



Weather Response Ad Hoc Committee

Feb. 28, 8:30-9:30 am

At Metro Social Services, 800 2nd Ave. North, 37201

In attendance: Bob Freeman(chair), Freddie O'Connell, Renee Pratt, Wendell Segroves, Theresa Skiles, Tim Leeth. Staff: Judith Tackett, Joseph Parker

Minutes

Meeting started at 8:40 am

Ground Rules:

After a brief welcome by Bob Freeman, the group accepted the following ground rules:

- Listen to each other
- Keep the goal in mind
- Use "parking lot" to stay on topic
- No cell phones, if you must monitor it for some reason, let people know and feel free to accept call once out of the room
- Understand your own expertise and speak up so we can have a full conversation
- **Decision-making:**
 - Clear statement of a decision.
 - Nod consent as statement is made. This is the time to speak up if someone does not agree.
 - No formal vote, but clear notification in minutes of decision made (with any dissent reflected)

Charge to Committee:

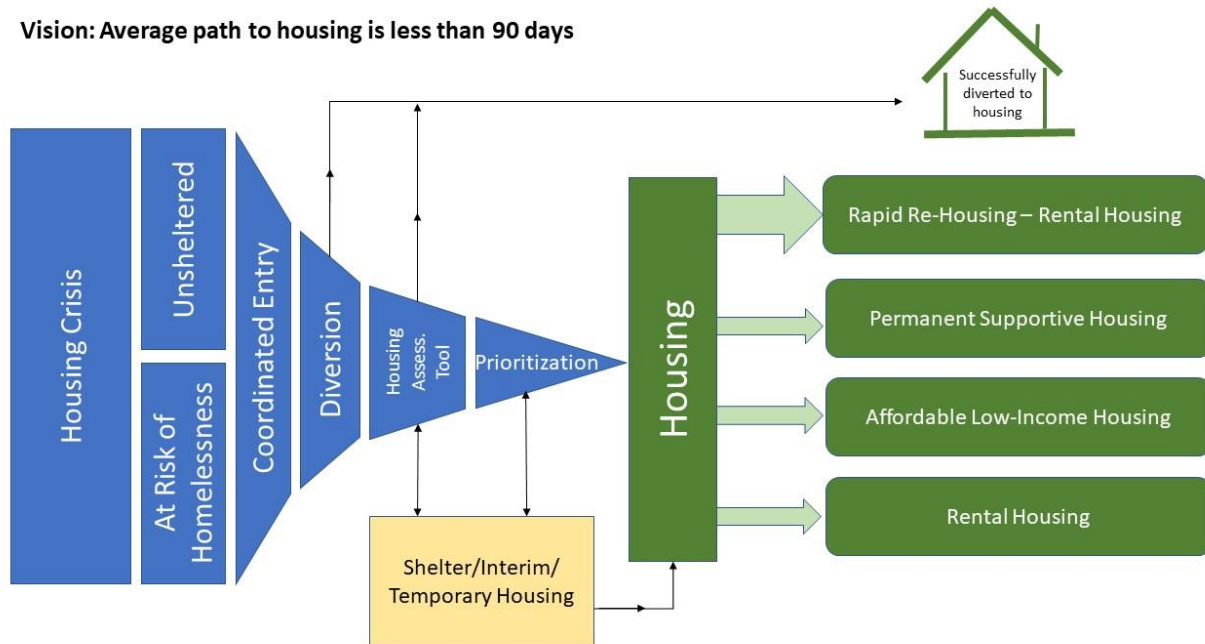
Bob Freeman read the charge to the ad hoc committee:

- Develop a solid recommendation and report back to the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission on how the city should/could address severe exposure risk for people experiencing literal homelessness.
- The goal of the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission is to build a housing crisis resolution system that assists people experiencing homelessness with obtaining permanent housing. Therefore, the Commission charged this Ad Hoc Committee to address and outline how their final recommendation/s is/are part of a coordinated entry & exit system that provides a path to housing.

What is a Housing Crisis Resolution System?

Judith Tackett explained briefly what a Housing Crisis Resolution System is:

Vision: Average path to housing is less than 90 days



History of community cold weather response & current Metro response:

Judith Tackett and Renee Pratt gave a history of the Community Cold Weather Response Plan regarding how Metro got involved and what role Metro plays now.

- 2013: Metro was asked by Open Table Nashville to help coordinate their overflow shelter response at 25 degrees
- 2014: Homelessness Commission facilitated meetings with community partners. Goal of partners to coordinate and put a plan in place. RITI to open additional beds at 27 degrees. OTN continued at 25 degrees. Cold Weather patrol from Mission at 32 degrees or sooner. Routes of cold weather patrol was coordinated with outreach workers. Website put in place. Texting system put in place. Metro to consider opening at 19 degrees or below and start preparing to open when shelter capacity at 90%.
- 2015: Partners asked to set a common response temperature. OTN said they did not have resources to open at 25 degrees. RITI lowered their response to 25 degrees. Metro's OEM to continue at 19 degrees and/or when capacity reaches 90%.
- Last three seasons, MSS stepped in to staff shelter. Other Metro partners: OEM, Parks, Health dept, Public Works, Police, Fire, Mayor's Office, MHC, Fairgrounds, General Services, Sheriff's Office
- In January 2017, after request from Councilman Jim Shulman who addressed the cold weather community response partners, Metro started opening at 25 degrees – overflow shelter turned into an alternative shelter.
- To still run a department, MSS opened night shelter only. Open for 23 days this season (so far). Strained resources, especially staffing.
- MSS does not have control over other department's resources. Thus, if partners do not continue, we will see gaps. Also, MSS does not own facilities and has no control over location.

