

Metropolitan Homelessness Commission Meeting
Sept. 1, 2017, 9:30-11 a.m.
Howard Office Building, 700 2nd Ave. South
Minutes

Meeting called to order at: 9:30am

Present: Liz Allen Fey, chair; Renee Pratt, Mina Johnson, Wendell Segroves, Paula Foster, Charles Strobel, Adriane Harris, Angie Thompson, Norman Humber, Bob Freeman, Charlotte Peacock, Tim Leeth, Theresa Skiles, Rickey Bearden, John Krenson, Ellen Zinkiewicz, Freddie O'Connell, Corey Harkey (Metro Legal)

Staff: Judith Tackett, Deon Trotter, Sally Besuden, Troy Jenkins, Joseph Parker, Nicole Williams

Meeting Called to Order at: 9:32am

Welcome & Roll Call, Introduction of new Board members

Liz Allen Fey welcomed the new board members and asked the entire board to go around the room state their names and their roles outside of the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission, and then talk briefly of why they keep coming back to the Commission.

Ricky Bearden, Central Police Precinct. He said he's been assigned to the Central Police Precinct for 1.5 years and has developed a true passion for individuals he works with every day. He's goal and reason for being here is to help people and find long-term housing solutions.

John Krenson, CEO of Operation Stand Down Tennessee (new Commission member). He said since its beginning OSDTN has been a very collaborative organization. He views serving on the Commission as an opportunity to continue in that spirit and see how OSDTN extends collaboration in our community.

Charlotte Peacock, serves on the Metro Social Services Board (new Commission member). She said it was easy to live in a bubble. She took the opportunity to serve on the MSS board to step outside her bubble and help the community. She said there were so many people in need. She personally feels an obligation to the community to do whatever she can, and she was excited to be here.

Charles Strobel, founding member of Room In The Inn. He joined the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission in 2005. He said when it was established, the Commission was the first effort for nonprofits and government to come together and hear the voice of people experiencing homelessness. Prior to that people who are homeless did not have an official voice to express their concerns at the same level as other commissioners.

Paula Foster, executive director of TCSW. Ms. Foster said she's served one year on the Commission and keeps coming back because she felt it's her responsibility as a member of this community to be here. She believes in fair treatment of everyone and for the past 25 years has been engaged personally and professionally in causes that find better ways to treat people.

Judith Tackett, director of the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission. Ms. Tackett said she was at the table as staff of the Commission. She talked about her passion to focus on solutions-oriented approaches to end homelessness.

Liz Allen Fey, owner of Strategy and Leadership LLC, Chair. She has a background in social work. She is at this table because she feels this is the time that the Commission has the opportunity to elevate the community conversation around homelessness.

Renee Pratt, executive director of Metro Social Services. Ms. Pratt started as social worker 24 years ago and has been with the Commission for about 10 years. She said at Metro Social Services, there is an influx of people. About 87% of people coming to MSS need housing-related assistance. MSS wants to partner with the community and with the Commission to eradicate homelessness in the city.

Wendell Segroves, currently experiencing homelessness. He expressed his passion to see homelessness end and will work until it ends. He stands for assisting people who are experiencing homelessness with services to make life a little better while working on solutions.

Adriane Bond Harris, director of the Mayor's Office of Housing. She said she was replacing Erik Cole who has served on the Commission as the Mayor's Office liaison for many years. Ms. Harris has a strong background working on affordable housing. She said she has a passion for it and is excited to about connecting the issues of homelessness directly with the work around affordable housing to help provide permanent supportive housing for people experiencing long-term homelessness.

Mina Johnson, member of the Metro Council. She said she volunteered to serve on the Commission because she sees opportunity. When people get to know people, friendships form. She said she has experienced how people assist others in need when they get to know them, and she believes there is a chance to make a larger impact. She said she thinks we have a chance to work with the community to move from a NIMBY to a YIMBY approach in Nashville.

Bob Freeman, owner of Freeman Applegate Partners, an environmental construction consulting company (new Commission member). He said as a child he was involved in resource shelters for people experiencing homelessness. It always struck him why his church couldn't shelter people all the time. Once he learned about the How's Nashville campaign, he reached out to former director Will Connelly and asked how he could get involved. Will connected him with resource shelters. Mr. Freeman is passionate about eradicating homelessness.

