

Metropolitan Homelessness Encampment Task Force Meeting

Tuesday, February 17, 2016

at Metro Social Services

800 2nd Avenue North

The meeting began at 9:00 a.m.

Present: Will Connelly, Wendell Segroves, Phil Duke, Traci Pekovitch, Lindsey Krinks, Sgt. John Bourque, Tommy Lynch, Marvin Cox, Renee Pratt, Charlie Strobel, Erik Cole

Public: Kate Wade, Steve Lindstrom, Raymond Mark Templeton, Denis Huey, Dominique Edwards, Scott Clemons, Tracy Edmonds, Raymond Alford, Mark Clark, Adam Graham, Samuel Lester, Robbie Kelly, Andres Chuanco, Colleen Lamba, Jayce Freeman, Caleb Pickering, Elizabeth Langgle-Martin

Staff: Judy Tackett, Karri Simpson, Josh Lee (Metro Legal)

Approval of minutes:

The minutes from the February 10, 2016 meeting were approved.

Housekeeping Items:

Public Defender's office had a conflict this morning and will try to be present at the next meeting. Metro 3 and Metro Legal is here. Still following up with Metro Health, Metro Codes and MDHA.

Review Recommendations:

There are only two meetings left until they must present. Two options for the next two meetings were presented:

- A. Go through the recommendations as a group to discuss and focus on the objective and "description."
- B. Divide into groups of three and focus on discussing sanctioned and unsanctioned camps and then each group will present out to the full group and discussion will ensue. This week's focus particularly would be on unsanctioned camps.

The goal is to have a draft and finalize on March 2nd to be presented to the full Commission that Friday.

Lindsey Krinks asked if now is the time to add additional recommendations if there are any. Judy Tackett stated that she recommends sticking with the current recommendations so that they can focus. Phil Duke stated that if he understands correctly then at the next meeting they need a draft of the draft.

Discussion ensued around which options. All voted for Option B.

The task force broke up into three teams and discussed amongst their groups for 30 minutes.

Team 1: Traci Pekovitch, Charlie Strobel, and Tommy Lynch

Team 2: Sgt. Bourque, Erik Cole, Renee Pratt, Marvin Cox

Team 3: Phil Duke, Wendell Seagroves, Lindsey Krinks, and Will Connelly

Discussion among Task Force members:

Lindsey Krinks presented on behalf of her group. They broke unsanctioned camps into 2 groups: those needing to be moved right away because of property owners or those not needing to be moved.

- The first step is identifying who the first responder is to the camps;
- Second step is to assess the need of the camp and what their barriers to housing are;
- Third is providing private resources including sanitation;

- Fourth is that the private property owner would set the timeline for when people must be off the property.

This group looked at standards from other communities for unsanctioned encampments to include no theft, no violence, keep it clean, no illegal drugs, active participation, and repeat offenders will be removed.

Erik Cole presented on behalf of his group. They're discussion around unsanctioned camps centered on the fact that these camps will always exist and how they should best be handled.

- Discussed a HOT team and looked at an example from Broward County, Florida.
- Possibly housing the HOT team at Metro Social Services, with help from Metro Police
- Raising up access to Homelink, a database used by current housing navigators, and relying on knowledge these individuals already have.

In regards to sanctioned camps their discussion centered on location and management.

- Who sanctions the camp? How Seattle passed an ordinance was looked at by this group.
- All in this group agreed that Metro may not be the best at managing this type of setting due to their limited flexibility.
- Twenty-four hour police presence may be needed and could be possible.
- What happens when the encampment is at capacity?

Traci Pekovitch presented on behalf of her group. This group defined unsanctioned camps as "camping without property owner permission," and that an alternative- sanctioned camps- should exist.

- If there was a HOT team, they would need to be knowledgeable of sanctioned camps and then a grace period of time would be given to those in unsanctioned camps, while getting access to resources, so that they can relocate to the sanctioned area Cincinnati is an example for how this could be done.
- Services and sanitation would not be provided in unsanctioned camp, but rather in the sanctioned camp.
- Those individuals identified in an unsanctioned camp would not be criminalized but given resources and the opportunity to move to the sanctioned area.

