support Amicus Briefs written by organizations instead of writing and submitting a Brief. Katie and Cheryl will research Amicus Brief options and will report back to the continuum next month.
* **Feedback on Agenda Format**: The question, *Should updates be submitted in writing and* *sent out with the agenda?* brought for the following comments:
* Every meeting time should allow space for the sharing of good, success stories.
* Written committee updates should be posted prior to the monthly meeting and if there are any additional updates after the posting, they should be shared during the meeting.
* Providing updates before meetings has been tried before but due partly to the clunky nature of the Maine Homeless Planning website it didn’t work. RFPs for reconfiguring the website are under review. Part of the plan for the new format is for users to be able to easily find committee updates and who to contact if there are questions on the updates.
* The meetings should be more about philosophical questions and less about updates.
* A communications plan needs to be developed with a lens of abundance not scarcity.

1. **Legislative Updates:**

Cullen updated the continuum by providing these highlights:

**Federal:** Attention was brought to the following two Budget & Funding Related items:

1. The House passed its tax package, the Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act of 2024 (H.R. 7024), at the end of January. The bill now faces a full vote in the Senate. The tax bill includes provisions to expand the Child Tax Credit (CTC), as well as top two top legislative priorities related to affordable housing (also included in the bipartisan Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act that has widespread bipartisan support). The tax bill would restore the 12.5 percent allocation increase for nine percent LIHTCs for 2023 to 2025; and lower the 50 percent bond financing test to 30 percent for 2024 to 2025.
2. Congress passed, and the President signed, another short-term two-tier, short-term continuing resolution (CR) to extend federal funding. THUD and three other federal spending bills are now funded through 3/1. Congress is likely to pass multiple mini-bus spending bills (vs. one large omnibus bill). As Congress finalizes the T-HUD budget for FY 24, it will need to provide a significant funding increase over 2023 levels for Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) to avoid a reduction in the number of families receiving HCVs. Based on CBPP figures, 600 fewer families in Maine would be assisted with HCVs in the House THUD bill, and 400 fewer families with the Senate bill.

**State:** Today’s update started with the mention of Governor Mills’ announcement that her forthcoming Supplemental Budget will include $16 million for the Emergency Housing Relief Fund. An overview on the status on key bills of the Second Regular Session of the 131st Legislature concerning homelessness, housing and rental assistance, general assistance and food security was provided. Details of the overviewed bills were sent to all names on the SHC list serve and was posted on the Maine Homeless Planning website.

1. **HUB Updates:**

Tara furnished today’s updates on behalf of Amy H. For the second year in a row the

HUB Coordinator’s led the PIT effort in their respective HUBs across the state. Over 200 volunteers and 50 provider agencies participated in this year’s count. Volunteers were recruited from numerous sectors such as universities, law enforcement agencies, city councilors, libraries and communities. HCs collaborated with Warming Centers to provide meals and 100s of donated warming kits were distributed. Anyone with questions regarding the HUB work were invited to reach out to Amy Holland at MSHA.

1. **SHC Updates:**

Cullen provided today’s update. Embracing the new format, the meeting of the Statewide Homeless Council scheduled on February 13th was for voting members only. The first half of the meeting consisted of a conversation on HUBs and SHC roles in partnership with the system redesign. In addition to the subcommittee formed to continue the HUB/SHC collaboration, a subcommittee to address the SHC nomination process and a subcommittee to draft a white paper on encampments will also meet. The update ended with Cullen screen sharing a draft of the SHC’s 2024 strategy sharing the following points:

* 1. ***Keep people from falling into homelessness****. We need prevention/diversion to keep people from entering our system. This includes some resources to pay bills.*
  2. ***Move people who are homeless into housing****. We need robust placement into housing and support for success in each placement. This means rental subsidies and ongoing case management support. Shelters play a vital role in this effort.*
  3. ***Keep people housed****. Don’t let people fall back into homelessness. This means ongoing case management.*

1. **MCoC Board Updates:**  A 6 hour Board retreat was held in lieu of February’s Board meeting. A regular update will be provided next month.
2. **CES Updates:**

Erin K. updated the continuum by noting the committee has been working on the following two on going topics:

1. **Adding Resources:** A sub-committee has been meeting to address how to add additional resources to the system. The lack of resources makes it difficult to harness *buy in* by a large population with a small amount of options available.
2. **Revamping Assessment Tool:** Due to feedback that the assessment tool is too long, a sub-committee is exploring ways to either shorten it or reshuffle the questions to make necessary questions at the beginning and supplemental questions at the end.
3. **Youth Coordinated Entry Prioritization Tool and Policies & Procedures**:

Leah McDonald and Allison Small, on behalf of Maine’s Homeless Youth Provider Group’ were in attendance to ask for the continuum’s approval of the updated YCES Prioritization and Assessment Tool, a tool user guide and an updated YCES Policy and Procedure Manual. ***Cullen put forth a motion to approve the implantation of the YCES Prioritization and Assessment Tool, the tool user guide and an updated YCES Policy and Procedure Manual. Julian seconded. No one against. No abstentions. Motion passed***

1. **Youth Action Board Update:**

Mathew W. noted YAB members are interested in attending the Time to Thrive Conference in Minnesota and are waiting for information to be released on the costs. YAB members will be traveling throughout the state to attend Regional Department of Education meetings on the topic of McKinney Vento. YAB is actively recruiting members who do not reside in Washington, Aroostook or Cumberland Counties.

1. **Brief Committee Updates:**

* **Monitoring Committee:** The committee, with TA assistance, has started to draft a new policy and procedure manual. The committee will also be designing a new monitoring tool.
* **Scorecard Committee:** Dan H. announced the committee has resumed meeting and invited anyone interested in participating to put their name in the chat. The next committee meeting will be held on February 23rd at 3:00 pm.
* **Resource Committee:** The committee is in the process of scheduling trainings for 2024. In addition to HUD required trainings, the committee will hold trainings on topics especially related to Maine. The committee is in the process of creating two surveys one for feedback on this year’s PIT count and another to gain a sense of desired training topics.
* **Diversion Committee:** The committee met last week for the first time. The planning of an action orientated focus is underway.

Awa reminded committees to send their rosters quarterly to Scott T. and monthly minutes to Betty L.

1. **Other Items:**

Tony G. announced that due to unprecedented demands, as of February 3, 2024 people falling in the third priority tier/homelessness of BRAP will be placed on a waitlist. All applications will continue to be accepted and any changes in the BRAP priority process will be shared with the continuum.

1. **Agenda Items for next month:**

* Encampment Discussion
* Amicus Brief
* All in attendance were asked to send agenda suggestions to the tri-chairs, Scott or Betty

**The next MCOC meeting scheduled for March 21, 2024 from 1:00-3:00 pm on ZOOM!**