

Steering Committee Meeting Notes 11/17/2008

Whatcom Homeless Coalition

Present: Thad Allen, Peter Theisen, Danae Armstrong, Greg Winter, Jackie Mitchell, Ann Deacon, Riannon Bardsley, Gail deHoog, John Harmon

Notes: Christy Greenwald, Stephanie Reinauer

1. Review October 20 Steering Committee Meeting Notes

No changes

2. Balance of State Update

Conference call Gail participated in took place a while ago. McKinney competition results: Steve Powers' project did not get awarded in bonus round. Bread and Roses project dropped out and funding went to Chelan/ Douglas. Steve was offered this funding and did not accept because it was not enough to make a difference in his project. Two new counties in WA that are receiving these funds that weren't before.

CTED has no plans for more HGAP rounds, besides existing grants (2 of which Whatcom has).

For point-in-time (PIT) count, CTED was going to choose Jan. 22nd, but the 29th is now set. Information needs to be more specific when gathering PIT information. Also, we have to use release forms provided by CTED. We will adapt it to make more user-friendly.

Rapid Re-housing grant: Whatcom was chosen and submitted through HUD. They are interested in how Clallam/Whatcom County sister county relationship will work out. Overall, we have support from the balance of state group.

3. HGAP II Update

Still negotiating with Pioneer Human Services. They are negotiating a purchase of apartment complex (37 units, 20 units must be high-risk offenders). Agreement for different rents than Fair Market Rent is also being discussed. Some money was set aside for Re-entry sex offenders. If all goes well and contract is signed in Feb., rent assistance vouchers can be issued right away.

4. Update on Homeless Service Center

- **Welcome Stephanie**

Just finished Masters in Sociology, volunteers with DVSAS, worked for Cornerstone Strategies on various community needs assessments, and planning projects including point-in-time counts, substance abuse and behavioral health plans.

- **Progress toward goals**

Chart handout- Actual and projection. Opportunity Council is on track for Primary clients. We're spending less than planned, on average, for Secondary population rental assistance, but WHSC is working on effective ways to provide services to even more secondary households. Tertiary numbers housed is on track. The OC is working mostly on screening on the front end, helping people who have steady income, to assist them getting into and retaining housing.

Social marketing campaign is in the works. Landlords who are already on board with WHSC have been invited to dinner/ focus group for next week to help WHSC develop strategic communications to engage more landlords and property managers in renting formerly homeless tenants.

Kristin Hill and Greg are making presentation to BWCHA Board tomorrow about 10 Section 8 preference vouchers, effective January as long as they are granted by the board.

- **Client Track**

HMIS software. Snohomish has recently started using it, Spokane has used it for a few years. \$20,000 grant will be given to WHSC as long as WHSC can export data quarterly. WHSC is rolling it out in stages. Second stage will be WHSC case managers using system. Then McKinney funded projects will use it. Fourth stage is all, or at least enough shelter and transitional housing providers using the system to account for 75% of beds.

5. Project Homeless Connect

Riannon is in charge of logistics. Purposes are to engage larger community in homeless issues, and to connect homeless people to services. 40+ people are currently involved in about 10 task groups. Task groups report back to Steering Committee. Depot Market Square, The Majestic and YWCA are the 3 venues. Volunteer Center is organizing volunteers. Gail says it's an impressive effort. She just started participating in the group.

6. Point in Time Planning

PHC will be helpful in planning, but there are other places to count people. Gail and Gary will be coordinating agencies who participate in the Count (30-40 orgs.). Those in jail who indicate they are homeless will be reported, but not to the State (as CTED/HUD do not consider inmates to be homeless), so those doing intakes need to be trained to differentiate between homeless and jailed.

7. How Does Tent City fit into our Housing First approach?

This discussion took place at Steering Committee about a year and a half ago. Decided at that time that the community's limited resources should be devoted to developing housing opportunities for all homeless persons, including housing-first strategies. That is still the position of the steering committee. Robert Ables & the Rainbow Center is leading this issue currently, trying to educate the community about Tent Cities. It was suggested by Gail that there is a lot of information out there on tent cities and encouraged steering committee members to do some research on their own about the issue.

8. The recent Herald article on homelessness and Old Town.

Comments were made about homeless community not mixing well with new developments. The Mission and Church on the Street were mentioned in article, but not the WHSC. Reporter was invited to talk to others involved in homeless services after the article was published. Advocates should be more proactive in communications around the issue of homelessness issue. Quotes in article did not speak well about homeless people. Bad stereotypes. WHSC and committee will be working with media on a high level, beginning in December. Committee agrees that we, as a community, need to make mixed income neighborhoods work – create neighborhoods where everyone is welcome.

9. Setting the Homeless Coalition meeting agenda

Steering Committee agenda items will become part of the WCCH agenda. Case managers of WHSC will talk about how the program is working at their level of the project.

10. Encampments

David Webster, Bellingham's Chief Administrative Officer, called a meeting about this. The Police and Parks Depts. will continue what they're doing, but will give a little more time for people to move their belongings. Committee was started at November's Coalition Meeting to develop written policies and procedures regarding storing peoples' belongings.