This group discussed the challenges in that unsanctioned camps will still exist and policies and protocols for those encampments will need to be created. As well as partners would need to include the faith based community, government, non-profit, and the community. Liability for the property owner was also a concern. The goal remains that the encampments are short term and that housing is the ultimate goal.

Tommy Lynch shared his research from National Recreation Park Association about how unsanctioned encampments are being addressed nationwide. Parks property is generally not utilized nationwide for encampments. In the last few years the general consensus with parks across the nation is that staff should be accommodating to all people within the parks during open park hours. However most cities are trying to work with local government to identify other public land to be used for camping in the overnight hours. In regards to Ft. Negley another aspect is that it is a historic ruin and it is the responsibility of the Metro Parks to protect that area.

Lindsey Krinks shared a handout with three examples of tent and tiny homes communities, including the rules they adhere to and enforcement. These examples were Green sStreet, Dignity Village, and Right to Dream. She also shared a handout with feedback from Chris Scott, resident of Ft. Negley, who left the last meeting early. Later this week she will be emailing out research on police protocol and policing alternatives.

Charlie Strobel stated he feels there is still a blur between sanctioned and unsanctioned camp, which is that if an unsanctioned camp needs to have safety, trash pick-up, and rules then you are essentially

making it a sanctioned camp. However, if an unsanctioned camp is left alone then it becomes a police issues, unless intervention approaches are reassessed.

Will Connelly felt that there are times when unsanctioned encampments are on land without the owner's knowledge, and while full utilities don't need to be installed, help to clean up the area could be provided so the property owner may let the encampment stay longer while resources are located. For people who want to remain isolated it is up to our community to keep going back to that person and trying to engage them.

Lindsey Krinks referred Chris Scott's comments as they echoed some of what Will Connelly was stating. She and people in the public that she has spoken with have a huge concern that this task force could actually make things worse for unsanctioned camps. They are trying to better the standards of living for people in unsanctioned camps as well.

Traci Pekovitch asked what the working definition of a sanctioned camp is.

Josh Lee, with Metro Legal, said to think of it in terms of unauthorized and illegal camps vs. legal and authorized camps. Tennessee has a broad definition for organized camps and there are categories to include primitive camps, which only involve tent camping. If a camp has more than just tent structures than they would fall under resident tent camping and there are specific requirements to provide water, sanitation, and fire safety. All of the camps do require permits from the state of Tennessee. From Metro standpoint there is then a lot of zoning regulations that will apply. The health and safety concerns would apply despite who has oversight of the encampment.

In regards to what zoning classifications would be needed, Josh Lee said he would have to get back with them. If it does require a zone change, that is a multi-step process that would require community and council member input.

Discussion continued around the fact that the reality is that the issue of encampment encompasses a much broader spectrum than simply sanctioned vs. unsanctioned.

Erik Cole brought up the systems approach, specifically he referred to the Focus Strategies report to the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission that recommends that Nashville build a housing crisis resolution system that has a 30 goal window for housing. He stated the community needs to focus on developing that system and that should be kept in the context of this discussion.

Public Input:

Denis Huey: the next important question is who sanctions a camp? That needs to be figured out before they go too much further.

Samuel Lester: He is concerned about the remarks that people in camps aren't citizens/tax payers/separated out from the rest of the population. This isn't true. Most people staying in camps are people who have fallen out of housing in the region and they are paying many forms of taxes. Also, having to rezone goes against their constitutional protection of individuals in encampments. It was deemed unconstitutional to criminalize the acts of daily living for people in encampments when there is no place else to stay. To do so is a violation of their and everyone else's rights. Need to also look as housing funds are being spent.

Recommendations for the next meeting:

Task force members including Phil Duke and Renee Pratt stressed the need to work on an actual draft of the draft recommendations and have something to respond to and finalize by the March 2 meeting.

Homework to prepare for next meeting:

Lindsey Krinks will email out all of the handouts she shared with task force members.

Judy Tackett will take all the points brought forward by the groups and put them into grid format to share with the task force members. She will also make all of the documents shared public. The minutes are posted on Nashville.gov and the notes will be posted there as well.

The meeting adjourned at 10:33 a.m.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 24 at 9:00 a.m. at Metro Social Services, 800 2nd Avenue South.