



**Metropolitan Homelessness Commission
9:30 am, March 1, 2013
Sonny West Conference Center
Howard Office Building (Fulton Complex)
700 Second Avenue South**

Commissioners present: Diane Kuhn, chair; Renee Pratt, J.C. Smith, Charles Strobel, Tom Turner, Angie Hubbard, Angie Thompson, Ellen Zinkiewicz, Lt. Warren McConkey, Howard Gentry, Phil Duke

Legal Representative: Josh Lee

Staff present: Will Connelly, director; John Hite, Tojuana Jordan, Judith Tackett.

Welcome

Chair, Diane Kuhn, introduced public comment cards as a new tool for the public to communicate with the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission. She said this was just a way for people who are more comfortable submitting something in writing. The Commission will evaluate all suggestions.

Minutes

Diane Kuhn said that Steve Reiter asked to supplement the minutes. She read the addition, "I would like to thank the following people and organizations for their assistance with the Homeless Memorial in December 2012:

- Judy Tackett of the Homelessness Commission for working with the media
- The Nashville Rescue Mission for providing pastries and coffee
- The Bridge Bunch for providing lunch
- Howard Gentry for providing beverages
- Megan Berry for printing the brochures
- Lambscroft for providing the chairs and supplies
- Charlie Strobel for being the keynote speaker

There are so many people to thank that, if there was someone missed, I sincerely apologize.
Steve Reiter"

Since the Commission did not have a quorum, the minutes were not approved.

Financials

There was no discussion under Financials.

Recognition of Hershell Warren

Diane Kuhn welcomed Hershell Warren and thanked him to be so gracious for coming to the meeting even though this was his first day of retirement. Hershell Warren has been on the Commission since 2007. Ms. Kuhn said he's been a great mentor to her.

Mr. Warren received a certificate and a gift thanking him for his contribution to the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission.

Hershell Warren thanked the Commission.

He received a standing ovation and a few commissioners including Charles Strobel and J.C. Smith added comments of thanks.

Project Homeless Connect Report

Diane Kuhn said that Project Homeless Connect was held last month and staff did a great job organizing it. She said the Commission received great feedback this year.

Tojuana Jordan gave a detailed report about Project Homeless Connect, showing results. The PowerPoint presentation is available online at <http://phcnashville.wordpress.com>.

Howard Gentry congratulated staff and volunteers and everybody who helped make this year's Project Homeless Connect again a success. He pointed out that at the beginning of the planning stage, the Commission was somewhat concerned considering all the staff changes that had occurred this year. He also said it would be great to do mini-PHC events. It would make sense and give us a way to continue services.

Diane Kuhn said the Commission was looking at more targeted, mini-events. The money financing PHC was raised outside of the Commission budget, she said, adding the Commission received great community support. She also said that the Commission was very late in getting the volunteers but because of help with some article in the media, the Commission reached its goal and was able to team up every participant with a volunteer to assist him/her.

Housing Campaign Report

Will Connelly showed two video clips of Linda Kaufman's presentation given on Feb. 26 at the Downtown Partnership. The meeting served as the kick-off event of a local community campaign to end chronic homelessness. Mr. Connelly then went through a slideshow that he had shown at the kick-off meeting. About 70 people attended the kick-off meeting. Will Connelly thanked Commissioner Tom Turner and the Downtown Partnership for allowing the Commission to use their space.

Mr. Connelly also announced that Nashville will hold a Registry Week probably in May. During Registry week volunteers survey people who sleep outdoors during three consecutive mornings to identify the medically vulnerable individuals. Registry week we'll hold probably in May here. But, he said, that was a decision that would be made by community stakeholders.

Ellen Zinkiewicz clarified that opening up the case management contract was not a reflection on the quality of work provided by Eckman/Freeman. Instead it was opened back up because the Commission decided that based on what other communities are doing, we need to change our approach of this contract. Will Connelly said that was correct.

Charles Strobel said that about a year ago, the Commission heard a presentation from street outreach workers. They reported that they meet on a monthly basis. He wanted to have an update on that.

Ingrid McIntyre of Open Table Nashville, Inc., reported that the meetings had been held monthly. There were about 7-10 people present at the meetings to share information and updates on hot spots, who gets in contact with whom, what resources are available to street outreach, and so on. At Project Homeless Connect, the outreach workers handed out a contact card that participants could turn in at the end and request follow-up services from street outreach workers. She said the group received more than 200 feedback and was putting them into a spreadsheet. Then at the next meeting they would divide up who would follow up with whom.

Commissioner Strobel asked who the authority was behind this outreach group meeting. Diane Kuhn said the meetings were started by Carolyn Grossley and now Will Connelly was reaching out to the group.

Will Connelly was also questioned about the goal to end chronic homelessness. He said it was helpful to him to look at a monthly goal of how many people should be housed and have a specific, collective goal like that.

Charles Strobel asked whether the 1,094 individuals that Mr. Connelly identified based on community data as being vulnerable and/or chronically homeless was a low-ball figure.

