

# Whatcom County Homeless Coalition



## ***Steering Committee NOTES***

July 20, 2009, 10:30-11:45 am

BWC Housing Authority Conference Room  
208 Unity Street, Bellingham

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

### **1. Review June Steering Committee Meeting Notes**

Notes accepted.

### **2. HGAP II update**

Going well for a new program.

**FLEX FUNDS:** Thad has housed more people than expected, and is therefore out of money. He asking for increase in funding. Also asking clients for more proof of income. They are housed at Ray's house and Stepping Stones with flex funds.

**CITY GATE:** So far, 16 eligible residents have received housing, 14 vacancies remain, 4 of which needed rehab from water damage. They are receiving lot's of referrals. They are working out glitches w/ confidentiality, getting consent forms, etc.

The current period is a rare, limited opportunity to refer post-released homeless clients until units fill up. In the future, potential residents will be referred while still incarcerated.

Policy committee continues to establish policies. York neighborhood was invited to have a seat on the policy committee. The police chief, prosecuting attorney (or their designees) will also have seats.

Pioneer is now interested in finding and acquiring labor-intensive businesses for employment and employment training for re-entering clients.

There is also interest in collaboration between WCC, BTC, and re-entry projects (Thad's and City Gate). Greg has offered to help facilitate that discussion.

### **3. Phase IV Planning update**

Discussing funders' round-table – interest from United Way, COB, and others.

We are trying to identify the number and types of units that we would like to develop. Have been meeting with small planning group. Place to start – 75 units of permanent supportive housing. Not all in one location. Small clusters for effective access by case management but not drastically changing the nature of neighborhoods. We also need to train volunteers for on-going support beyond the capacity of case managers.

Paul Schissler is surveying developers of affordable housing to determine the number of units planned and in the pipeline. Re-starting the conversation that began with CHAT group. One idea is to develop a local housing trust fund.

Aim to get Phase IV 10-Year plan out by end of the year. Waiting to hear more about the shifting landscape of housing at the state level.

### **4. State Advisory Council on Homelessness (SACH)**

Talked about the role of housing in the Department of Commerce. Lots of focus on business (mentioned 16 times, housing mentioned once). Advisory Council is writing a letter to the Governor: we have a good working relationship with Housing Division of the agency formerly known as CTED. We would like to keep the Housing Division where it is.

SACH sent a letter to DOC, want to connect early release program with other housing programs in community, not work in isolation. Funding for 3 months of rent assistance coming end of August.

Concept of housing as economic driver is poorly understood. Both new construction and subsidies create jobs. Subsidies go to local landlords who then spend it, stimulating the economy. Reduced housing burden for residents, who then can spend more money on other things. Affordable housing acts as an incentive to attract businesses to town.

Connect landlords to weatherization stimulus funds. Helps both landlords and tenants (who are paying the utility bills.)

### **5. Homeless Service Center update**

- **Clean and sober housing policies**

The issue was whether to consider clean and sober housing permanent housing. The WHSC can only help people move in to or stay in permanent housing, not transitional. Up until this point we have been treating clean and sober housing as permanent.

It has been an on-going discussion with input from many stakeholders, including one of the biggest providers of clean and sober housing in town.

As of July 13<sup>th</sup>, Clean and sober housing is considered transitional housing from the perspective of WHSC. It is NOT a regular landlord/tenant relationship, and it needs to be this way to keep it clean and sober (need to be able to evict immediately).

Now we can help people transition OUT of clean and sober housing into permanent housing. (Though we can't help people move in/stay in.)

Trying to amend flex fund vouchers for Thad's clients so he can use vouchers for transitional or permanent housing.

Pending issue of Oxford House considering themselves as permanent – Greg and Gail will follow-up with Jennifer Turin about this.

Gail spoke with Jennifer Turin from Dept. of Commerce. Whatcom county will view Oxford houses as transitional housing for the people who receive resources and support from HSC, and it is important that the service plans reflect the reflect that information.

- Upcoming grant opportunities:

1. **Samaritan Bonus** - no one else in county submitting application, going to apply for master-leasing 7-units for permanent supportive housing. If shelter plus care, could lead to more units. Application due July 30<sup>th</sup>.

2. **WA State Coalition Against Domestic Violence** - partnered with Gates to develop a housing-first program for survivors of DV. Narrowed down to four applicants including Womenscare/Homeless Service Center. Will fund two of the four semifinalists. Funding for case management and rental subsidies. Address barriers that send people back to abusers. Due August 21<sup>st</sup>. \$200,000 for two years.

New HUD grant for homeless veterans. Online application. – Greg will look into this.

## 6. Legislative/Balance of State update/State Coalition

HPRP grant contracts expected in early September.

Nothing else to report from Balance of State.

Greg went to State Homeless Coalition – joined the legislative committee. Emphasize need to fix HGAP funding. Document recording fees won't be enough, even if we make sure it doesn't sunset in 2013. Can't use the same funding to backfill a contract as well as backfill what was lost from recession.

Greg thinking of joining Low-Income Housing Alliance legislative committee as well, to have more cross-over. Alliance has more, larger non-profit housing developers, mostly along I-5 corridor.

**ESG federal money is supposed to increase by 20%. Why can't we use that to backfill lost HGAP? Gail spoke with Jennifer Turin (Commerce) about this and Jennifer told Gail to send CTED an email to with the suggestion. She does not think it is an allowable use of ESG**

**7. Homeless Coalition schedule of agency presentations**

August 2009	Womencare	Kirsten Hammer
September 2009	Home and Community Services (tentative)	Barbara Brattle and Pam Lambeth
	WA Low-Income Housing Alliance	John Davies
October 2009	United for National Healthcare	John Cummings
November 2009	Bellingham Housing Authority	

**8. By-laws**

**Greg reviewed WCCH charter. See “track changes” on draft to be passed out. Main sections that may need to be tweaked: attendance and voting, decision making for both coalition and steering committee.**

**Greg requests group to review his edits and talk about at next steering committee. We will bring any recommendations to the Coalition, perhaps sometime this fall.**

**Next Steering Committee meeting: Monday, August 17, 10:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.**