**Attending:** Vickey Merrill (CHOM), Awa Conteh (City of Bangor), Mike Shaughnessy (MaineHousing), Karessa Grenier (Hope and Justice Project), Jerry Botta (HOME Inc.), Joe Locke (MaineHousing), Jessica Lincoln (The Northern Lighthouse), Cullen Ryan (CHOM), Lauren Charon (DHHS OBH), Norm Maze (Augusta Housing), Abigail Smallwood (Hub 1), Nicole Frydrych (Hub 6), Tracy Allen (KBH), Jace Faris (Hub 8), Kari Bradstreet (H.S.A.), Tony Giarratano (Shalom House), Janice Daku (RCAM), Kelly Watson (MaineHousing), Melody Fitch (FVP), Noelle Coyne (WMCA), Jen Weatherbee (HUB 7), Shawnna L. (YAB), Johanna Buzzell (MaineHousing), Jessica Sanfasin (VOA), Sharon Jordan (WPHW), Emily Richards (Hub 5), Sara Wade (DHHS)*,* Chris Bicknell (New Beginnings), Alice Preble (DHHS), Mike Tuller (BFAH), Kehli Buck (RCAM), Lauri Legrere (VOA), Betty St. Hilaire (United Community Living Center), Jeff Cosgrove Cook (Hub 3), Mat Wyman (YAB), Nakesha Warren Colbry (Hub 2), Boyd Kronholm (BAHS), Elaine Grade (KCHC), Alison Small (Community Care), Johnnie Walker (Partners for Peace), Julian Sherman (PCHC), Russ Johnson (Shalom House), Shelby Wilson (Hub 9), Rebecca Hobbs (Through These Doors), Megan Simmons (DHHS), Tara Hembree (MaineHousing), Nickie Cohen (CHCS) , April Reed (MaineHousing), Cheryl Harkins (HVJ), Donna Kelley (Waldo CAP), Rosa Moore (HOME, INC.), Diane Small (Sanford Housing), Sarah Kasun (CHCS), Amanda Randall (Shaw House/Community Care), Ginny Dill (DHHS), Kat Parker (City of Bangor), Aaron Geyer (City of Portland), Melissa McEntee (RGH), Danielle Mayer (VA), Karen Martin (VA), Katie Spencer-White (MMHS), Linda Plourde (Frannie Peabody), Bev H. (YAB), Mike Merrill (VOA), Datsy Aponte (Lewiston Housing), Michelle (Safe Voices), Donna Alger (BFAH), Jennifer Gunderman (City of Bangor), Dan Hodgkins (Preble Street), Bill Higgins (HA4A), Sean Fitzpatrick (VA), Jessica Wilson (City of Biddeford), Scott Thistle (MaineHousing), Rori Durham (Cloudburst), Brittany Odom (Cloudburst), Alexa Timmreck (Cloudburst), Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing)

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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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**Meeting Minutes: Maine MCoC**

**Date: May 16, 2024, 1:00 – 4:00 PM**

**Location: Zoom**

**Maine**

**Continuum of Care**

# **Moment of Silence:** The meeting began with a moment of silence to recognize those who have passed away while homeless.

# **MCOC Minutes from the April 18, 2024,** meeting were posted on the Maine Homeless Planning website for review. Awa asked for a motion to approve the minutes. During the discussion Katie said these minutes were too detailed - minutes should just cover major points and decisions made. She asked that we adopt this going forward. Tony made a **MOTION** **to approve the minutes**. Minutes were **APPROVED**.

# **Recording and Posting Meetings:** All MCOC meetings, including committees, are virtual. Some Committees use MaineHousing’s Ring Central, while Full MCOC and Board meetings use CHOM’s Zoom account. There have been several requests that we record and post meetings, at least larger ones, and our HUD TA providers have also recommended this as a best practice.

**Pros:** -These are supposedly ‘public’ meetings, so they should be made available to the public.

-Recording and posting promotes transparency and accountability

-Neurodiverse individuals may also benefit from recordings v. written minutes

-Not everyone can make it to every meeting – recordings would keep everyone informed

-It is impossible to capture everything in handwritten minutes and there have been several instances where the minutes were not clear – it would be helpful to have a recording to refer back to in those instances

-A quick google search turned up “tons” of CoC meeting videos from all over the country, showing this is a very common practice

-We deal with federal funding – people have a right to know how we decide on it

-In another age, written minutes were the only option. We now have the technology to capture every word of every meeting, accurately, and without any bias or interpretation

**Cons:** -Recordings take up a lot of storage space on servers – who has the capacity?

-Recordings would be considered public records – subject to FOIA requests

-We have an ongoing crisis of governance, we do not always operate in a formal, organized way, there is a lot is dysfunction at these meetings – do we want to put that out there? We are not ready for that.