Will Connelly said that yes, likely that was a low figure. “We miss a lot of people in the Point-in-Time count.

Charles Strobel further said that Nashville as a community may be housing 25 people a month already. Will Connelly responded that when he asked that question of who has been housed, he focused on the chronically homeless population. He said we needed to improve our data collection, “but this is what we got.”

Ashley Blum asked whether the chart Will Connelly showed in his presentation only reflected the people moved into permanent housing. Will Connelly said yes, the chart showed the goals to permanently house people.

Will Connelly also said that the Commission was trying to get away from multi-year plans and break goals up into smaller junks. “Around May or June is when we hope we have more housing resources in the community and begin housing more people.”

Q&A

Charles Strobel said the need for more collaboration has been a conversation around this table for at least 2-3 years. He mentioned the GAPS Group and others as examples and said decisions were being made independent of each other. “We ought to be able to bring

more collaboration to the table.” Specifically, he said, he would like to address the collaboration between HUD and the GAPS Group. When HUD shifted its focus from transitional housing to permanent housing, it made a recommendation, not a mandate to locals. He said locally nobody has applied for that funding.

Will Connelly said that Suzie Tolmie of MDHA was on the planned trip to San Antonio. He added that he attended that last GAPS Governance meeting. “We try to collaborate more in the future. But it certainly is a challenge.” Suzie Tolmie agreed saying this was a challenge that needed to be addressed.

Diane Kuhn said this was a discussion that would be ongoing. She said that the Commission was going to form a Housing Committee, and “we should have some representation on the Housing Committee from the GAPS group.

“When Will came in, his background is permanent housing,” Ms. Kuhn said. “This is what we as a Commission want to do. This is our best effort right now.” She said there were 50 or 60 folks at the kick-off meeting (*author’s note: there were 71*). Ms. Kuhn also said the trip to San Antonio was a boot camp where participants were expected to come back and “tell us what we need to do.”

Ms. Kuhn added that she would try to find out why Commissioners were not present. “We do need eight commissioners here to make things happen.”

Moment of Silence:

Diane Kuhn read three names of people who died since January and invited the public to add other names.

Michael Bollinger

Rochelle Bigsby

Trina Carter

Jesse Call asked to add Ina “Allison” Cowen.

Charles Strobel said that he believes Trina represented the chronic homeless population from the beginning.

Public Announcements

Dennis Huey asked what the bylaws say about commissioners who do not attend the meeting. He talked about enforcing the bylaws, which say that after missing three meetings commissioner can be removed. Diane Kuhn said 11 commissioners were appointed by the Mayor, 4 were Metro Council representatives, and 7 were non-voting members representing Metro departments. Mr. Huey said that the folks who don’t want to participate or are unable to participate should say so. “They need to take this seriously.”

Howard Allen said it was worse now than when the Commission first started. He stated that homeless representatives needed to be at the table. He said this was the nucleus and the Commission needed to hear from people who were homeless. “You need some “real” homeless people to be here.”

Will Connelly said the Commission was trying to get people here. He added that he also was attending feeding programs at least once a week to receive input.

Mr. Allen said it was time for the Commission to return to monthly meetings. Mr. Connelly responded that he believes a lot can be done in workgroups outside of this meeting.

Barry Hobbs said there were approximately 25,000 empty homes in this city and this county today. “You’ve got like 19,000-20,000 left over, so that’s a house per person. Let’s get this show on the road.” He said plans were good and nice, but “let’s get something done.” He said if he had \$30 million, \$10 million each year from government, business, and the faith-based communities, he could end homelessness. He called for action and said folks were still dying in the streets. “I’m sick of hearing the horror stories. ... It’s not about being Americans or Christians. It’s about being human.”

Jim Johnston said there were question and answer sessions and he was always being left out of it. “You’ve got to have to have a court order to get the question and answer session of the last meeting.” He said the Commission was always so rude. “You have never followed through with nothing on this thing except for take the money and run.” He said the Commission was a conflict of interest. He then pointed to different commissioners and voiced his opinion about them.

Douglas Thompson & Julio Fernandez said they were here representing a workers’ campaign. They pointed to a recent article printed in the Tennessean that talked about the lawsuit brought by several construction workers (some of them are homeless) against Trojan Labor. They said John Taylor who is one of the plaintiffs wanted to be present at the meeting to describe his experience, but he was sick today. They said if people would be compensated for their work fairly, then that would be part of the solution.

Steve Reiter it didn’t make any sense to him that when MDHA has an RFP out for \$2.5 million and was present at the Commission meeting that there was no presentation about that RFP. “This Commission is here to create housing opportunities, not to implement best-practices. MDHA should be making a quarterly report to this Commission about housing opportunities. Yet I’ve been here since 2005, and I have never seen MDHA make a presentation here.”

He also said that he was working with Will Connelly to come up with something to address identity theft in the streets, when people say they are outreach workers and then steal homeless individuals’ identities.

Adjourned.