Norman Humber, chief of staff, Nashville Rescue Mission. He shared that he experienced homelessness as a child. He said if there is a need out there, there is always an answer to be found.

Tim Leeth – New member to Commission, lived experience. Being a member of the board will help him get better answers to questions and solutions for homelessness.

Freddie O'Connel, Council member, District 19. His district has many constituents experiencing homelessness and wants to make progress towards ending homelessness. He also feels there is opportunity now to do something.

Theresa Skiles, Contributor vendor, lived experience. She is experiencing homelessness for the second time, represents people experiencing homelessness that have lost jobs that are falling through the cracks and don't fit the typical mold. She lives in a motel now and said she's always been lucky in that she did not have to live on the streets. There are more and more people experiencing the type of homelessness she experiences, they work, but just do not get ahead to get back on their feet and into housing on their own.

Angie Thompson, representing the Public Health Department. She has had passion for mental health advocacy and the connection between homelessness, prison and mental health issues. She is at the table here because she felt this is where we can look at and discuss the interactions of those issues.

Corey Harkey, Metro Legal, sitting in for Josh Lee. She usually represents public schools where she sees a lot of homeless children. She is a member of Edgehill UMC and had Rev. Barnes as a mentor.

Ellen Zinkiewicz – representing NCAC. Here to be a voice for youth employment programs and working with disconnected young people experiencing homelessness. Also want to be partner regarding Nashville workforce.

Liz Allen Fey said now the meeting will move to the agenda items. She encouraged commissioners who would like to add an agenda item to a meeting to reach out to Judith Tackett.

Approval of Minutes of Aug. 4, 2017

Wendell Segroves made a motion to approve the minutes. Freddie O’Connell seconded the motion. All approved.

Financial Report

Lisa Ricketts reported there was a surplus due to open positions. This year’s fiscal year budget is \$367,000 more than last year.

Liz Allen Fey asked that at the Board Retreat, Judith Tackett will go over the budget more in-depth. Where does the money go.

Assistant Director Position

Renee Pratt reported that the position is closed. Resumes are being looked at, and interviews are scheduled for mid-September. Members of the interview panel are Judith Tackett, Renee Pratt, Liz Allen Fey, Charlotte Peacock, Wendell Segroves, and Mina Johnson.

MHC/CoC Governance Workgroup Report (MHC – Metropolitan Homelessness Commission; CoC – Continuum of Care)

Liz Allen Fey gave a quick overview of the MHC/CoC history and context of how both organizations came together to consider a “marriage” of the boards. The discussion looked at either a blended governance structure or figure out how to effectively work together.

Mina Johnson gave an update. She said there were three models discussed:

1. Relational model – where the MHC and the CoC Governance Board remain independent, but better outline how they work together.
2. Combined Model – which included two models:
 - a. Unified governance board with a Metro ordinance where MHC remains under MSS Board, which may examine the board connection.
 - b. Unified governance board with a Metro ordinance calling for an independent MHC, which would likely create an independent department.

Mina Johnson said the pros and cons of an independent model were discussed. Pros included having an own board and clarity of decision-process. Cons included having to hire more staff, put in a lot of resources to build that structure, which would create redundancy and take away from serving people

and focusing on outcomes while building up a department. The group ruled out the feasibility at this point for an independent MHC (maybe that's a future discussion).

That left the discussion to focus on the relational model and the combined model. Cloudburst called into the meeting and outlined peer models. Each city is uniquely different in the exact structure of their governance make-up. However, they all have one leadership board.

The question now on the table is if there is a combined governance board, what would a possible make-up of membership look like? Would it be appointed by the Mayor, elected by the CoC, or a combination? That will be discussed at the next meeting.

Wendell Segroves said while the idea of MHC being an independent structure was tabled, he still is interested in discussing that possibility.

Judith Tackett said she wanted to stress one thing that Cloudburst clearly stated, which left a clear impression on the MHC/CoC governance workgroup members: Nashville is unique in having this dual governance system. Cloudburst only found one other city on the West Coast, that has a dual governance structure and that is because they received a specific large grant that required them to create a special monitoring board. Every other city has one unified leadership structure around the CoC.

