

HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Minutes  
Basement Conference Room City Hall  
March 20, 2013  
12:00 pm

<b>Attendance Record</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
<b>MEMBERS</b>		
Bob Hughes	X	
Carmelita Wood		X
Charlie Armstrong	X	
Chris Murray	X	
Connie Dunn	X	
Dan Rosensweig	X	
Frank Stoner	X	
Jennifer Jacobs		X
Jennifer McKeever	X	
Joy Johnson		X
Kaki Dimock		X
Kira Drennon	X	
Kristin Szakos	X	
Mark Watson	X	
Nancy Kidd	X	
Wes Bellamy		X
<b>NON VOTING MEMBERS</b>		
IMPACT		X
Ron White		X
Vicki Hawes		X
<b>STAFF</b>		
Kathy McHugh	X	
Melissa Thackston	X	
Jim Tolbert		X
Tierra Howard		X
<b>OTHERS</b>		
Ed Bain - TJACH	X	
Edith Good - PHAR	X	
Joyce Dudek - AHIP	X	
Marnie Allen - City	X	
Erin Briggs - VSH	X	
Margot Elton - Uva Student	X	

The meeting began at approximately 12:05 PM with lunch provided for those in attendance. Kathy McHugh advised that Chairperson Johnson was out of town at a conference and would not be able to attend.

After determining that a quorum existed for the November 14, 2012 meeting, a vote was taken to consider the minutes. A motion to approve was made by Joyce Dudek and a second by Bob Hughes. Vote was unanimous to approve.

The January 16, 2013, minutes were then considered with Kathy McHugh asking attendees to focus on reviewing comments attributed to each of them, so as to ensure accuracy. A motion to approve was made by Jennifer McKeever and a second by Bob Hughes. Vote was unanimous to approve.

The meeting then went directly to an introduction of the briefing on homelessness issues, which was the result of a recommendation by a HAC subcommittee. Kathy McHugh introduced Ms. Erin Briggs (Virginia Supportive Housing / The Crossings) and Ms. Marnie Allen (City of Charlottesville Community Attention Foster Families / formerly MACAA Hope House Director).

Ms. Allen passed around a handout entitled The Characteristics and Needs of Families Experiencing Homelessness (The National Center on Family Homelessness dated 12/11) and Ms. Briggs passed out Executive Summary – 2013 Charlottesville CoC Point-in-Time Results (Open Knowledge Collaborative). Marnie Allen added that Ed Bain and Nancy Kidd were also part of the presentation and encouraged them to speak up if they wanted to clarify and/or add things to the presentation.

A discussion of both handouts then ensued, with mention that total sheltered homeless figures were up to 232 from 223 in 2012. Erin Briggs gave a description of information and its limitations, stating that data is subject to who you can find at a given point in time and that this method has various issues. She also indicated that Fluvanna County reported zero (0) for in school homeless children and adults, but that this is likely inaccurate.

There was a discussion as to the various definitions associated with homeless persons and the fact that characteristics are self-reported by those who are interviewed during the point in time survey. School data come from school administrators and there are certainly differences in ability of various school systems to track and identify those who are homeless. Issues such as doubling up are problematic, as these persons are not always residing in these homes legally (i.e., not on the lease, exceed legal limits for unrelated persons living together, etc...) and tend not to disclose information in fear of losing their current housing.

Marnie Allen shifted the discussion to funding issues and homeless families. She stated that shelters do not traditionally cater to families - although the Salvation Army has helped on the women's side as long as a male child (over a specified age) is not involved. Shelter for Help and Emergency (SHE) was referenced as providing an alternative for females who are fleeing immediate danger; however, this is for women only. PACEM works with only individuals and no families.

As to family units, both Salvation Army and MACAA have limited units. Salvation Army has 11 and MACAA has another 4 that are specifically used for housing homeless families. MACAA "Hope House" units were initially set up as a 6 month program with a provision to move families into public housing once this expired, as there was a "homeless preference" being used by CRHA at that time. When this changed to provide preference for "employed persons", MACAA shifted their program to 2 years to provide families with a period of time to gain stability. This change was followed by a subsequent shift by HUD to focus on "Housing First". The idea behind *Housing First* is to stabilize people by getting them into housing and then work on the other issues that impact their ability to stay housed by providing wrap around supportive services to address the root causes of homelessness. The *Housing First* model initially focused on the use permanent supportive housing, but recent trends have been more toward "Rapid Re-Housing" which is geared toward a much shorter duration (i.e., 3 months) of time for assistance and very limited wrap around services. For Charlottesville, the high cost of housing and lack of available units makes *Rapid Re-Housing* difficult to implement and almost impossible to sustain unless the homeless person/family is able to secure employment.