**Questions and options:**

-Ok with a live stream set up, but not permanent recordings.

-Who would be responsible for saving/storing these?

-How would they be made accessible, and to whom?

-As Collaborative Applicant, MaineHousing would be happy to bring all meetings back to Ring Central, and post recordings and transcripts on the website (being updated now)

-Many CoCs post on YouTube – that would be easier to find than our site

-People have had problems with Ring Central in the past – could MaineHousing use Planning funds to get Zoom or some other platform? All platforms have issues – Ring Central has been upgraded several times over the years, but MaineHousing is willing to explore other options to ensure we have a system that works for everyone.

# Julian S. made a **MOTION that MCOC begin recording our meetings**, starting next month, and work out the logistics of storing and posting between now and then. **Seconded** by Rebecca H. There was one No vote, and one Abstention. **Motion PASSED.**

1. **General Updates and Discussion:**

- HVJ recently hosted a training in Vassalboro and is now preparing for their annual “Longest Day of Homelessness” event next month. (June 25th, starting at 10:00 AM in Tommy’s Park, Portland)

-Seasonal Warming Centers are closing, leaving many people with no shelter options. Regular shelters are already struggling just to maintain – several are in danger of closing this year. There will be more Warming Centers next winter, but what about now? What about Cooling Centers if we have record high summer temps again?

-The Augusta Overnight shelter closed yesterday. 40 people are now outside. Last year when they closed, people donated tents and other supplies but this year there was nothing. They invited City & State officials to talk about the pending closure and find solutions – no one came.

-All the COVID prevention/diversion funding has expired – and CMP Bills are now due for all those who fell behind over the winter. That will lead to lots of evictions, including many families.

-The outcome of the Grant’s Pass case before the Supreme Court might make things even harder.

-Can we conduct a Summer PIT Count? Bangor did one a few years ago and found twice as many people as their winter count. We can get HMIS data any time – it’s the Unsheltered Count that is more challenging. It is a lot of work to organize volunteers – maybe that would be easier in the summer? Outreach is way understaffed – will make any count difficult.

-Can the CoC have a say in what happens with the Opioid Funding? It’s very complicated – hundreds of pages of legal agreements – and the only mention of Housing is for Recovery Housing, even though Unsheltered populations are disproportionately impacted. We would need to be able to provide some very specific data to get any access to this funding.

-Brian M., working for CHCS in Hub 7, does great outreach work to the encampments in the area, helping people get ‘document ready’ to access housing.

1. **System Inflow and Outflow:**

Mike S. presented data from April 2024. Housing Problem Solving completed 23 interventions (down from 37). 70% were “at risk” and 22% were currently homeless. 14 clients (61%) reported successful resolutions (down from 84%). HMIS Shelters reported serving 1272 people (down from 1321), operating at 93% overall capacity (up from 91%). There were 50 exits to Permanent Housing and 6 to Transitional Housing, a 3.93% exit rate (down from 7.78%).

-The data here is only from HMIS participating Shelters. It does not include non-participating shelters, DV shelters, or any Warming Center beds.

-We need a way to show that data too, to have a better sense of where the need is.

-The biggest shelters are also mostly Low-Barrier, and serve mostly single adults – how does that skew the data regarding family homelessness?

1. **Adding new Resources to Coordinated Entry**:

The Committee is exploring options to add new resources to the system, for example, the HOPE program will now be in CE. They are also asking MCOC, particularly MCOC Leadership, to help promote CE and encourage additional resources to participate in our CES, such as PHA Vouchers and non-CoC funded Projects. Many providers here have such housing in their portfolios. The Committee has tried to reach out but does not have the ‘pull’ to convince more agencies to join.

1. **Data Dashboards:**

Having high quality, real-time data to help with decision making would be helpful –there are many examples of CoC’s doing this. Dan H. made a **MOTION** to propose that MaineHousing hire a company to create such dashboards for MCOC. Julian **Seconded**. Discussion followed:

-What sort of data would these show? Whatever we want to enter – HMIS, HDX, APRS – we have lots of data, but this would put it in a visual format, easy to understand, easy to update.

