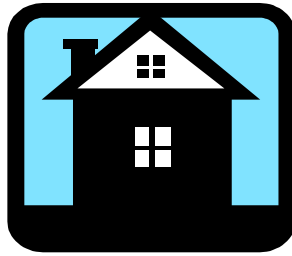


Whatcom County Homeless Coalition



Steering Committee Notes

February 22, 2010, 10:30-11:45 am
BWC Housing Authority Conference Room
208 Unity Street, Bellingham

Present: Kirsten, Greg, Debbie, John, Thad, Riannon, Gary, Gail

1. Review January Steering Committee Meeting Notes

Notes are approved.

2. Balance of State update and legislative items

A few bills died in Olympia, including the bill that would require more notice for no-cause evictions.

We need more advocacy activity from this group on a few items: HB 2782 preserves GAU as “disability lifeline” see handout with description and talking points. Need phone calls and emails to our legislators.

The Housing Trust Fund legislation is still moving along, it likely won't go through at the requested level of funding. We're not that optimistic. It is funded by a document recording fee that only the banks would pay. The issue with using this Fund as a permanent funding source is it that it would fluctuate, but better than nothing.

Reinstate HGAP funding? A legislative spending cap last year caused Dept. of Commerce to significantly cut funding to already operating homeless housing projects. Since then, Home Security Fund revenue has exceeded the cap by several million dollars, making the cuts unnecessarily large. There are now some budgetary proposals in Olympia to restore some of that funding. We were fortunate that we did not have to restructure our program, so we would benefit if the funds were reinstated. Greg is following this closely. **UPDATE: the proposed House budget restores much of this funding for the HGAP program; the Senate budget, however, cuts funding even further due to the fact that the Senate proposes funding additional programs with Home Security Fund revenue. Our message is that we much prefer the House budget on three items: Housing Trust Fund, Disability Lifeline (formerly GAU), and Housing Trust Fund.**

3. Census update

Gail and Greg have met with Leland Dart, Hillary, and Linda – they will work with Hope House outreach workers to get an accurate count of people experiencing homelessness. We are waiting until after Project Homeless Connect to get a meeting together and figure out how to work together. The census heard our concerns and tried to address them. They want to work with us. They are donating hygiene kits to PHC and will have a table there.

Census will present to Housing Authority Staff, then staff will encourage residents to participate.

4. Homeless Service Center update (see handout of PowerPoint)

Greg reports on outputs and outcomes of Homeless Service Center's first 18 months of operations, serving 794 households.

John would like frequencies to go with percentages of retention outcomes. Outcomes are comparable to Clallam County and others doing housing first model.

Outside evaluation is ongoing for first 3 years of program.

Gary motions to present to the full WCCH, appreciate WHSC and partners for enacting the plan and achieving good outcomes.

Kirsten says it would be a good idea to let the whole community know the good work we're doing.

Gail – would like to tie this to the next steps we need to take to end homelessness. Show what we've accomplished so far, and let the community know what we still need to do.

Greg – we could do a report card for 10-year plan. Should report on last year as we move on to next phase of the plan.

John suggests investing in making a nice report, similar to an annual report, putting some faces to the numbers. Let people know who the homeless population represent.

Gary – it's important to acknowledge the good work that is done in the community. Important for the WCCH to acknowledge.

Gary will work with Stephanie to draft something for next steering committee.

See "A Human Connection" article passed out by Gail.

5. PIT update

Coordinated this year by Gail, who did a marvelous job of getting to some new places and recruiting lots of volunteers to help. We achieved good coverage this year, due to the added sites and more intensive outreach. For example, NWYS, extra outreach to youth.

The overall count only went up by 6 people between 2009 and 2010. (compared to Commerce expectation of a 19% rise in homelessness statewide)

Families with children stayed about the same

Median age went down – a lot of youth were added. 515 persons under 18, 65 more than last year. 55 unaccompanied minors. Haven't looked at the 14-24 year old group yet.

Re-entry, last year 167, this year 125. Significantly fewer from jail possibly due to City Gate homeless re-entry project.

Chronic homeless population went down again 2008 – 158, 2009 – 115, 2010 – 85. This is what we would expect with our additional services available. We try improve methods every year, improve coverage and improve eliminating duplicates.

Riannon and others would like to know if there are differences in reasons for homelessness and where slept last night based on the last permanent zip code.

John said that the Section 8 waitlist getting stale but there are no openings yet, it's fully leased up. People aren't leaving the program. BHA is hoping to receive new resources for Veterans or people with disabilities.

6. Department of Commerce Consolidated Grant Formula

Commerce is considering several different types of funding formulas to determine the base grant amounts for each county. Several formula combinations that would give Whatcom more money than the typical formula. The key is how much bonus funding we can get.

How much influence do we have over the base formula?

Gail thinks this group should get the spreadsheet and test to see which one would be best for us. If we get to vote or have influence, we want to know what would benefit us most.

Commerce wants the formula to be linked to causes of homelessness (unemployment, rent to income ratio). They will not rely on local data for the formula (such as PIT).

7. COB Consolidated Planning Process

This agenda items is postponed until next meeting.

8. By-Laws Subcommittee update

Pass out first draft and will discuss next time.

The committee is still grappling with the voting and attendance issue.

We believe we are ready to invite more people to this table – more decision makers and representatives from other parts of the community. We want to keep chemical

dependency services representation on the steering committee since it is such a main cause of homelessness.

Next Steering Committee meeting: Monday, March 15th 10:30-11:45 a.m.