

MID-WILLAMETTE HOMELESS INITIATIVE TASK FORCE

February 17, 2016

Meeting Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Task Force Members - Bruce Bailey, Councilor Warren Bednarz, Steve Bobb, Sr.; Commissioner Janet Carlson, Mayor Cathy Clark, Sheriff Mark Garton, Ron Hays, David Leith, Heidi Mackay, Chief Jerry Moore, Sheriff Jason Myers, Irma Oliveros, Mayor Anna Peterson, Jon Reeves, Verena Wessel, and Commissioner Jennifer Wheeler.

Task Force Staff - Hitesh Parekh, Marion County, and Laura Walker, City of Salem.

Meeting was called to order at 4:15 PM by Mayor Anna Peterson.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair's Comments:

- Task force is a collaborative effort by Marion County, Polk County and the Cities of Salem and Keizer.
- Public comment will be taken at the next task force meeting.
- Encourage all members of the public to e-mail the task force if they have questions.
- Verena Wessel is here representing the Keizer community (and not Northwest Human Services).
- CCTV is recording the meeting for live streaming and replay.
- Task force website (www.homelesstaskforce.net.) will go live tomorrow at noon.

Task Force Member Comments:

Task Force members introduced themselves and expressed their thoughts and expectations for task force work.

- Commissioner Janet Carlson, Marion County: The issue of homelessness and the idea of creating a joint task force involving Marion and Polk counties and the cities of Keizer and Salem was raised at a Marion County Public Safety Coordinating Council meeting. Hopes that the Marion and Polk Counties' Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness (2009) will incorporate specific goals and objectives from this group.
- Mayor Cathy Clark, City of Keizer: Looking forward to hearing from a variety of people in the community about homelessness. Three Keizer representatives on the task force, Councilor Kim Freeman, Patty Ignatowski, and Shaney Starr, are unable to attend the meeting today.
- Commissioner Jennifer Wheeler, Polk County: Wants to know what services are being provided to the homeless, what the gaps are, and how these can be filled. What types of services do the homeless need in Polk County? A large number of Polk County residents live below the poverty line.
- Councilor Warren Bednarz, City of Salem: As community leaders and decision makers we need to educate ourselves about the services that are available for the homeless. He is looking for an action plan from this task force, not a report. Wants to stop homelessness

now. Wants a homeless or home-insecure person who can share what it is like to be homeless, or close to being homeless represented.

- Ron Hays, Department of Mission Advancement, LLC: Runs the philanthropic arm of Mountain West Investment Corporation.
 - Steve Bobb, Sr., Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde: He is interested in this issue to help veterans on the street. Wants to change their lives in a positive way.
 - Heidi Mackay, West Salem Business Association.
 - Bruce Bailey, Union Gospel Mission: Wants to see some action at the end of this process.
 - Irma Oliveros, Salem-Keizer School District: Each year the number of homeless students and families increases in our counties. Wants to see this minimized.
 - Jon Reeves, Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency: We need community solutions to this problem. This much interest in helping the homeless is great.
 - Verena Wessel, Keizer community representative: Worked with the homeless population over the last 15 years. Also on the committee that drafted the Marion and Polk counties Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness.
 - Chief Jerry Moore, Salem Police Department: Salem police interact often with the homeless. Wants to coordinate efforts to help make a difference to those less fortunate in our community.
 - Sheriff Jason Myers, Marion County: The criminal justice system is not the right place for the homeless, even though most of them end up there. Wants to help this population that typically suffers from alcohol and drug abuse and mental health issues.
 - Sheriff Mark Garton, Polk County: Wants to offer his insights on the Polk County homeless.
 - David Leith: Waiting to hear from the Oregon Judicial Conduct Committee if he can serve on the task force, is currently serving as a private citizen. Issue of homelessness is of primary importance to the community. Honored to be asked to serve on the task force.
- **Ratify Task Force Charter (Action)**
 - Four jurisdictions approved the task force charter after legal review by each jurisdiction.
MOTION: Commissioner Janet Carlson made a motion to ratify the Mid-Willamette Homeless Initiative Task Force charter. Seconded by Councilor Bednarz. A voice vote was unanimous.

2. BACKGROUND/SCOPE OF PROBLEM

- A. **Video Introduction on Homelessness Issues:** Commissioner Carlson introduced a video clip from the Jon Stewart show describing successes in reducing homelessness in Utah using Housing First: <http://www.cc.com/video-clips/Intv3q/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-the-homeless-homed>
- B. **Panel Discussion:** Craig Bazzi, Community Action Agency; Christian Edelblute, West Valley Housing Authority; Diane Merry, Community Action Agency; Linda Strike, Community Action Agency; Laura Walker, City of Salem; Andy Wilch, Salem Housing Authority; Shelly Wilkins-Ehenger, Marion County Housing Authority.
 - Mayor Peterson introduced the panel discussion with the following questions:
 - Who are the homeless in Marion and Polk counties?

- Who are the “chronically homeless”?
- How many homeless people are there in Marion and Polk Counties?
- What barriers do homeless people encounter and what services or tools do we currently have to address them?

Laura Walker delivered a PowerPoint presentation with the following information.

- The 2015 homeless count showed 1,660 homeless in Marion and Polk counties.
 - Of these, 308 were chronically homeless.
 - 69 percent of the homeless have health conditions.
- There are 3,866 affordable housing units in Marion and Polk Counties, excluding emergency shelters.
 - 250 emergency shelter beds and 292 transitional beds, and funding for 200-300 clients for tenant-based rental assistance programs (annually).
- In the City of Salem 2,909 households receive Section 8 housing assistance.
- In Polk County 703 households receive Section 8 housing assistance.
- In Marion County 1,182 households receive Section 8 housing assistance.
 - County serves over 270 individuals in county-owned properties throughout the unincorporated areas of the Salem and Keizer Urban Growth Boundary.

