

## **Metropolitan Homelessness Commission Meeting**

**Aug. 4, 2017**

### **Minutes**

Meeting called to order at: 9:30am

Present: Liz Allen Fey, chair; Renee Pratt, Freddie O'Connell, Mina Johnson, Tanaka Vercher, Wendell Segroves, Charles Strobel, Tom Turner, Adriane Harris, Angie Hubbard, Angie Thompson

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

#### **Meeting Called to Order at: 9:35am**

#### **Welcome and Roll Call**

#### **Approval of Minutes for July 7<sup>th</sup>.**

Wendell Segroves made a motion to approve the minutes, Tom Turner seconded the motion, all approved.

#### **Budget Report**

Lisa Ricketts gave a budget report of last fiscal year. The Commission did not spend all of its budget because of the open positions, which cannot be used otherwise.

Freddie O'Connell asked a contract question wanting to know how the case management dollars were spent. Judith Tackett explained that \$405,000 were spent on a contract with Centerstone for Critical Time Intervention after people move into housing.

The Commission accepted the budget report.

#### **Governance Work Group Report**

Liz Allen Fey reported back from the MHC/CoC Governance Workgroup. She said, the group had two meetings. At the first one, they decided to get some history of the CoC and Coalition, peer city information from Cloudburst, and they identified questions. At the second meeting, after reviewing the information gathered, the workgroup broke into two groups and identified three potential models:

1. A relational model – where the CoC Governance Board and Metropolitan Homelessness Commission remain separate, but work together with more distinct roles; and
2. A combined model with one unified governance board. During that discussion a third model was raised:
3. A combined governance, but rather than under another board it would be a stand-alone model.

Judith Tackett said that discussions about a standalone always goes immediately to the operational function of where staff is housed.

Liz Allen Fey said the discussions at this point need to remain on governance. The conversations have been productive. The MHC/CoC Governance Workgroup will try to come up with a recommendation during the next two meetings. Then the question was raised when the CoC would be voting for the collaborative applicant.

Angie Hubbard said nothing was scheduled and at this point, the NOFA has been released, so the collaborative applicant vote won't occur during this time.

Liz Allen Fey said the next meeting was scheduled for Aug. 22, at 9:30 a.m. the meetings are public and the notes are posted. She asked if Commissioners had any questions.

Freddie O'Connell asked whether there was anyone in the group who felt that the status quo was the best option at this point. Liz Allen Fey said that was a clear no.

Charles Strobel asked Judith Tackett as the new director what she thought should happen. He said the Commission should look to her to take some queues.

Judith Tackett said she believes there needs to be a strong unified governance body that reflects the entire community. "We need to be more intentional about who is at the table." She said at this point the CoC membership was mostly comprised of service providers, which meant that at present homelessness in this community was a service provider issue. If we keep saying that homelessness is a community issue, then we need to include the entire community beyond service providers and support the work that is being done by providers from a bigger perspective.

Ms. Tackett further spoke about being intentional on the structure of a combined leadership model. Who chairs the committees, how effective are meetings. She talked about the need to be intentional on who sits on committees and how we lead meetings. We also need to be intentional about how we seek public input. The reason is that if we do not start being intentional about governance, roles, staffing, goals, and so on, then we will slow down any progress.

Freddie O'Connell asked how long the community still has technical assistance from Cloudburst. Angie Hubbard said their participation was community-driven and Cloudburst would be with us through the transition. Mr. O'Connell said having that third party here was extremely helpful.

Further discussion focused on who "the community" was. Liz Allen Fey said the bigger question was "who is the community." Angie Hubbard said per CoC regulations the community is anyone interested in homelessness. Judith Tackett said it was important that when we started looking at committees that we tie them under the Continuum of Care because in essence the Commission is part of the CoC as well. Freddie O'Connell spoke about the importance to define community in this context. Liz Allen Fey said these were the conversations that needed to happen moving forward. Charles Strobel said we needed to evolve the understanding of community, and he stressed that we could not want to lose sight of the homeless individuals themselves. Judith Tackett agreed and she has started conversations on how to broaden that discussion. Liz Allen Fey said the work the MHC/CoC Governance workgroup did around values really talked about that, specifically how do we help people move from the situation of homelessness and/or prevent that situation.