Regardless of limitations, *Rapid Re-Housing* is what is currently available and if agencies don't figure out a way to access the money and work together then Charlottesville will lose out on these homeless resources. Ms. Allen stated that we as a community cannot afford not to go after HUD money because there will be a shift in policy at some point and we need to be participating in order to take advantage of funding in the future.

Bob Hughes asked about what constitutes "affordable" and Marnie Allen responded that it is generally based off of a family spending no more than 30% of their income on housing. Erin Briggs added that a person would have to work 80 hours per week (at a minimum wage job) to be able to afford a one bedroom apartment on their own. While not ideal, the current situation can also be complicated by agency intervention as some social service providers require separate bedrooms for specific aged children of different genders. This requires rental of larger (more expensive) units which can tax limited resources.

Dan Rosensweig asked about the challenges for lessors, not just leasees. Ms. Briggs replied that funding for rapid re-housing and communicating benefits to landlords is a huge issue. Guarantee of being paid for rent is a huge part of this, but also having a person (such as a housing navigator/locator) to call (to help work through issues) is also an important factor. Erin added VSH is currently working with PACEM on a test case with five individuals who are being housed with rapid re-housing money and Crossing social workers are providing case support services. Dan then asked about background/credit checks on the landlord side. Erin responded that this is not easy to handle and basically you have to get lucky with people willing to provide these folks with a chance.

Marine and Erin discussed challenges with rapid re-housing including the fact that HUD seems to want to show quick results, meaning that this model works best for folks who need just a little help/time. Given that Charlottesville seems to have more problems with chronic homelessness, rapid re-housing is not necessarily the best tool for addressing local homeless needs.

Marnie Allen went on to describe use of the housing locator model and that City support for this would be important. She also stated that rapid re-housing is problematic for local non-profits because the funding is reimbursement based and most non-profits lack funding for rental payments up front. She added that some agencies also fear that the funding for rapid re-housing could be short lived and that people will come right back to them should funding terminate. Kathy McHugh then added that fronting money for non-profits to participate with rapid re-housing is something for the group to discuss relative to a possible use of CHF dollars.

Erin Briggs added that Charleston South Carolina had gotten \$1 million for homeless prevention and rapid re-housing, but due to lack of HUD criteria for use, that there were problems. Accordingly, HUD is trying to adjust funding regulations to limit future use and potential for abuses.

Marnie Allen added that homeless families are plagued with long term issues such as generational poverty. Frank Stoner asked what are the long term problems, to which Marnie responded "poverty, lack of engagement and hope."

A general discussion followed with Frank Stoner asking about the potential for individuals renting "extra rooms" in their homes (which appears to be viable if the rooms can pass inspection) and Chris Murray asking about how HAC might be able to help out. Ed Bain explained that Fredericksburg is using a housing locator and it seems to be working, but that there is a lack of connection to landlords locally that will make this difficult to get off the ground in Charlottesville.

Marnie Allen then stated that (while she did not want to put Connie Dunn on the spot) CRHA could adopt a “homeless” preference which would be a big help with transitioning homeless from temporary rapid re-housing situations into a more permanent situation. Kathy McHugh added that part of the problem with the preference issue is due to a shift by HUD PIH to a more business based model where employment and ability to pay rent are highly valued.

Kristin Szakos commented that Fredericksburg is larger and therefore there are more opportunities for rapid re-housing. Further, she views the homeless situation like a permeable membrane with homeless persons/families going between City and County with ebb and flow between the two. She stated that the housing locator should be more regional because City funding would limit geographical outreach.

Erin Briggs responded to this comment by says that a regional effort is needed but you have to figure out the transportation issue. She also noted that different organizations can help figure out different pieces of the complex puzzle. Marnie Allen echoed this by pointing out that accurate reporting is needed at all levels (municipal, school boards, county, non-profits, etc...) to support need for funding.

Frank Stoner asked about what schools are doing and was told that they help the homeless through funding with the McKinney / Vento Act. According to Marnie Allen, the City uses their funding for transportation to help keep kids in the same school even if they move around and the County (who also utilizes fund raising efforts) uses funds for emergency housing and groceries. Federal funding can be used for tutoring and other support services as well.

