

**Metropolitan Nashville Homelessness Commission
Task Force Committee on Governance**

Monday, Nov. 7, 3-4:30 p.m.

MDHA Board Room, 701 South 6th Street, 37206

Present: Freddie O'Connell, Liz Allen Fey, Renee Pratt, Kirby Davis, Jim Harbison,
Erik Cole, Josh Lee
Staff: Will Connelly, Judith Tackett
Other: Anne Havard, Virginia Nash

Goal: To present a set of needed actions to the Commission on how we move ahead with the recommendations for a governance structure in the Focus Strategies report.

Minutes

Approval of Minutes

Kirby Davis made a motion to approve the minutes of Oct. 24, 2016. Liz Allen Fey seconded the motion, all approved.

Review of the beliefs & update from the Commission meeting where the beliefs were presented:

Freddie O'Connell gave a brief update on the presentation of the beliefs at the Commission meeting. All confirmed them again.

- Everyone has an opportunity to housing.
- Services need to be aligned and moving people toward housing.
- Leadership should be operating out of best practices.
- Decisions need to be data-driven.

HUD TA update?

Jim Harbison invited the members to attend the TA CoC meeting series on Wednesday and encouraged them to especially attend the morning session. He said there are other sessions and people who cannot attend Wednesday are welcome to join the Thursday meeting. He explained these sessions were the kick-off of a six-month technical assistance (TA) process. Mr. Harbison further pointed out that this was a HUD process and that they did not care about the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission meaning they are focused on the Continuum of Care (CoC) rather than one government entity.

Freddie O'Connell asked Erik Cole whether he was the chair of the CoC governance committee, which Mr. Cole confirmed.

Discussion

Mr. O'Connell pointed to two key questions that he would like to have conversation around:

1. What do we as a task force hope to accomplish?
2. What is possible?

Mr. O'Connell said that if the group is looking at streamlining governance, what does that look like and how is it done? He said he would like to go in with HUD TA and think about it from the standpoint of what aspects of the HUD TA are relevant and what we need to push on more. He also said the group needs to be prepared to go back to Focus Strategies and be able to have a conversation about what they said versus what HUD TA came up with and ask for clarification if needed.

Kirby Davis said to the first question, he believes that the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission as part of the CoC can make a recommendation to the TA people as to what the Commission thinks should happen. Freddie O'Connell agrees, but adds that he thinks the scope of the task force is not limited to only the CoC. He said with the Commission, with the Metro Social Services Board and with the CoC, the way these three entities interrelate, he thinks the CoC was part of that, but it did not span the entirety of the overall idea of streamlining governance.

Continuing the conversation – Framing the work

Further conversation focused on the question of “Which of the implementation steps do we all agree with?”

Jim Harbison explained the MDHA as the CoC Lead and HMIS Lead only have a light administrative touch and do not set policy. He said MDHA had that capacity if the CoC wanted to do that, but currently MDHA was only functioning as a CoC and HMIS administrator.

All agreed that the last time there was some comprehensive community planning done was through the 10 Year Plan in 2005. There is not a shared overall view in terms of homelessness.

Will Connelly pointed out that HUD expected the CoC lead to take a leadership role around planning efforts including the Point In Time count and other functions such as an annual gaps analysis. He also said that the Homelessness Commission did its best to convene stakeholders and come up with some plans, but they are not strategic, systematic plans on how to address homelessness. All agreed that the current system was fragmented.

Mr. Harbison pushed back on the planning function of the CoC lead and said the tasks as outline by HUD in the government grant NOFA did not include actual planning. They include administration, he said. He further stated that the first task to the TA group was to educate the Continuum of Care.

Erik Cole said for the past two years everyone relied on community volunteers to help device a grant-making process in absentia of a communitywide planning strategy around ending homelessness. He said it was all about accountability and leadership. “And on leadership we tell agencies to have to make tough decisions, but without that strategic plan, it's hard to lead these conversations,” Mr. Cole said, calling for a plan to operate off.

Liz Allen Fey said it was about a collaborative effort, which really was about buy-in.

Further discussion focused on housing needs and support services and that it was unclear what exactly the needs are in a quantifiable manner and what other community resources are used to leverage efforts around homelessness.

Liz Allen Fey said she believes everything needs to be put into one system. Ms. Fey explained that the task of the Homelessness Commission was to be the planning and accountability entity in charge of creating a systems approach to homelessness in Nashville. She further said that no mayor has seen the value of creating a stand-alone entity. That is part of why the Commission has moved from MSS to MDHA and back again to MSS. "For us to really move this ahead, there has to be an entity, and it has to have some level of autonomy and authority focused on this." Ms. Fey said she had questions about the Commission being housed at either MSS or MDHA.

Further discussion centered on the accountability issue and whether a future mayor would have the possibility to reduce the function of the Commission, which could happen by simply reducing the budget. The current Commission ordinance does not have a sunset like the original ordinance had.

