

Metropolitan Homelessness Commission
Sonny West Conference Room, 9:30 am
March 3, 2017

Present: Liz Allen Fey, chair; Renee Pratt, Angie Hubbard, Angie Thompson, Freddie O'Connell, Erik Cole, Wendell Segroves, Steven Samra, Paula Foster, Tanaka Vercher, Mary Carolyn Roberts, Mina Johnson, Charles Strobel, Tom Turner, Norman Humber, Rod DeVore (for Ellen Zinkiewicz), Sgt. Ricky Bearden.

Staff: Judith Tackett, Jessica Ivey, Deon Trotter, Sally Besuden, Troy Jenkins

Welcome & Roll Call:

Liz Allen Fey called the meeting to order at 9:32am.

She announced the resignation of Kirby Davis and thanked Paula Foster and Mina Johnson for agreeing to serve on the executive committee. She told Freddie O'Connell that she would appoint a replacement on the Governance Taskforce.

Approval of Minutes:

Due to a lack of quorum at the last meeting, two sets of minutes had to be approved.

Mary Carolyn Roberts made a motion to approve the January minutes; the motion was seconded by Wendell Segroves. All approved.

Mary Carolyn Roberts made a motion to approve the February minutes; Mina Johnson seconded the motion. Freddie O'Connell asked for a minor change to correct his name spelling in one location. With that change, all approved the February minutes.

Financials:

Lisa Ricketts walked to Commission through the budget sheets before them, telling them what is presented on each sheet. She said the budget at this point was on track with spending.

Freddie O'Connell requested a vote on the FY17/18 budget proposal, which was not voted on at the last meeting due to a lack of a quorum. The Metro Social Services Board of Commissioners approved the Homelessness Commission's budget request at their last meeting as required. Mr. O'Connell felt it would send a strong message if the Commission could take an official vote showing its support for the budget request. Judith Tackett gave a report on the additional budget requests for FY17/18. A brief conversation was held around the additional HMIS licenses that are requested. Judith Tackett reported that the current budget includes \$27,900 in HMIS licenses. She said she was asking for an additional \$25,000 in the new budget which would add up to 100 more licenses. These were needed to shift the Homelink database to HMIS. Steven Samra voiced his concerns about increasing HMIS funding when there was no benefit to the community because it was a closed system. Angie Hubbard explained that the goal moving forward was to open the system up (with exceptions to meet legal requirements of protection of privacy), which was also a strong recommendation from the HUD TA (Cloudburst). Erik Cole said

Cloudburst has outlined that Nashville's HMIS is underfunded and under-resourced. He said there was a need to invest 2-3 times more money.

Freddie O'Connell made a motion to approve the budget request, seconded by Paula Foster. All approved.

Public Comment Changes:

Liz Allen Fey said this was a time of opportunity, alignment, accountability, and resources. She said she hoped that the Commission will look very different. One of the changes that was requested was to allow public input in different areas of the agenda. She said she was willing to try this out and would allot three different time slots for public comments. She said the only request she had of the public was to allocate no more than 30 minutes total for public comments.

Public Comments:

John Zirker commented on HMIS and said it was a long time coming. He said he was involved in discussions 10 years ago and it has been a long time coming. He said it was a good idea. He also described what his community looks like. He said it looked like a war zone. He talked about the need for wrap around services, but beyond that, there was a need for new low-income housing units. He said in a city that was booming it ought to be possible to add new units for people experiencing homelessness.

Tim Smith spoke up on how hard it was to find things on the Webpage on MDHA and on the Homelessness Commission page. He asked why the Commission was not keeping it updated and whether the Commission was trying to keep secrets.

Angie Hubbard responded that she would look into the specific issues the gentleman said was not available. Judith Tackett said she was asking for an office assistant and part of that person's task would be to update the Website regularly. She repeated that there was nothing to hide, but to post content, it would be great to have a clear direction for the Commission, which the Commission is working on now through the governance process. John Zirker asked whether the housing numbers reported for 2016 were of people housed. Judith Tackett confirmed that these were numbers from community providers that the Commission staff reported out. John Zirker pointed out that these numbers were basically recycling people through the same housing units. Judith Tackett said that the numbers did not reflect housing development, just housing placement.

Howard Allen thanked for the opportunity to have public input at different times throughout the meeting. He said this makes him feel a part of the meeting. "We know this system better than all of y'all. He commented that the Vulnerability Index was practically a tracking system. He said housing was a beautiful concept and maybe one day we can sit down with the Council members and come up with our plan. He said as of now it was still a losing battle for people like him.

Governance Discussion:

Liz Allen Fey framed the discussion. She said the Continuum of Care formed a Charter Committee that was tasked to re-write the governance charter. She said it was really important to understand where we've been, where we are and where we are going.

