



Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date/Time/Location: April 14, 2011 – 8:34-10:00 a.m. – Whatcom County Health Department, 509 Girard Street, Bellingham

WCHAC Members Present: Laura DeRose Harker, Dave Finet, Nancy Larsen, Kathleen McNaughton; Sue Parrott; Steve Powers, Paul Schissler, David Webster, Gary Williams

WCHAC Members Absent: Gib Clarke, Regina Delahunt, John Harmon; Gary Tomsic

Whatcom County Health Depart Staff/Guests: Gail de Hoog, Whatcom County Program Specialist; Greg Winter, Whatcom Homeless Service Center; David Stalheim, City of Bellingham; Wendy Knight, Bellingham/Whatcom County Housing Authority; Vicki McClure, Health Department Human Services Clerk

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/Who
Call to order	The meeting was called to order at 8:34 a.m. by Gary Williams. Quorum was present.	
Opening Remarks	<p>Attendees wished a good morning on a snowy morning.</p> <p>Gail synopsized an e-mail from Ron Buchinski regarding a homeless man with mental health issues, whose body was identified after a 10-year search by his sister.</p> <p>Gail then related a second story about a local homeless man with mental health issues who was reunited with his family in New York because of the new partnerships created through the work of the Homeless Service Center, including law enforcement, LAW Advocates and Hope House. Kudos to the agencies responsible. Theresa Meurs, of Hope House and who was instrumental in this reunification, was nominated and is a finalist for Catholic Charities USA Volunteer of the Year.</p> <p>Two similar stories with dramatically different endings.</p>	

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1. Review February 10, 2011 minutes.	Minutes of February 10, 2011 were reviewed. A motion was put forth and seconded to approve the minutes as presented.	Motion: To accept the minutes of February 10, 2011 as presented. Yea: 9, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: Gib Clarke, Regina Delahunt, John Harmon, Gary Tomsic
2. Hearth Academy	Attendees were provided a summary of the HEARTH Act, the Executive Summary from "Opening Doors – Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness," and information on The Columbus Model. A federally sponsored 1.5 day clinic on the HEARTH Act, delivered by NAEH and designed to develop strategies to prevent and end homelessness, occurred in February. The strategies identified as priorities were (a) Coordinated Intake System and common assessment tool; (b) Expanding rapid-rehousing capacity, and (c) Targeted prevention. At the end of the training, attendees signed a document titled "Working Together to End Homelessness" and referred to as a Declaration of Interdependence. This document, signed by members of 13 agencies, describes objectives and benchmarks that will become the focus of our Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. Whatcom County was chosen as a training site due to the community's attitudes and progress regarding ending homelessness. Greg related how our local prevention criteria will be targeted and how that will be a shift for us, and that data collection and reporting systems must be further refined. It is expected that before the end of the year we'll see more agencies working closely with the Homeless Service Center to coordinate wait lists, and available wait list services. Greg reports the momentum is good. Attendees were asked to take the "Working Together to End Homelessness" document (Declaration of Interdependence) to their agency boards of directors. While no funding will come to the community as a direct result of training, increased funding possibilities are anticipated due to coordination of efforts. A motion was made and seconded to approve and adopt the interdependency declaration.	Motion: To accept and adopt the Interdependency Declaration, titled "Working Together to End Homelessness," as presented. Yea: 9, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: Gib Clarke, Regina Delahunt, John Harmon, Gary Tomsic
3. Re-Location Assistance	David Stalheim introduced a proposal for relocation assistance for those living in substandard housing units. Once property is condemned, a landlord could be required to provide up to \$2000 in relocation funds to a tenant being relocated, as provided for under RCW 59.18.085. The City of Bellingham proposed the Homeless Service Center be contracted to oversee the relocation program.	

