

Metropolitan Homelessness Commission/Continuum of Care Governance Workgroup
July 25, 2017
Meeting Minutes

Present: Daryl Murray, Catherine Knowles, Liz Allen Fey, Renee Pratt, Wendell Segroves, Paula Foster, Mina Johnson, Rachel Hester, Hershell Warren.

Staff: Deon Trotter, Mark Murray (Metro Legal), Judith Tackett

Public: Steve Reiter

The session was recorded by Metro 3.

Meeting Purpose:

Explore the potential of combining the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission and the Continuum of Care Governance Board to create a unified governance structure to end homelessness in Nashville-Davidson County.

Introductions:

Catherine Knowles, who joined the group for the first time today, gave her reason for why she thinks this is an important task.

Ms. Knowles served as the program supervisor of the Metro Nashville Public School's HERO program for 20 years. In that capacity she serves coordinator of the Metro Schools homeless population. She's been on the CoC governance board since it formed. She said it was time that Nashville has a unified form of governance in its community. A lot of the nonprofit providers do great individual work, but a lack of coordination/collaboration creates repetitive work. She sees a lot of families she works with get stuck in the cycle of homelessness. They receive great services from an agency, they get into housing, but a few months or a couple of years later, they end up back homeless. "It's time for the city to come together and build a real structure."

Goals

Liz Allen Fey repeated the goals of the group.

The main question is, can this group start building models to present to the CoC and Metro Homelessness Commission?

The goal is to get the work done by Sept. 1, which the group agreed was an ambitious timeline. It was determined to meet every two weeks, but Liz Allen Fey said she was unavailable on Aug. 8 and would bring this up at the end of the meeting. She encouraged the group to meet without her.

Quick Review of history of the Coalition and CoC

Judith Tackett had sent out a document outlining conversations with local people involved in the Coalition and CoC in Nashville. She went over the following history summary with the group:

Summary of the History of the Nashville Coalition for the Homeless and its beginnings (1980s to mid-1990s); 1994 Start of the HUD requirement of CoC's to submit a consolidated application for funding

The following summary is based on emails from Charles Strobel, founding director of Room In The Inn; Rusty Lawrence, executive director of Urban Housing Solutions; Bill Friskics-Warren, medical director with Neighborhood Health; and Suzie Tolmie, homeless coordinator at MDHA who serves as the CoC collaborative applicant.

Late 1970s and early 1980s:

Bill Moynihan¹, ED of Metro Social Services, convened a group of people at this office on a regular basis to discuss urban services and outreach. This group included among others Bill Barnes, David Webb (Interfaith Association), Larry Prisco (Storefront Ministry), Pat McGahey (Downtown Presbyterian Church), Ken and Carol, Charles Strobel (Holy Name).

1982:

An informal coalition started as a committee of the Council of Community Services. It was chaired by Thomas O.H. Smith. John Lozier provided some staffing out of the Family and Children's Services.

1983:

Rusty Lawrence became director of the Council of Community Services and took over the staffing of the Nashville Coalition for the Homeless.

The coalition put together a proposal to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for a clinic for the homeless and won a 4-year grant, which resulted in the Downtown Clinic (which opened in 1985). After two years, the Metro Health Department took over the clinic and when the grant ran out, Metro absorbed the cost in its budget.

Background on the Council of Community Services:

The Nashville Coalition for the Homeless was run out of the Council of Community Services, a free-standing nonprofit that served as the planning and research arm of the United Way.

The Council of Community Services convened community leaders and other interested parties to study emerging social problems and plan for solutions. Resulting service programs were either spun off to an established community organization or new independent nonprofits were started. Such nonprofits included Senior Citizens Inc (now Fifty Forward) and Urban Housing Solutions.

1987-1994:

Kate Moynihan became the first director of the Nashville Coalition for the Homeless until Bill Friskics-Warren took over and served as the Coalition's director from 1989 to 1994. Bill Friskics-Warren.

¹ <http://www.nashvillescene.com/news/article/13009236/bill-moynihan-19212003>

Accomplishments:

- *Study of the city's loss of more than 2,000 Single Room Occupancy units in the 1970s and 1980s.*
- *Annual Walk for the Homeless was established raising \$40,000-\$50,000 per year to pay for move-in costs (rent and utility deposits) for people transitioning from homelessness into housing.*
- *Development (with Barrett Lee, a sociologist at Vanderbilt University) of a method for enumerating people experiencing homelessness in Nashville.*
- *Bi-annual enumerations were held (Point In Time counts) from 1987 to 1993 (these counts were stopped because the Coalition felt that rather than reflecting the actual extent of homelessness, the counts merely showed the city's shelter and transitional housing bed capacity).*
- *People with lived experience were added as Coalition partners (which posed some challenges as now people who were served by the very providers at the same table voiced their opinions about those very services).*
- *Publication of a report on the violence experienced by people on the streets and in shelters.*
- *Standards were developed for local shelter providers.*
- *Another grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation provided dollars for a demonstration case management program for families experiencing homelessness.*
- *The inaugural Memorial Service for people experiencing homelessness was organized in 1991 with the help of members with lived experiences of the Coalition.*
- *A meter program (repurposing parking meters) was implemented in the Downtown Business District as an alternative to a panhandling ordinance.*

The Coalition came up with an early blueprint for the services necessary to deal with homelessness in Nashville.