### **How's Nashville Fundraising**

Judith Tackett said that the Metro Homelessness Commission has a How's Nashville Fund, which was a special donation fund. She said any person can donate into it and it is very similar to a nonprofit in that people receive a tax deduction. She said as a Metro staff member she was not allowed to give tax advice

and had to tell people who ask about the tax deduction to get with their CPA or attorney, but federal law permitted governments to set up special funds like that. The How's Nashville fund has largely been kept alive through grants from MDHA's CDBG dollars and some fundraising. Ms. Tackett said the fund regularly gets to a point where it is about to be depleted. The How's Nashville fund covers move-in costs for people who transition from literal homelessness to housing. It covers security and utility deposits, first month rent, and some arrears up to a total of \$1,000 per household. Ms. Tackett further said this year that thanks to Metro Social Services, we had \$120,000 to tie us over through this transition. But this money is one-time funding that needs to be used by June 30, 2018. She said she was also working with Angie Hubbard to identify some CDBG funds for this year. After that, the CDBG funds would likely go away and there was no plan on how to replenish this fund.

Freddie O'Connell asked what the future was of How's Nashville. Judith Tackett said she started that conversation with the How's Nashville leadership group a few months ago, but the group decided to get through the governance conversation and focus on moving the big picture conversations that were had in the smaller How's Nashville group under the CoC, where they belong. However, Ms. Tackett said, she felt the How's Nashville brand was especially strong with landlords. It has become a housing outreach tool for building relationships with landlords. Freddie O'Connell said he thought that was a great idea.

Liz Allen Fey said that often what happens was that we wait to see how we will work together with the CoC. She said if she had it her way, we would do a strategic plan for the community. A piece of that would be fundraising. She said she would like to entertain the idea of having a committee around fundraising because the mechanisms were in place, so why aren't we doing it?

Freddie O'Connell raised the question about being sensitive to the fact that the Commission does not want to take charitable donations from other service providers. Charles Strobel agreed and said we should look at the Metro budget. Liz Allen Fey said there were two ways to think about it. For one, is it worth exploring the need and second, what is our role in the How's Nashville coalition? Freddie O'Connell asked why it was put on the Commission's shoulders? Judith Tackett said part of that was so that providers were not in competition with their fundraising efforts for their own organizations. Mr. O'Connell asked who technically was How's Nashville; he asked whether there was a chair. Judith Tackett said technically she would be the chair with the Commission functioning as the backbone organization. However, right now there were not How's Nashville meetings because all providers were meeting under the umbrella of the Continuum of Care. Angie Thompson said there were also issues about how this all played together. What function and authority would a fundraising group have? Judith Tackett said that Metro government staff could not fundraise on behalf of a nonprofit, but it could fundraise for a line item in its own budget.

Further discussion went into how the How's Nashville fund is set up. Renee Pratt gave the example of the Caldwell fund that was set up within the MSS budget. Liz Allen Fey said the question was how could this body leverage funds that other cannot. Mina Johnson said that in her observation we needed a solid governance body so that we don't take fundraising capability from CoC providers. Once governance was in place, this discussion could be picked up.

Liz Allen Fey said the idea to put a fundraising task force together was due to the urgency for the next three years so that we avoid not having these funds available for the community come July, and people can continue to cover move-in costs. Judith Tackett said these funds were accessible to all the partners. The provider agencies were the ones that request the funds on behalf of their clients. The Commission

then pays directly to landlords. Mina Johnson said we needed a sustainable way of keeping that line item.

Freddie O'Connell asked for a clear sense of the goal before voting to create a fundraising task force or committee. He asked whether the goal was so that we as the Commission get more engaged with funders? Liz Allen Fey said she wanted to raise money for the How's Nashville fund. But she said, if the Commission was not there to do that yet, then maybe this was not the time to set up a committee just yet.

Freddie O'Connell said he struggled with the governance issue that has been one of the obstacles to Metro being a bigger partner around homelessness. He indicated that with governance not being resolved, now the Commission is looking to start fundraising. Liz Allen Fey said this was really about How's Nashville. She agreed, the governance was not solved; service providers work well together, but there was not a coordinated system in place yet. The question was do we just let How's Nashville hang out there and let it run out of funds even though it had great outcomes? Freddie O'Connell said he was unsure of that performance. Was it a target that could be expressed to a potential donor?

Liz Allen Fey said that because of time, she would like to move further discussion about this to next month's meeting. All agreed with that.

### **Public Input Session**

Sharon Hall said she did not really see any education of the public. She said there was nothing that went out to the public that says this is how we need your support. She also said that when she came to Commission meetings she left with what she came with, which was nothing. Not much has changed.

Tim Leeth talked about media policy, which reads well. But he said procedures make it seem like information is filtered to who can see it. He was critical of the communications piece that does not trickle out to people where they are.

