

Whatcom County Homeless Coalition



Steering Committee Notes

August 17, 2009, 10:30-11:45 am

BWC Housing Authority Conference Room

208 Unity Street, Bellingham

Present: Greg, Debbie, Gary, Robert, Gail, Thad, Riannon, John, Peter

1. Review July Steering Committee Meeting Notes

Notes approved.

2. HGAP II update

City Gate: Things going really well with the re-entry coordination team. It's coming together in a positive way. Different facets of community are coming together for a new, important reason. This team is a good resource for Pioneer Human Services (PHS) – Joe Nagel sees this team as who he turns to for support. 24 units have been filled out of 37. Some of the other units still have prior tenants finishing out their leases. For economic viability, the remaining units need to be filled with tenants that have some level of income.

Early Release: A whole bunch of people that were on DOC supervision no longer are.

In order to save money, the legislature changed laws about who is in prison, who is on supervision, and how long supervision lasts. Almost 9,500 offenders in state just released from supervision. In our office close to 200 have recently been released from supervision. The drop in supervision could lead to more recidivism and influx into the county jail. Also, many people who are no longer on supervision are leaving clean and sober housing.

Thad's been called to testify for state senate committee September 1st to talk about offender housing and landlord relationships.

DOC Vouchers: started this month – only those on supervision are eligible. Only high risk/high need/high violence offenders are getting supervision. Low-moderate risk (drug and property) offenders are not getting supervision.

Do we need to coordinate with other DOC's to decide how to use vouchers? Vouchers only provide assistance for the first 90 days – can we use HGAP funds at the end of that time? Especially with those

starting community college from jail, try to get them vouchers/HGAP so they can stay in school. Vouchers can pay for transitional, clean and sober, or permanent housing.

3. Possible HGAP funding cuts

We still don't know anything. We had a conference call – Dept. of Commerce has to cut about \$9.3 million from HGAP projects. Expected 28% cut on HGAP projects. We're not planning to do anything yet, because no decisions have been made at Commerce. So we don't know what our cuts will be. Gail will go down to Olympia on Sept 17th to advocate for our programs, so we won't know anything until after that.

Expectation that 2331 funds should be sufficient to backfill any HGAP loses at the local level. But that's hard to predict. Should be ok for current projects, but the sustainability is not there, especially beyond 2013 when the supplemental 2331 recording fee will sunset.

Gail will request that Commerce rewards programs that are performing well.

4. Medically fragile update

There is a work group including Qualis Health, CCS, WHSC, St. Joe's, Lighthouse Mission, skilled nursing facilities, and Hope House volunteers trying to keep medically fragile from being released into homelessness. Qualis Health is training volunteers for medication management – want to expand to provide volunteer housing case management as a pilot program to provide permanent housing and supportive services to this population and to use the scarce health care resources (e.g. beds in skilled nursing facilities) for effectively to serve people who are homeless and medically fragile.

What about offenders that need care? No one will take them. That is another gap this group will need to address.

5. Discussion: What Should Permanent Supportive Housing look like in the future?

Phase IV of 10 year plan – want target number of additional units needed to meet our goal.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) – population has received the least amount of attention. Backlog of those needing PSH and case management. We are making a lot of progress in this area. Long term housing for chronically homeless, disabled and Shelter Plus Care.

Problem – as soon as people get stable, they lose their mental health services – that impacts their stability.

How does 75 units sound as a target number to develop? Based on: OC as sponsor for Shelter Plus Care - additional 40 vouchers through OC and WHSC and in partnership with WCPC. OC also awarded master-leasing contract from the county, set up to expand number of units. Greg just applied for Samaritan Bonus Grant– looks good for funding for 8+ units of master-leased PSH. Where will the rest of the units come from? Is 75 a good number or should we ask for more? That includes the OC sponsorship of S+C. (40 S+C, 8-12 OC master-lease, 8-12 WHSC master-lease = 60 of 75 already) Need to know about HGAP funding levels before finalizing the projected number.

75 sounds good – achievable, sustainable

S+C is not going away.

Possible Partners to fill the Gap:

The Housing Authority serves a different population. They need affordable housing but not necessarily the on-going support.

Archdiocesan Housing Authority – difficult to commit because of funding for supportive services.

OC – open to it, but need additional sources of funding.

PHS – possible new partner, could they do more than City Gate? Maybe down the road.

Lake Whatcom Clinic?

Housing Authority Tax-Credit Housing: Really important to be sustainable. Criteria for tax-credit housing opened up. We want to make sure we have something sustainable – 42 year financial commitment for keeping rent affordable and providing support.

John requests a letter of support from the Steering Committee to the Housing Finance Commission to change the criteria, to let communities set their own disability priorities and still be eligible for tax credit incentives. This formula works really well for our community: 20% disabled, 20% homeless, 20% large families. (50 new units a year = 10 units for homeless.) People can transition from transitional to permanent without moving – more stability in their life. The HUD formula now is 70% homeless, which works for large urban communities (Seattle), not small/medium communities (Bellingham).

We know that case management is key.

We know integrated housing is better for individuals and communities.

Haven't got NIMBY problems with integrated affordable housing.

- John will draft a letter and send to Greg.
- Greg will review and consider bringing it before WCCH.
- Housing Finance Commission meeting again Sept 19th

What happens when people leave City Gate? They can't use Shelter Plus Care. They're not homeless. They can stay as long as they want, but hopefully they'll leave eventually to open up new spots. This is another gap to fill to find a home for everyone in our community.

6. Homeless Coalition meeting agenda (including schedule of agency presentations)

Next Steering Committee – by laws (resend)

Next WCCH meeting items:

- ✓ John's letter
- ✓ DOC updates (Thad)

7. Other

Repair and retention RFP released.

Housing and mental health RFP about to released – has funded Sun House and Gladstone house.

Next Steering Committee meeting: Monday, September 21, 10:30 a.m.- 11:45 a.m.