Bill Friskics-Warren noted that under his leadership the Nashville Coalition for the Homeless became more activist in nature and butted heads with then-Mayor Phil Bredesen. He resigned in 1994 recommending that moving forward the Coalition should be led by people experiencing homelessness.

In 2002, the Homeless Power Project was founded. Here is an excerpt from their Facebook page: The Nashville Homeless Power Project was founded in June 2002 by Homeless and Formerly Homeless People (HFHP) who were part of a homeless discussion group called the Living Room. The Living Room was a safe place for HFHP and never-been-homeless to share their experiences, strengths, and hopes. Every week we would learn of abuses of people on the street by police officers or about another family without a place to stay or another homeless person who worked without pay. There wasn't the space or the capacity in the Living Room to thoroughly address these issues. It was with this need that a few of the HFHP from the group decided to form the NHPP.

The Homeless Power Project dissolved in 2008 or 2009 (if Judy's memory serves right). I believe Steven Samra would know more history about the Homeless Power Project. Previous directors included Jeannie Alexander, Matthew Leber, and Jay Mason.

Continuum of Care:

From <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/coc101.pdf>:

Initially, HUD did not impose any requirements for systemic planning at the local level. From 1988 to 1993, HUD held national competitions for its homeless assistance funds every year, for which individual organizations throughout the country wrote applications. However, since 1994, HUD has required each community to come together to submit a single comprehensive Continuum of Care (CoC) application rather than allowing applications from individual providers in a community. HUD's intent in creating this structured application process was to stimulate community-wide planning and coordination of programs for individuals and families who are homeless.

In Nashville, Suzie Tolmie has the history of the Continuum of Care. She has served as MDHA's homeless coordinator since the CoC's beginning and in that capacity has served as staff of the collaborative applicant, MDHA.

Suzie provided the attached document of a 1995 grant application to HUD, which includes a descriptive picture of the situation of Nashville's homeless service provider system of that time.

Liz Allen Fey asked what the group noticed. The following discussion points were raised:

- In the beginning everyone was at the table. Fewer groups/organizations. Now people are mostly at the table for funding purposes.
- People have tried to do the same thing for a long time, but then they get exhausted and roll off.
- A lot of time is spent planning and drafting blueprints, but then we do not put it into action.
- The approach to providing services is very territorial.
- The focus shifted from collaborating to address a need to collaborating to receive funding.
- Opportunity: We are at a point with the Collaborative Applicant conversation where people are back at the table to talk about how to end homelessness in Nashville.
- Questions were raised around how to hold each other accountable, how to shift from funding focus to needs/person-centered focus.
- Early on, the decision makers were at the table. Now most organizations send representatives who cannot make decisions right then and there. Thus, the group now ends up just talking rather than moving issues forward.

Liz Allen Fey said the following issues were brought up in the discussion: Accountability; decision makers, becoming person-focuses, relationship-focused, and the notion that people get exhausted and quit.

Peer City Models

Darlene Matthews send the following information:

Below I'm re-sending a summary of how Boards were re-purposed from other communities. It's usually pretty straightforward.

Like Baltimore and DC, you all had a homeless "leadership" group that pre-existed HEARTH and CoC Board regulatory requirements. However unlike DC and Baltimore you all created a new CoC Board instead of trying to augment your current leadership group (the Commission) to try and meet the new HUD regulatory requirements. That's the primary difference here.

Houston's CoC change was done quite a while ago so I'm not sure they had a "combination" of leadership.

Your current CoC Board is a very small and weak structure that has historically operated with a very narrow charge. It doesn't make sense for a narrowly-driven entity to continue to operate when your CoC has stated that they want to move forward with a "big CoC". Combining it with a larger entity like the commission that is willing to augment itself to meet CoC Board requirements makes a lot of sense.

In turn you need a "Big CoC Board" to support a collaborative applicant with a big implementation charge.

If what you are asking about is the specific PROCESS by which these changes in leadership structure took place, here's some context:

- *DC – the legislation was updated to simply include that the DC ICH would also function as the CoC Board*
- *Baltimore – the CoC's Ten Year Plan document was amended in 2013 or so, to expand Board expectations and requirements to include CoC Board responsibilities; then in 2016 a much more thorough change was made through a community-driven revision to the Governance Charter and By-Laws*
- *Atlanta –Atlanta was a part of a regional CoC. They formed their own CoC and specifically created an ordinance to document the role that government would play.*

Judith Tackett and Deon Trotter reported on a session they attended at last week's National Alliance to End Homelessness Conference in D.C. That workshop called "CoC Leadership that Works" presented by Carl Falconer, regional director of SOAR and Housing Initiatives of Lutheran Services Florida Health.