Samuel Lester said How's Nashville had done amazing work through a collective of people and groups that have worked together. He talked about the cost savings achieved over the last years and benefits that spill over to institutions. He compared those cost savings to criminalizing people who are on the street, which then just pushes people further down the line. Mr. Lester said the city should be more than willing to fund How's Nashville and provide move-in costs that helps people obtain housing, which ultimately saves a lot of money. He said he believes there need to be more rapid re-housing dollars and dollars to keep people in their housing.

Steve Reiter criticized Liz Allen Fey for how she runs the MHC/CoC governance workgroup meetings and said it was inappropriate for her to chair the meetings. He said people did not feel free to speak up. He said there needed to be a third party to facilitate the meetings. He further spoke to the status quo of governance saying we didn't have to combine federal, state, and local bodies.

Howard Allen said he would like for someone to get a video of what an actual CoC meeting looks like. He said he didn't think anyone around the table knew what that looks like. He said people experiencing homelessness didn't feel part of it. He spoke of empty rhetoric because he still didn't have a place to go. He said that homeless people were under attack with less than 92 days until Room In The Inn started up

again. He spoke of the need for a Homeless court, and that homeless people were different and didn't need to be going through the same system.

### **Media Policy for Encampments**

Tom Turner presented the Commission's media policy on encampments. A task force met to discuss it. The goal was to provide clear guidance for how the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission staff addresses requests from the media to accompany the Metro homeless outreach team to encampments. This policy does not limit people experiencing homelessness nor the media from talking to each other and approaching each other. All it does is address how staff handles any request from the media to be sensitive (from the staff perspective) of the privacy of people living in encampments. Judith Tackett stressed that this policy was just for the Commission's outreach team, and that it had no bearing on others.

After brief discussion, Tom Turner made a motion to adopt the policy, Wendell Segroves seconded the motion. All approved.

### **Director's Report**

Judith Tackett welcomed Nicole Williams as the newest staff member. She is the Data & Performance Coordinator. She said to address one of the public comments that was being brought up frequently and also today, which was criticism of how we communicate. Ms. Tackett said the Commission needed to start telling the story and have data as part of that story.

Ms. Tackett reported that two new positions were posted: the assistant director, which would focus on communications and take on administrative oversight tasks, and the community liaison/office assistant to strengthen the relationship with service providers.

The Commission has open seats also two seats for people with lived experiences. Ms. Tackett said this time she intentionally reached out to service providers asking for nominations for people with lived experiences. Names for the open Commission seats were sent to the Mayor's Office for the Mayor's consideration when she appoints new commissioners.

Ms. Tackett said she wanted to touch on the Mayor's Interdepartmental council, which was a staff meeting amongst different Metro departments. She said in her vision she would like that Council to be chaired by a department representative who sits on the Commission to serve as a liaison and give regular updates to the Commission.

Ms. Tackett also updated Commissioners on the Public Investment Plan that created a partnership with MTA. She said staff was meeting with MTA to implement the new pilot program that would allow for up to 500 annual bus passes to people experiencing or at risk of chronic homelessness who work with housing navigators.

On the data improvement, Ms. Tackett said with the new data and performance coordinator now on board, conversations have started to improve the data collection internally as well as play a lead role in data conversations with partners. Ms. Tackett said she would like to provide a presentation on what the homeless outreach team was doing at a later date and talk about their projects.

### **Moment of Silence**

Liz Allen Fey read the names of people who passed away the previous month and the room held a moment of silence in their memory.

### **Announcements**

Wendell Segroves informed the Commission of a meeting that he, Steve Reiter and Lindsey Krinks with the new Central Precinct commander Gordon Howey about the picking up of bags by police in Church Street Park. He said nothing was resolved.

Liz Allen Fey said she would like to hold a strategic planning retreat – 4 hours offsite, probably in October or early November. Judith Tackett was tasked to reach out and look for possible dates. Steve Reiter said the public would need to be notified, a comment that was confirmed.

Ms. Fey said at the next meeting she would go back to keeping time during the public comment period because she had received feedback from several people who feel they are not given a chance to speak up because some people dominate the public comments now.

Ms. Fey asked commissioners what their takeaway was from the public comments. Mina Johnson said this was the first time that Metro was really thinking about being more housing-focused for people experiencing homelessness. But she agreed that we were not doing a good job around PR with that. She said of course things take time, but she understood the frustration. Wendell Segroves said he agreed about more need for public education.

Adriane Harris spoke up to a specific comment which criticized that Erik Cole stepped away from the Continuum of Care and the Commission. She said he was now in a different office and that she was now representing the Mayor's Office moving forward.

Liz Allen Fey also addressed one comment about her serving as the facilitator of the MHC/CoC Governance Workgroup. She was specifically asked to take on that task by the group. She said she would raise that question again to the group.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 am