Judy Tackett gave a brief history of the Commission:

2004 – Mayor Bill Purcell Task Force to develop a 10 Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness in Nashville

2005 – Creation of the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission under the Metro Social Services Board of Commissioners

2005 – Hiring of a Homelessness Coordinator in charge of staffing the Commission, is part of the MSS Planning & Coordination Unit

2007 (June) – move of the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission to MDHA. The 10 Year plan was renamed to focus on ending all homelessness (rather than just chronic homelessness)

2007-2011 - Took on HMIS from ITS (previously HMIS was at Metro Health Department)

During this time the executive director hired a total of 6 staff: Executive Director, HMIS manager, funds development coordinator, communications coordinator, outreach coordinator, office manager.

In 2008, The Key Alliance was formed, which was the nonprofit fundraising arm of the Commission staffed by Commissions staff.

2011 (July 1) – move back to MSS, but left HMIS at MDHA

2012- dissolution of The Key Alliance board and functions; complete separation from the Homelessness Commission, The Key Alliance has meanwhile been dissolved.

2013 – New director (Will Connelly), How's Nashville collaboration, new focus on housing.

2014 - New ordinance (old one would have sunset the Commission after 10 years). The new ordinance dissolved the Commission's connection to the 10 Year Plan.

Judy Tackett continued by reading the vision, mission and duties of the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission:

Vision:

To end and prevent homelessness for people in Nashville.

Mission/Purpose:

The Metropolitan Homelessness Commission has an unwavering commitment to a single mission: to end homelessness in Nashville. Together with many community partners including people who have experienced homelessness, we lead efforts to create, implement, fund, and advocate for programs and policies that generate measurable results and lead to a clear, 30-day path out of homelessness that provides housing stability for individuals and families.

Values:

- Housing focused
- Person centered
- Data driven
- Effective use of resources

Duties as outlined in Ordinance 2014-777:

The Metropolitan Homelessness Commission shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- a) To implement a coordinated and focused approach to ending homelessness and to develop measurable objectives;
- b) To assure participation of all stakeholders including homeless persons;
- c) To maintain accurate, current data on homeless populations;

Judy Tackett then gave an overview of what staff currently do. She said there was a total of 5 staff Metro-funded: Director, assistant director, CES manager, data and performance manager, housing and landlord outreach coordinator (3 positions filled, 2 open); and 3 grant-funded positions: 3 encampment outreach coordinators (2 positions filled, 1 to start next week). In addition, a new staff request was submitted for an office assistant for the next fiscal year.

Highlights of specific tasks:

- CES: (move from Homelink to HMIS)
 - Families
 - Individuals
 - Veterans
 - Youth
 - Hospitals (H2H)
- Landlord Liaison Project
- N.O.T.E. – outreach coordination & linking people to services
- Interdepartmental Council (coordination among Metro departments)
- Youth Planning – co lead of The Key Action Plan
- VA Planning – goal to end Veterans homelessness, reach functional zero
- CABHI/Centerstone/SOAR contracts
- How's Nashville Section 8 & finances
- Housing navigation process & training
- RITI contracts for Guest House and Day Shelter
- Cold Weather planning & contract for coordination
- Educational community outreach
- Participation in State Interagency Council on Homelessness

Commissioners asked questions specifically around staff positions. Judith Tackett in response to the questions reported that the director position was open, one additional outreach worker was starting this Monday, and she was restructuring the Hospital to Home position. Paula Foster and Angie Thompson asked about the Hospital to Home position. Ms. Tackett said that the project needs a strong data focus, which hospitals brought up. She said the Hospital to Home program was not over, it would just been divided up between a data/performance position and the assistant director to allow for more pointed solutions around data sharing. The position was not grant funded and Ms. Tackett said she was posting the opening as quickly as possible restructuring it to a data and performance coordinator position.

Charles Strobel brought up the mission statement, saying that over time, it seems that the Commission has morphed itself from a Commission to an agency. Commissioners around the table agreed.

Liz Allen Fey asked what authority this table needed to have to serve our community ?

Freddie O'Connell said he thought the authority that the Commission needed was to direct Nashville to a posture of Housing First and to make sure the resources were available to create meaningful permanent supportive housing. Charles Strobel said that's what he believes Mr. Zirker kept saying earlier when he asked whether we were creating housing or just recycling housing opportunities.

Freddie O'Connell said he thinks the Commission needs some authority to create development capacity specifically focused on the population making up to 30% AMI. He said right now, any act of the Commission would go no further than possibly encouraging Erik or Judy or Renee to say to the city via the Mayor's Office or possibly to MDHA that what we need now is not just the housing that comes out of the Barnes Trust Fund or incentives grants or maybe the 100 units that results from inclusionary zoning – if it remains legal in Nashville. “It is specifically looking at how can we create the capacity in Nashville to build housing for this particular [population].”

Liz Allen Fey asked whether that meant that this body also needed to become a fundraising body because what Mr. O'Connell just described was “at best” an influencing body.

Paula Foster raised the question of who the staff currently reported to and how it needed to be set up. Mary Carolyn Roberts said that the Commission could also not just sit around and wait for money. She suggested to look at new partnerships, for example with congregations. Mina Johnson said as a body, the Commission was a planning and coordination body, and she concluded it did not have any authority. The Commission was coordinating with Metro Social Services and with MDHA. So in a way, Council Lady Johnson said, the Commission has too many bosses. She said the question then becomes how can we not be in the way and help others be where they need to be. So, do we need to restructure or what is the best way to get there?