Liz Allen Fey said the workgroup comes back on September 12 to look at recommendations and fine-tune what would be the best structure for Nashville. She said it was important not to come with a final product, but make a recommendation that allows for further discussion. It must remain clear that the final decision is with the CoC membership and the MHC.

Tim Leeth questioned the timeline. Paula Foster reported that the timeline was not set in stone. It rather highlights the urgency, but is adaptable to the need of the community.

Charles Strobel asked whether HUD has given input through MHDA on this issue. He said historically there were always two bodies. Paula Foster said that HUD wants to see a combined board and would like to see the whole community involved, which would lead to higher scores on the NOFA application. Treva Gilligan who is representing Angie Hubbard reiterated what Paula Foster said about HUD wanting to see one board. Judith Tackett said Nashville was behind the curve with a lot of model cities having restructured their boards years ago.

Public Input Session

Liz Allen Fey said that based on feedback from the public, the Commission will move back to holding people to 3-minutes. After they have spoken once, people who have not spoken yet will be given their time. Deon Trotter will hold up time cards.

Barry Keith Hobbes, a formerly homeless man, said he has been listening to the merger discussion and has an idea. He said there should be a new Commission with the following members: Barry Hobbes, Steven Samra, Steve Reiter, Madge Johnson, Howard Gentry, Howard Allen, Ken McKnight, Charles Strobel, Tim Leeth, and others. He said current Commission members should serve as advisory board. He said a merger with the CoC sounds good especially since the CoC comes with federal money. But he said that money needs to come from other sources, not just government, but also business and the religious community. He also said he would like to see a merger between Open Table Nashville and Room In The Inn and have their programs and services year-round. "Please consider my recommendations and welcome aboard to the new members."

There was no other public input at this point. Paula Foster asked whether anything was done with the flooding that was going on after remnants from Hurricane Harvey. Judith Tackett said she had not been contacted by anyone, but OEM has a new tool and links that people can go to that shows where flooding is happening, what areas are closed or evacuated and Ms. Tackett sent out the link through social media and sent it to housing navigators. Currently one area was evacuated north of town and OEM opened a shelter at a nearby church.

Director's Report

Judith Tackett provided the following director's report in writing and went over it quickly:

How's Nashville & Role of Commission in Fundraising

The How's Nashville flex fund is a special line item fund in the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission's budget.

In the past couple of years, most of the dollars for the fund have come through grants from MDHA's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) (\$80,000-\$120,000 per year). We also have some private donations and a few smaller grants. The breakdown of contributions over the past year (below) reflects this:

Public grants: 75%

Private grants: 15%

Donations from individual contributors: 9%

Congregations: 1%

Every dollar in the How's Nashville fund is used to pay for move-in costs requested by service providers. The following agencies have requested assistance through this special donation's fund: Open Table Nashville, Vanderbilt, Neighborhood Health, Metro Social Services, Nashville Rescue Mission, Room In The Inn, The Salvation Army, Park Center, Safe Haven Family Shelter, Goodwill, Operation Stand Down Tennessee, Street Works, Mental Health Cooperative, Oasis Center, Centerstone, Welcome Home Ministries, Urban Housing Solutions, and Bridges (for deaf and hard of hearing).

On average, we spend about \$525 on security deposits and first month's rent per household. This does not include NES deposits or arrears we pay, which increases the average per person spending to approximately \$660. We provide up to \$1,000 in one-time assistance per household.

How's Nashville has morphed into a housing assistance program that provides move-in costs as well as support for housing navigators.

The Metropolitan Homelessness Commission manages and assists partner agencies with the following activities:

- We have a partnership with MDHA's Section 8 program, where MDHA made available up to 18 Section 8 vouchers per month (housing navigators can apply for these vouchers through our office);
- We pay for move-in costs that housing navigators apply for on behalf of their clients;
- We coordinate with Urban Housing Solutions to fill their SRO units (housing navigators submit applications through our office);

- We will manage the MTA annual bus passes that housing navigators will be able to apply for through our office.