Brainstorming Session/Discussion:

- The group agreed that the people to be most concerned about are on the streets. People in encampments are a concern, but they usually have equipment to keep them warm or tend to go indoors.
- The question is how many people are on the streets. Data becomes important.
- Also focus on the fact that if we recommend additional shelter beds, then there is a need for additional housing opportunities (general rule: 6 housing opportunities per year for every new emergency shelter bed created).
- Recognize that every facility has a capacity. At present Metro does not turn anyone away, which does not permit to function as an entry point doing preliminary assessments as would be recommended in a Housing Crisis Resolution System (HCRS). Metro planned for a 50-bed shelter, usually runs 130-200 beds.
- When Metro opens, numbers at the Mission go down.
- Discussion of Room In The Inn's increase in capacity. They have really stepped up every year, trying to add services and focus on removing barriers.
- Collaboration important.
- Canvassing should be done based on data. An effective HCRS could provide By Name Lists, outreach coordination could help identify people who are shelter resistant early, then canvassing could be more targeted.
- By Name Lists could provide monthly census. Real-time data.
- What about the heat? The group was not sure what a response should be during extreme heat. Judith Tackett summarized what OEM has provided in the past (cooling shelters years ago only saw 3-5 people, school buses parked at Riverfront/Farmer's market open for anyone – not well utilized). Wendell Segroves said people go to public facilities during heat. Judith Tackett said Metro publicized Golf Course, Parks facilities, and libraries as serving as cooling stations during extreme heat. OEM also providing water (similar to canvassing).
- Conversation went back to winter shelter. MHC has a day shelter contract with RITI for \$250,000.
- The question to answer was why Metro opens additional shelter when the shelter beds that are available are not at capacity?
- Capacity should also be provided and kept at Metro shelter. Then the question is who has access to an overflow shelter.
- Budget/resources becomes an issue. The group wants to look at last year's budget.
- What are possible facilities? There needs to be an inventory of facilities. Is there an opportunity to create a temporary location, say, a tent in a parking lot? Who has access? Cost? Capacity?
- Does Metro need to run an overflow shelter, or should it be a grant?
- Renee Pratt stated that her board does not want MSS to be in the shelter business.

If there was no limit on a budget, an ideal shelter would open at 32 degrees (which is when liquids freeze, and it becomes harder to stay outdoors without water). A shelter would have a check in and secured lockers for storage, create a policy to ensure low-barrier access, gather data at the shelter (VI-SPDAT and entering into CES), a dedicated location. During heat waves, there should be access to water.

There was discussion on the budget and not everyone agreed that this was a zero-sum game. However, Metro has a set budget and the question becomes where to invest. Freddie O'Connell stated that if this group's recommendation will move to opening extreme weather shelters, he will want to have the

discussion about investment in housing opportunities to keep aligned with building a strong Housing Crisis Resolution System. Example, for 50 additional shelter beds, we would need to invest in 300 housing opportunities for the same population we serve with the emergency beds (1 to 6 ratio).

One key question the group mulled over: Does Metro enter the shelter business? Does Metro relieve any pressure? What happened with people entering with weapons?

The group acknowledged the following:

Whether Metro is involved in the cold weather response as running a shelter or not:

- A Metro shelter will not end exposure to extreme weather for every person (free will of person)
- A Metro shelter will not eliminate barriers completely (policies create rules and potential barriers)
- If continued, a Metro shelter cannot be assumed to have unlimited capacity. In other words, someone will be at risk of being turned away.
- The goal of any response from this ad hoc committee is to drive the number of people exposed to extreme weather toward zero.

Freddie O'Connell said the question to ask was what are the things Metro is best equipped to do and what are other providers in the community better equipped to doing?

Theresa Skiles spoke to the importance of holding people accountable. She said if people experiencing homelessness were held accountable for their decisions, they would make better decisions.

Next steps:

1. Examine data: # people on streets, # housing stock
2. Look at last year budget.
3. Parking lot issues:
 - a. Focus needs to be on people who are staying/living on the streets
 - b. Should Metro enter the shelter business?
 - c. Should Metro be in the 0-30% AMI housing business?
 - d. How does the Interdepartmental partnership work around the extreme weather response?
 - e. Non-permanent locations, Dec. 1-March:
 - i. Find a location (tennis court tent, etc.)
 - f. Communication
 - g. Capacity of a Metro shelter
 - h. Grant?

Next meeting:

With the goal of presenting recommendations to the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission in June, the group decided to meet every 3 weeks. Next meeting is **Wednesday, March 21, 8:30-9:30 am.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:50am