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<p>3. Re-Location Assistance (con't)</p>	<p>The fund would be seeded with \$5000 from the City, with an additional \$5000 from the County's Housing fund. Funds disbursed, as well as court costs, would be recovered from the landlord, as specified in the RCW. The fund would be used for the most egregious cases, which currently occur at a rate of two to five per year. It is estimated that these numbers are under-reported, and the units are often "housing of last resort." Approximately 25% of homes in the weatherization program could qualify as those with health/safety issues. Issues are county-wide, but would start in Bellingham. It was asked if other municipalities could be linked, perhaps providing additional funding. The number of units deemed unsafe due to health and safety issues has increased in the last year according to Law Advocates from their work with individuals with landlord/ tenant issues. How quickly funds can be recovered will be an issue, and courts may find it overwhelming. This could be a prevention strategy. Landlord licensing is still being considered, a separate issue from this proposal. A coordinated system is important. As the city has a rental rehabilitation program, funding may be available to make units habitable. Possibility of looking at situations in the city as a pilot? A motion was made and seconded to support the development of procedures to support the ongoing need for safe and healthy housing in the County.</p>	<p>Motion: For Health Department staff to proceed with the development of a procedure to support the ongoing need for safe and healthy housing in the County. Yea: 9, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: Gib Clarke, Regina Delahunt, John Harmon, Gary Tomsic</p>
<p>4. Community-wide Risk Mitigation Fund</p>	<p>Whatcom County's "Landlord Guarantee Fund" as implemented by the Whatcom Homeless Service Center was provided to attendees. The current policy covers damages and lost rent for high risk tenants with a set aside fund in the WHSC contract. A few other housing contracts also have a set aside amount in their contracts for these types of costs. It is asked that the group consider a community-wide risk mitigation fund instead on individual line items in housing contracts; available to landlords who rent to high-risk individuals. Greg reported of between 60 and 70 landlords, HSC has had three claims. Agencies applying to the community-wide fund would have clients receiving case management services and have a relationship with HSC. Case management would be home-based, and not exclusively limited to housing case management. A clear MOU with agencies involved with the community fund would need to be implemented so diminish the possibility of unrealistic expectations. Gail is</p>	<p>Motion: To support further investigation of the program by Gail de Hoog, with a report to follow Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: Gib Clarke, Regina Delahunt, John Harmon, Gary Tomsic, Sue Parrott (left early)</p>

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4. Community-wide Risk Mitigation Fund (con't)	considering \$25,000 in funding this strategy to expand capacity for difficult to house clients. Motion was made and seconded to support further investigation of the program.	
5. Ongoing Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="280 304 479 368">• Legislative Activity <li data-bbox="280 1098 510 1161">• Point in Time Count Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="607 304 1444 432">• HB 2048 would extend the sunset date in document recording fees from 2013 to 2017 and would increase fees by \$10. Each county would work with their landlord community to discuss opportunities for them to participate. <p data-bbox="651 472 1429 563">Disability Lifeline: bill would remove the cash grant and move funds to housing assistance. Each county would target the assistance.</p> <p data-bbox="651 603 1438 667">Housing Trust Fund: House is budgeting \$60 mil.; Senate \$30 mil. Call your senator.</p> <p data-bbox="651 707 1444 962">Federal budget: Federal budget cut the block grant fund, which means \$200,000 housing assistance will be lost locally. Negotiations are on only about 25% of the federal budget. Self Help housing retained funding for 2011, but was cut for 2012. Admin. fees on Section 8 are changed. Good news: 7000 new VASH vouchers and McKinney Vento increased too. HUD-funded grant \$\$\$ still a possibility, but USDA is cutting housing.</p> <p data-bbox="651 1002 1391 1066">State: some general fund support will decrease, and some human services grants will no longer be available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="607 1106 1444 1453">• The Executive Summary of the Point in Time Count report was provided to attendees. Greg reported approximately 100 cases each year are lacking some data. The Commerce report compares counties, and we're making good gains, which reflect local investments. Due to decreasing revenues, not as much funding is available. Number of chronic homeless has remained steady and we aren't seeing a lot of new folks. We've made progress between 2008 and 2010 on those previously institutionalized, but saw an increase in those released from incarceration in 2011. The number indicating household economic reasons for their homelessness 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point in Time Count Report (con't) • EDI update • Requests for funds outside RFP/Q process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased this year. Eighteen percent of our local homeless rely on Disability Lifeline, and approximately 30% of Disability Lifeline clients are homeless. This is the most challenging housing population. The complete Point in Time Count report should be out next week, and Gail will send it to the membership when it is available. • Paul reported that EDI is almost approved. Only available for new home construction now, Paul asks the membership to e-mail legislators. • Guidelines provided to attendees, as discussed at previous meetings. 	<p>Gail to send PIT report to membership when it is available.</p>
<p>6. On the Horizon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Bellingham, and other municipalities will address local fair housing laws to add Section 8 as a protected housing class. 	
<p>Adjourn</p>	<p>The meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 10:00 a.m.</p>	
<p>Next Meeting</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">June 9, 2011 8:30 – 10:00 a.m. Whatcom County Health Department Administrative Conference Room 509 Girard Street,</p>	