Highlights:

- Start building a board by leaving off the service providers
- Once you have formed a board, locals can add a few service providers to represent certain groups (example: shelter providers, transitional housing, permanent housing)
- Homelessness is a community issue, thus it should be solved by the community

- But – if you want a CoC that reflects the community, you need to shift away from stacking it with providers only.
- Committees is where the work of providers should happen; thus, there is plenty of opportunity for providers to bring in their expertise

Rachel Hester said RITI's board shifted from the old ways to a more business-oriented board model. She said it's been complicated, but has benefitted the organization overall. She said she no longer can go to a board meeting and "wing it," but needs to come fully prepared. Liz Allen Fey said structure was about identity. She said currently there was a lack of role definition.

Liz Allen Fey summarized on a poster the main issues that were raised in the previous discussions:

Poster:

Accountability

Decision Makers

From service focused to person focused

Relational

Represents the community

Clear strategy

Clear identity

Empowerment

Clear structure – build a lasting structure

Ms. Fey said that at the last meeting we spoke about three models, but that she had a hard time coming up with three models because the group already has identified that it is not willing to stay the same (that would be the third, "status quo" model)

The workgroup split into two groups for 30 minutes for each to discuss the following two models:

1. Blended Model:
Blend the CoC Governance Board and the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission into one governance board/structure.
2. Relational Model:
Keep the two bodies separated, strengthen their identities, and figure out how they work together.

Workgroup reports:

Relational Model:

MHC role/focus:

- Advocate – provides communication/education to the community
- Sets city's agenda
- Decision makers are:
 - Business leaders
 - Political leaders
 - Faith community leaders
 - City departments (social services, police, legal)
- Fundraise in accordance with a strategic plan
- Creates annual report card
- Convenes provider groups
- Committees:
 - Fundraising
 - Communication
 - Etc.

HUD CoC role/focus:

- HUD compliance
- Decision makers are:
 - Real estate
 - Reps from MHC
 - Service provider leaders
 - City department frontline staff
 - Advocates
- Has seats on MHC
- Reports to the MHC (acts as a committee to MHC)

Shared responsibilities:

- Shared membership
- Shared data
- Shared politics

MHC

- Convenes planning
- Public awareness
- Accountability
- Fundraise

CoC

The question is where does the accountability lie?

The principle of the relational model was to keep the CoC focused on the NOFA and HUD requirements while the MHC become the larger umbrella organization that focuses on the community strategy to end homelessness.

Blended Model:

- Oversight of federal, state, and local funding and scoring
- Oversight grants directly to new entity
- Oversight of data management
- Guidance for needed policy (federal, state & local)
- Power and authority to act on behalf of community
- Leadership of leveraged resources
- Identify bench/strategy/gaps of services
- Connector of services to meet 
- Unified vision
- Ordinance will identify accountability

Questions this group raised:

- Where does power/authority come from:
 - Board?
 - Government?
 - Particular agency?
 - (ordinance change)
- How does this entity oversee vision for homeless issues

Community leadership – members of CoC current board [nominees]

The discussion of the blended model focused on where the Homelessness Commission would be housed. Would it still be function under the MSS Board or would it become a standalone Commission?

The workgroup decided to look at these two versions at the next meeting.

Mark Murray from Metro Legal said that one of the issues to look into further is how a standalone commission may affect the membership. For example, it may not be possible to have Council representatives on the Commission. Further legal clarification would be needed.

Moving forward, the workgroup decided to look at the following models:

3 models:

1. Separate governance bodies with clear role division that form together a housing crisis resolution system (big umbrella)
2. Combined governance body with MHC under MSS
3. Combined governance body with MHC as a standalone under Metro

Next meeting:

The group decided that they will not split into two groups at that next meeting, but remain together to discuss each model.

Next meeting is scheduled for Aug. 22, 9:30-12:30 p.m. (3 hours)

Homework:

- Liz Allen Fey and Judith Tackett will look further at peer cities and see if there are pitfall examples that need to be avoided
- Judith will get with Suzie Tolmie to accumulate a list of the requirements from HUD for the CoC's. What are the CoC's tasks that HUD expects them to do? (beyond just the NOFA)
- Judith will reach out to the group to ask prior to the next meeting what the members' questions are for Metro Legal
- Judith will bring copies of both charters/by-laws for the CoC & MHC to the next meeting
- Ensure Metro Legal is present.

Liz Allen Fey said in the end the group will present, hopefully together, to both bodies – the CoC and MHC to have them discuss and make the decision. “We’re going to present it to the groups for discussion, not just a vote.”