In addition, the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission staff provides training for housing navigators. We are in the process of revamping that training, which will be offered in three modules:

- A) Coordinated Entry System
- B) Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT)
- C) Move-in cost and MTA bus pass requests

Director's Argument for Sustainable Funding: *The How's Nashville flex fund pays for move-in costs that any government or restricted grants won't pay for. We are a last resort. I believe maintaining this flexible funding pool helps our community to fill gaps and focus on building a Housing Crisis Resolution System. 100% of the funds will go back out to clients of our partner agencies.*

An annual fundraising event is an awareness tool that will promote a systems approach to addressing homelessness and has the potential to raise previously untapped dollars. Having a sustainable fundraiser will also insulate this fund from any future administration that may not support this fund through the Metro budget any longer. It strengthens partnerships with service providers and creates consistency. Having the flex fund also gives us leverage to continue to provide trainings that will streamline service provision at different entry points.

MTA partnership – Drive to End Chronic Homelessness

The Metropolitan Homelessness Commission, in partnership with MTA, MSS, and the Central Police Precinct, successfully applied for the Mayor's Public Investment Plan (PIP) program this year, which resulted in a \$225,000 award to MTA for up to 500 bus passes for people experiencing chronic homelessness. This is a one-year pilot.

Starting this month, housing navigators will be able to submit applications for bus passes to the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission. The application process for bus passes will be very similar to the application process for the How's Nashville flex fund.

Individuals 18 and older who experience or are at risk of chronic homelessness *and* are actively working with a housing navigator toward permanent housing are eligible for an annual MTA bus pass. **The housing navigator must submit the application on behalf of the applicant.** Once an application is approved by the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission staff, the Homelessness Commission staff will print a bus pass (we will receive a special printer and be trained by MTA to do so). Housing navigators will then distribute bus passes.

Every 90 days, housing navigators must report on the progress each bus pass recipient has made toward obtaining housing. This will be done in the Coordinated Entry System (CES) of HMIS and in care coordination meetings. If a person is no longer working toward housing, the bus pass will be deactivated. It can be reactivated after a person is again actively working with a housing navigator. There will be an opportunity for appeal if a person feels that the housing navigator has neglected to work with him/her at the appropriate level, which caused the deactivation of the bus pass.

As part of this program, the Homelessness Commission's outreach team will work with MTA at specific sites to assist with service linkages for people who hang out along MTA bus routes/bus stations. We continue to work hard to offer Metro an alternative to an enforcement-only approach by engaging people and connecting them with services that lead to housing.

MTA is also exploring a train the trainer program for its MTA bus drivers. We support their efforts on that front.

Data improvement through CES implementation

The management of the Coordinated Entry System (CES) has moved from our prior Homelink database into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). In our last budget, the Homelessness Commission increased its HMIS support from \$27,000 to \$52,000. With that money the Homelessness Commission pays for HMIS licenses, which are provided at no cost to provider agencies.

Homelink is no longer accessible as of Aug. 28. Now all housing navigators enter their data into HMIS. We estimate that we will nearly double the usership of HMIS through this process, which will allow for improved data collection.

In addition, the Homelessness Commission is pushing for the goal to meet the federal criteria and benchmarks to effectively end Veteran homelessness. Through that process, we hope to demonstrate how a well-functioning system works. This would allow us to create the infrastructure necessary to implement an effective CES, including data collection and outcome measures, for all populations.

Commission Retreat – Oct. 6

At the next meeting, we will hold a Commission retreat from 8:30 to noon in the Howard Office Building. The meeting will be organized by the director and will be informational in nature. I plan to outline the focus areas for the remainder of this year, while the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission is in talks with the Continuum of Care about governance. Once a governance structure is in place, the Homelessness Commission will have to determine its role and create a strategic plan. In the meantime, the director requested to be able to spend some time with commissioners on role definition and help focus the Commission's work.

There will not be a public input session at the retreat, but the meeting is open to the public.

Storage

Metro government, the Downtown Partnership, Room In The Inn, and the Nashville Rescue Mission are scheduling a meeting to develop an immediate plan to assist with storage of bags. The issue has been raised at prior meetings about Church Street Park. Metro recognizes that there should be a long-term solution for providing easily accessible storage space. In addition, any bags picked up by police should be stored for a short time in a place that people can reach on foot and without any fees attached.