Summary of Discussion:

- Why is there inadequate permanent housing?
 - Private sector rents have increased, with Salem and vicinity having the lowest vacancy rates out of 23 markets. (Vacancy rate was 2.5 percent in the fall of 2015.)
 - From Spring 2015 to Fall 2015 vacancy rate declined by 13%.
 - Since Spring 2015 the Salem area saw a 10% increase in rental costs.
 - For rural Marion County in 2015, more than 700 Section 8 housing vouchers were issued, but less than 200 households could find a place to live.
 - Marion County Housing Authority vacancy rates are very low, estimated at less than 1%.
 - New housing construction is taking place, but not of affordable housing units.
 - Economic issues:
 - In Salem, 37% of population or 57,000 households earn \$35,000 or less.
 - Permanent affordable housing units are subject to fair market rents.
 - Hard to house population can't compete in the market place.
 - Other barriers:
 - Those with a criminal history or bad rental history seeking housing also face barriers to housing.
 - Some ex-offenders have a criminal history along with substance abuse and/or mental health issues.

3. BEST PRACTICES: HOUSING FIRST

Margaret Solle Salazar, Oregon HUD Field Office Director, and Kristen Arnold, HUD Community Planning and Development Representative, presented this item.

- Housing First is a “best practice” model for housing the homeless. It has been researched for more than ten years. It quickly and successfully connects the homeless to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry.
- Housing First includes support services such as mental health and substance abuse treatment to maximize housing stability and prevent the homeless from returning to homelessness.

- Housing First is cost effective since it is expensive for local agencies to retain homeless individuals on the streets. It results in higher housing retention rates and diminished use of crisis services and institutions.

Summary of Discussion:

- How can the Marion and Polk county areas extend housing stock to meet the demand for those without housing? Is there a model in terms of whether to focus on projects or scattered housing sites?
 - This is a critical question communities are struggling with. The largest metropolitan areas in the state don't have enough affordable housing developments.
 - Developers can be a huge asset to the community.
 - Need more hard units developed (with on-site health care services), located in mixed income communities.
 - Some development options are:
 - Communities build more market rate and subsidized housing, or a mix of both.
 - Use Section 8 vouchers in more creative ways (project-based vouchers).
 - Metro communities are working very aggressively in landlord recruitment and retention.
- The 2015 state legislature appropriated \$40 million to develop affordable housing for low income families throughout Oregon.
- Who plays what role when it comes to public-private partnerships in developing affordable housing?
 - Oregon Housing and Community Services runs the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program which is essentially a public-private partnership for developers.
 - Other jurisdictions have "concept to development" housing models for communities to use, but these are not from HUD.
- There are the visible homeless and the invisible homeless. Is there a way to quantify the invisible homeless? How do the homeless who have alcohol and drug disorders or mental health issues fare when applying to rent a dwelling?
 - Educating both tenants and landlords is critical. Providing landlords with some type of assistance if they encounter tenant problems is helpful; for example, a hotline they can call if their tenants are in need.
- Is there a funding source for doubled up families who are not considered homeless under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987?
 - HUD's Emergency Solutions grant program provides funds for these families.
- Tenants housed under the Housing First model are more likely to be successful dwellers in the long run if they have on-site accessible services.

4. CONTINUUM OF CARE

Diane Merry and Linda Strike, Community Action Agency, and Jo Zimmer, Rural Oregon Continuum of Care (ROCC), presented this item.

- Continuum of Care is the entire network of services for homelessness, moving from homelessness to self-sufficiency.
- Marion and Polk counties are in the Regional Oregon Continuum of Care which includes 26 other Oregon counties.
- ROCC receives federal funds which are administered by Community Action Agency.
- Community Action solicits annual applications for funding to area service providers giving priority to proposals based on the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness.

- In 2015, Marion and Polk counties had five projects and \$700,000 in funding from Continuum of Care funds.
 - Projects include ARCHES, permanent housing, ready to rent housing, and transitional housing.

Summary of Discussion:

- Councilor Bednarz requested that task force members read the Marion and Polk County 2015 Homeless Count Report. It will be placed on the web page. He also noted a resource directory from his church and the need to hear from homeless individuals.
- The Oregon Health Authority has \$2.6 million in grant funds available. Marion County Health Department will apply for these funds to use for sobering and detox stations.
- The Crisis Outreach Response Team responds to incidents where mentally-ill individuals with repeat contact with law enforcement are connected to community services and not cited. The team is made up of Marion County and City of Salem law enforcement and mental health professionals.
- Mayor Peterson excused herself to attend Congressman Schrader's town hall meeting. Commissioner Carlson closed the meeting and thanked task force members and all others who attended the meeting. The next task force meeting is on March 29, 2016.

Adjourned 6:04 PM

Handouts: Roster: Task Force Members - Attachment A
List of Technical Advisors - Attachment B
Signed Charters - Attachment C
Background and Scope - Attachment D
Marion and Polk Counties Plan to End Homelessness - Attachment E
Marion and Polk County Housing Inventory List - Attachment F
(Draft) Services For Homeless People in Marion and Polk Counties - Attachment G
De Muniz Resource Center List of Housing Resources - Attachment H
Housing First Overview - Attachment I