The conversation then shifted to foundations. Will Connelly said the Focus Strategies report was presented to a group of funders and they came back with the very clear message that we currently have a disjointed system. They said they were willing to come back to the table when a clear governance structure was in place. Kirby Davis raised the question what HUD would want to see to give the community the most money for people to get into housing. Will Connelly said HUD was definitely looking for a systems approach. He said HUD was moving away from a set programs. They were asking for system-wide performance targets on reducing homelessness regardless of individual programs' funding sources.

Renee Pratt said she believes there was a need for a unified system. She said Focus Strategies gave us a report and the Commission needed to agree on what they accept from the report and if there are further questions, then the new CoC TA could help with those. Freddie O'Connell said he would also like to hear from HUD TA about their perspective on all of this.

Conversation turned toward the next steps and what it would mean for the Commission and its role if there is not a clear path to a unification of governance and status quo maintains. Ms. Fey asked how this could be turned into a win for the community. Jim Harbison responded that MDHA had been saying consistently that there was a need to bring CoC TA into the conversation.

Further discussion focused on funding. Will Connelly said creating a unified governance structure under the Homelessness Commission as suggested by Focus Strategies would only move planning funds to the Homelessness Commission. The voucher program and Shelter Plus Care funding at MDHA would stay intact through the CoC contracts with HUD.

Liz Allen Fey raised the question of how would making the Homelessness Commission the governing body of the CoC create greater accountability than exists now? Erik Cole said that was what the Mayor was asking as well. The group discussed how the current CoC functioned through their Performance Evaluation Committee (PEC), which was led by volunteers. In the end, Erik Cole said that having a single governing structure would be less confusing. He added that's also when the hard work would be starting. Freddie O'Connell said Metro would have a vested

interest in the CoC, which it didn't have right now. Ms. Fey said the hope would also be that with alignment would come more resources. Will Connelly added that there were resources that currently were not being used. Josh Lee said there was also the question of who was responsible for what. The Continuum of Care was a name for all the existing providers. Then there was the governing body. And then there were at least two entities that were involved. One was the CoC collaborative applicant for all the federal funds. Another one was the CoC lead responsible for the planning function of that. There is potentially federal planning money associated with both of those tasks. Mr. Lee said the question was whether the Homelessness Commission should be the governing body, the collaborative applicant or the planning lead or all of them? So once the Commission was determined to be the governing body, then they would be a part of deciding to get money, but then that would include deciding whether the Commission itself should get money. Ms. Fey said action could be driven by doing a community strategic plan that then would serve as guidance for setting priorities.

Erik Cole said going into the Focus Strategies process, he believed that it was a coordinated community strategy between the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission and the CoC. He said once it was finished, it was made clear to him that some people believed Focus Strategies report was not representing the CoC. He said the result was that it was now a year later and we were in the same place with MDHA not wanting the results. Jim Harbison pointed out that the final decision regarding the Continuum of Care's governance structure lays with the full CoC membership. Mr. Cole said the Commission was not able to even present the Focus Strategies report to the full CoC membership.

Liz Allen Fey pointed out that the conversation was going into a loop that the group needed to break out of. She said the question on the table was how do we even get to a point to pose the leadership/governance question to the CoC membership.

Further discussion focused on what different members expected from the HUD TA and that all would try to participate in next week's kick-off meetings. Liz Allen Fey said this group did not interfere with what HUD TA was doing. She said there was some work that could be done on this to get everything well-positioned for whatever decisions were made. Such work included looking at the MHC by-laws.

Erik Cole pointed out that Nashville was not San Francisco or LA with their homelessness issues. He said Nashville also had a supportive mayor; and he pointed out that we could actually be really close to having a plan in place.

Will Connelly said changing the CoC to a high performing system was a heavy lift. He said if Nashville wanted to do everything that was included in the Focus Strategies recommendation that was really hard work, especially with a confusing governing structure. Erik Cole said he agreed that Nashville was not close to a solution, but close to coming up with a plan, an actual document. Liz Allen Fey, Freddie O'Connell, Erik Cole, and Will Connelly agreed on looking at governance as the preliminary step to building a bigger system. Josh Lee said that Nashville didn't have to reinvent the wheel that other places have gone through this process and created various systems.

Will Connelly recommended that the next meeting should focus on whether governance should be in a government agency or in a nonprofit?

Josh Lee said it would be important to look at which systems were high performing and what Nashville would want to emulate.

Will Connelly said Focus Strategies kept repeating that funding and planning should be under the same roof to get the best results.

Renee Pratt said it would be helpful to have a timeline for this entire process including the HUD TA and to understand what the deliverable was at the end.

Next steps

Freddie O'Connell asked all Task Force members to reflect on the recommended implementation steps in the Focus Strategies report.

He further asked Will Connelly and Renee Pratt to come up with a report as suggested in the minutes of Oct. 10. Will Connelly said he expected some of that to come out through the HUD TA, but said he could report out as well.

Next meetings

First and 3rd Mondays of the month, at 3 p.m. here at MDHA board room.