We are examining immediate relief options and continue to work on long-term solutions.

Discussion Points:

How's Nashville Fund: Ellen Zinkiewicz asked whether other organizations were not fundraising because these funds exist. Judith Tackett said she couldn't speak for other organizations, but she really didn't think so. These funds are less restrictive and the How's Nashville group discussed this issue before the fund was created and found it was needed. CDBG in the past four years has been a large funding source and there is a great likelihood CDBG is going away. Ms. Tackett believes that the Commission could help tap into additional funding opportunities that are not part of the usual donor base of providers. Paula Foster asked whether the How's Nashville fund was a 501(c)3. Ms. Tackett said no, but she explained that the way the fund is set up is still tax-deductible. Paula Foster said that grants usually have restrictions and these fund can be a good thing to fill gaps. John Krenson said that OSDTN does not take this fund for granted and still actively works and looks for funding for these things. Further discussion clarified that this is not a unique fund within Metro. There are other similar examples. Adriane Harris said the Barnes Fund also allows for outside fundraising. Liz Allen Fey said an effective CoC has fundraising capabilities particularly for macro issues, which was a way to leverage new funds as opposed to competing for current funds. She suggested to bring the issue to the October meeting.

MTA Bus Pass Discussion: Freddie O'Connell asked whether this was a joint process with MHC and MTA and what the eligibility requirements were. Judith Tackett said it was a one-year pilot and the main requirement was that people are experiencing or at risk of chronic homelessness AND work with a housing navigator toward housing. She also stressed that even after a person is housed, the bus pass will remain with the person as long as the person continues to work with a support service provider to help maintain housing longterm. The program also includes a train the trainer program. Freddie O'Connell said the program needed to include good training for riders as well. Ellen Zinkiewicz said this was a cool program and congratulated Judith Tackett on securing the funding for it. Freddie O'Connell asked whether this was being done with HMIS and data in mind? Judith Tackett said yes, each person receiving a bus pass would have to be part of the coordinated entry system, which is now in HMIS.

Moment of Silence

Liz Allen Fey read names for the Moment of Silence, including the name of the Rev. Bill Barnes. After the reading of the names, Freddie O'Connell said it was worth talking about how we get the names. Judith Tackett said she reached out to different organizations including Room In The Inn, Park Center, Samuel Lester at Open Table Nashville, Metro Social Services, and the Nashville Medical Examiner's Office.

Announcements

Ellen Zinkiewicz said Fay Parker's memorial service was next Thursday at 6:30 pm

Public Input Session

Lee Stewart of Metro Social Services asked about the MTA bus pass program and Judith Tackett confirmed with him that people at risk of chronic homelessness were also eligible for the program.

Samuel Lester of Open Table Nashville thanked the Commission for holding a moment of silence for people who passed away. He said it was incredibly frustrating that people disappear without acknowledgement. He suggested to also reach out to the police chaplain. He said the current flooding was a large concern. He said he's gotten calls from multiple camps that are flooding. He said OEM does not always cover all areas since these locations do not have addressed. The concern was that bodies will turn up after floods, which was a constant fear. Mr. Lester also talked about the transportation plan that is coming before Council. He voiced his concern over further gentrification. He said he hoped the

Commission will make it a priority to emphasize the need for funding for 31,000 units of affordable housing.

There were no further public comments.

Liz Allen Fey asked commissioners what they heard from the public comments.

Charles Strobel said the flooding comments stood out for him. He said during the extreme cold, there was a cold weather plan that kicked in that involves OEM. He wondered if the city had a similar plan for flooding. Further discussion informed Commissioners that there is a Cold Weather Community Response Plan, which is a community plan (not city plan) that focuses on what each partner does when extreme cold strikes. There is no similar flood plan focusing on people who are experiencing homelessness. Judith Tackett said conversations have been had, but doing a community plan means convening community partners specifically around this question. Liz Allen Fey said the Commission needed to push for that to happen considering that isolated events may no longer be isolated events like flooding.

There was no further discussion and the meeting was adjourned.