Liz Allen Fey said the question was what the Commission's authority was and then what the function of the Commission was. Paula Foster responded that the Commission had not authority. Freddie O'Connell asked what the authority was the Commission needed. He said it was the authority to innovate, and he brought up the Green Street project as a model. Further discussion focused on the history and the Commission's involvement in the Green Street model. Angie Hubbard said there needed to be authority to set priorities no matter the funding source. Freddie O'Connell said if Nashville was going to be a Housing First focused community, the authority needed was to innovate and coordinate. He said those two things were pretty closely related.

Other questions that were raised included what the role was between the Commission and the Mayor's Office; whether the Commission's role was to be a convener or a problem-solving strategist; whether the Commission served as the backbone organization of a collective impact model or its role was to enable a backbone organization.

Paula Foster said that the Commission was mixing governance and programming. She said a backbone agency was needed. Renee Pratt added that with that goal, it would need

to be determined where the Commission should live and once that is decided who sits on the Commission. Erik Cole said that Council Lady Mary Carolyn Roberts hit on this point, that in two words, the Commission needed focus and goals. “We have allowed ourselves to try to be everything to everybody.” He said this group needed to push entities to make housing work. Steven Samra said the Commission and the community were at a point where the planets are aligning. He said he encouraged commissioners to be thoughtful and mindful of how we move forward.

Liz Allen Fey asked commissioners who they think need to be at the table (on the Commission). Commissioners listed the following:

- People in position to make decisions
- State liaison
- Sheriff & Fire departments
- Codes
- People who experience homelessness
- Providers
- MDHA
- State corrections
- Churches/congregations because they’re the whole package (funders and providers)
- Statewide consumer network

Ms. Fey added funders and people who have the resources and can influence others.

Paula Foster cautioned that there may be a conflict of interest if funders and providers at the table. She said commissioners need to be people who understand homelessness. She said she was not sure businesses have the understanding they would need.

Liz Allen Fey said she envisions that the Commission could become the CoC Board with a strong committee structure. Then whoever sits around this table would be presented with a problem to solve.

Public Comment:

Howard Allen – We had all the correct people sitting at the table. We need someone that’s been around, dealing with the Commission. You all need to be listening to us

Steve Reiter – We heard a lot talk about what this group is – ongoing issue. The Commission should be more of a work issue not a commission meeting issue. He gave the example of HMIS. Mandy hasn’t given a report on an open system. We don’t have our act together. I would love to hear reports on housing, transitional shelter, emergency shelter, there are several things we could be doing and we aren’t doing it. We should be sending out advisories out to other departments. Some of the people who understand housing aren’t at the table. He recommended the commissioners don’t discuss your roles at this meeting.

Erin Gauvin with Park Center affirmed the conversation about structure vs programming. She said she was exciting to hear about the housing first focus, but it would be helpful to have providers around the table. She was concerned that since there isn’t a focus on what is happening to those people who have the skill and passion ...we are losing them.

Samuel Lester with Open Table Nashville said in regard to the various people that need to be at the table, I still don’t understand why someone from the schools aren’t here. It is

a huge problem. 2nd the big elephant in the room is MDHA reluctance to participate in affordable housing.

Tennessee Plan to End Homelessness

Judith Tackett introduced Abigail Dowell with the Office of Housing and Homeless Services of the State Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services. Ms. Dowell also coordinates the Tennessee Interagency Council on Homelessness, which has published the first state plan to end homelessness. Per request from the Commission, Ms. Tackett has invited Ms. Dowell for a quick presentation and Q&A.

Abigail Dowell spoke about the collaborative effort underway at the state level and gave a brief history of the Tennessee Interagency Council. She said it was still pretty new, and the state plan was just put into place in summer 2016. The Council is already working on an update. She said things that are being discussed at the Homelessness Commission level here in Nashville were also being worked on by the state. Ms. Dowell highlighted some of the action steps outlined in the plan such as how the budgets for housing can be adjusted, coordination among schools systems, the creation of a data repository at the state to get a strong understanding of what the needs are in Tennessee. She said the goal was to prevent homelessness whenever possible and where not, make episodes of homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.

Freddie O'Connell asked why the goal was to end chronic homelessness by 2017. Ms. Dowell responded that the Council was trying to align its goals with the federal goals of ending homelessness. She said, "We don't want to miss any opportunities the federal government puts out there."

The Website to review the plan is www.tn.gov/endhomelessness

Judith Tackett commented that it was very helpful to have the communication open at the local, state, and federal levels. She added that by building a systems approach that addresses homelessness, in turn would also address other issues that come along with a lack of housing and homelessness.

Moment of Silence was held for people who passed away during the previous month.

Announcements:

Wendell Segroves announced the burial services for David "Cowboy" Luttrell, which was scheduled for the following Monday.

Liz Allen Fey announced that the next Commission meetings will be focused on holding work sessions.

The meeting was adjourned at 11 a.m.