A discussion about CHF followed. Kathy McHugh explained that the City would like to see some coordination between service providers and that an ESG grant application due in April would provide an opportunity to work together. She explained that the TJACH service providers group has been meeting to determine what they should apply for and that perhaps Ed Bain could provide more detail on this. Marnie Allen stated that she would like some feedback from the HAC regarding funding options.

The discussion then shifted to possible CHF funding for homeless service providers, per the handout:

- Supportive housing strategies such as community case review (which would help with homeless prevention efforts)
- Provision of funds to support the planning/coordination function for TJACH now that their board has officially voted to separate from the Haven (Note: it will be difficult to fund raise for planning / service provider coordination as opposed to day shelter operations)
- Provision of CHF funds for temporary funding of rapid rehousing efforts so that non-profits can pay landlords and cover expenses without lengthy delays for reimbursement

Kathy McHugh asked the group for feedback on the three ideas and/or to let her know if they had other thoughts.

Chris Murray asked if revolving funds to provide funding for rapid re-housing would actually be used for rent and Kathy explained that the funds would be limited to reimbursing rent only, no administration costs. She went on to respond to various other questions about how this process might work. Kristin Szakos asked specifically about helping people who are from Charlottesville and that (as a City Councilor) that she could support working with agencies if homeless are housed in the City. She also noted that the money is just a float loan and that it will be paid back so this is not an actual expenditure.

Dan Rosensweig explained that he thinks this is a cash flow issue and the value is in the opportunity cost. He stated that we should be looking to where the biggest reserves are in the City (i.e., General Fund) and not CHF. He stated that CHF should be readily available for investing to increase affordable housing inventory and not tied up in supporting cash flow issues.

Kristin then asked if we could require an interest payment to offset the use of funds; however, Kathy McHugh indicated that HUD (through the ESG program) would likely not allow this as an eligible cost and that based on lack of current funding (only about \$20k in CHF currently available) and the fact that most of next year's CHF is already spoken for - that using funds in this way might prove difficult.

Chris Murray asked if we could set some minimal level of funding (such as \$20k) and look to see what we could do with this amount. He added that he did not want to charge interest because of the need / hassle with administering such a small amount of money. Dan countered that he would still be concerned over use of CHF in this way, as another fund might be a better fit.

Kathy McHugh asked if there were any further thoughts on either case review or funding TJACH; however, there were no comments. She went on to briefly mention the Comprehensive Plan changes and referenced the memo provided with the handouts. There were no comments or questions on this topic either.

Kathy also advised that Section 3 would be incorporated into future CHF projects starting with the FY 13-14, and that Tierra Howard could provide future training to help with compliance. Moving through the other agenda items quickly (as the meeting time was running over), she also mentioned that she was looking to form a lead based paint HAC subcommittee because of the inability to identify problem data to support an application for HUD grant funding. While Charlottesville has a considerable amount of pre-1978 housing, it appears that we may very well have only a limited problem. Regardless, she thought that it would be a good idea to form a small group to look into the matter further. Joyce Dudek and Bob Hughes volunteered to serve.

Kathy then asked for those who were willing to stay to consider potentially changing the City definition of affordable housing to have different levels of affordability which can be used for classification, tracking, etc... (e.g., use of HUD/LIHTC income brackets to include deeply affordable / extremely low income- less than 30% AMI; moderately affordable / very low income from 31% to 60% AMI; affordable or low income from 61% to 80%; and workforce or moderate income 81% to 120%). Noting that each of these would still be linked to paying no more than 30% of income for housing expenses.

It was noted that there are many programs with differing income limits and definitions and it would be nice to have a standard definition to classify these. There was a discussion about the purpose of this change and if it could be used to prioritize funding and/or focus proffers. Frank Stoner noted that he liked the idea of being able to target programs toward each group and need.

Frank then went on to ask about getting the tax assessor to look at the housing inventory to enable the group to determine the availability of market rate affordable housing; however, Kathy countered that this has not been done because Jim Tolbert had directed her to make sure that any request for assistance was based on a HAC recommendation/request for data. Kristin Szakos went on to move that Kathy McHugh meet with the tax assessor to determine what data might be available and to come up with a plan based on this. The consensus of those remaining in the meeting was to proceed.

Bob Hughes stated that he liked this idea because only good things can come from this effort and it will provide more accurate information on the housing inventory (including type, size, bedrooms, value, etc...). There was also a brief conversation about student housing and whether UVa keeps data

on student addresses. Chris Murray stated that we could use the “U” zoning classification for properties around the University to designate them as student housing and remove these from analysis of the City housing stock as a whole.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:55 PM by Kathy McHugh as Chairperson Johnson was unable to attend the meeting.