-Isn’t this something STELLA or other existing systems could do – can we do this ourselves?

-We are talking about getting a new HMIS vendor – can we find one that can do this?

-If MaineHousing does this, it would be a one-year contract – by then we may have found other, better options, but hiring a company that does this would be the quickest way to do it now.

There were two abstentions. None opposed. **MOTION PASSED.**

1. **HMIS Lead and Vendor:**

Kelly W. said she was prepared to discuss the options regarding a new HMIS Vendor, but that the group first needed to determine if they wished to continue with MaineHousing as the Lead.

-Some feel that MaineHousing, as a state agency, is limited in what they can do, but if we contracted with a university, they would be internally motivated to do more. There are examples of other CoCs who have schools running their HMIS.

-We need to clarify the distinction between the HMIS Lead and the HMIS Vendor – there seems to be some confusion on this point. The HMIS Lead is the entity approved by the CoC to administer their HMIS – run and submit reports, provide user training and help, ensure data quality and compliance with security and confidentiality – that sort of stuff. The HMIS Vendor is the company that supplies the software program that stores and compiles the data itself. There are a limited number of HUD approved HMIS vendors, and every CoC must go with one of them, regardless of who the Lead agency is. Some Lead agencies have contracts with particular Vendors. If the real problem is the Vendor, we don’t want a new Lead that uses the same one.

-Do we want a new Lead? Putting out an RFP does not necessarily mean we are unhappy with the current Lead, it’s just good practice and due diligence. What do we want from an HMIS Lead?

-HUD has a list of specific requirements, but CoC’s can also put things in Governance and/or MOUs that go beyond the HUD basics. Our Governance is way out of date.

- It seems the bigger concerns – where most of the problems are coming from – are with the Vendor, not the Lead. We should review and evaluate the current Lead, Vendor, and Governance – determine how each is, or is not, meeting our needs, and go from there.

-Kelly W. said she would welcome such an evaluation. Meeting expectations is incredibly important to her and her team. We want to know how we can best serve the MCOC, but the pickle MaineHousing is in right now is that we see the need to put out an RFP for a new Vendor – but the MCOC is talking about putting out an RFP for a new Lead. It does not make sense for MaineHousing to RFP for, and possibly contract with, a new vendor if we may not be the Lead going forward. That is why we need MCOC to decide the Lead question first.

-Ok, so who makes that decision? Do we do that here, today, with 75 people attending? Should it go to the Board? Should it go to the Data Committee to draft a recommendation? We can vote here – anything that democratizes our process is good – no more power hoarding by a few.

-Do we even have a review process for either the Lead or the Vendor?

-Chris B. made a **MOTION** that the **Data Committee review the HMIS Lead and HMIS Vendor and make recommendations to the full MCOC and MCOC Board regarding next steps**. **Seconded** by Cheryl. **PASSED.**

1. **Consolidated Plan:**

MaineHousing will be seeking input – particularly from people with lived experience of homelessness – on their proposed 5 Year Consolidated Plan. This Plan outlines how the agency will utilize ESG (Emergency Solutions Grant) and other federal funds. Anyone interested in participating is encouraged to contact Kelly. There will also be a series of public forums before the Plan is finalized. It was suggested this information be shared through the Hubs, as well.

1. **State, Federal, SHC, & Board updates:**

-Cullen asked for approval to **send a Thank You letter to our Maine Delegation for their support of T-HUD funding**. **MOTION** by Awa, **seconded** by Chris – **PASSED** without objection.

-The State Legislature approved $7.5M for Low-Barrier Shelters, but not the $10 M that was sought for all shelters. SHC has asked MaineHousing to explore if EHR funds could be used as a lifeline for shelters in danger of closing until a more permanent funding solution can be found.

-The Board approved dropping “Pilot” from all CES documents and references. Awa made a **MOTION that the full MCOC also approve this change. Second by Donna. PASSED.**

1. **Any Other Updates and Announcements**

-There is now a new Hub Coordinator in Hub 9!

-Over 900 people have been entered into CES since June of 2024. 60% report being unsheltered when first assessed.

-A big “Thank you” to all the agencies and people who operated Warming Centers this past winter – you saved lives!

If there is anything you would like to cover at our next meeting, please email the Tri-Chairs.

**The next MCOC meeting is scheduled for June 20, 2024 from 1:00-3:00!**