

Chittenden County Homeless Alliance Strategic Planning Committee Meeting

Wednesday, October 18, 2017 3:00PM – 4:30PM
Champlain Housing Trust, 88 King Street, Burlington, VT – 2nd floor Grand Hall

MEETING MINUTES

1. Introductions & Announcements:

Present: Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services, out-going committee chair), Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont, in-coming committee chair), Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance, meeting note taker), Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust), Marcy Esbjerg (CEDO), Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community), Jan Demers (Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity), Chris Brzovic (Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity), Johnny Quezada (Committee on Temporary Shelter), Kevin Pounds (ANEW Place), Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority), and Emily Higgins via phone (VT AHS DCF Office of Economic Opportunity).

Announcements: None.

2. Leadership for CCHA Strategic Planning Committee

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): Diana Carminati has accepted my invitation to take over as the chair of the Strategic Planning Committee. And the “Everyone Known to Someone” work will probably fall under this committee.

3. Social Media

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): We had mostly talked about Facebook as our possible social media presence.

Johnny Quezada (Committee on Temporary Shelter): I second that. I think Facebook is one of the more popular platforms that people visit on a regular basis.

Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community): And it takes less time because on Twitter you have to be posting constantly or you don’t exist.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): Did we talk about who the audience is and what we want to convey?

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): It’s worse to have a bad page than no page at all. What would we post there?

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): I would plan to post meeting invitations, agendas, minutes, and to create “events” to invite people to quarterly meetings, etc.

Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community): And we could post articles.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): It could be a good way to post articles, but perhaps it should be the chairs of our committees who decide which articles to post and write the captions.

Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community): An intern could do it.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): No, they couldn't curate it/decide which articles to post.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): I agree; it should be someone in a leadership role in the CCHA because if you post an article, people think you are endorsing all the ideas in the article (unless you include a caption that explains your reaction to the article). We'd want to make sure anything that was posted was in alignment with the philosophy of the CCHA.

Jan Demers (Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity): And the frequency of posts doesn't have to be every day or every week. Quality over quantity.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): You can cross-post things from other agencies.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): It feels like for many people, if you don't have a Facebook page, it's like you don't exist.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): I think we should have parameters though. Like, would we want to post other people's fundraisers, or other things, regardless of content?

Kevin Pounds (ANEW Place): What is the goal? That would determine the guidelines.

Johnny Quezada (Committee on Temporary Shelter): The way I get the majority of news and articles is from LinkedIn. But, I'm not necessarily saying that's what we should use.

Jan Demers (Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity): But who is our audience? Many in the homeless community are on Facebook.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): We talked about how we would turn off comments since I am only 20 hours a week, and it might be a lot to manage moderating comments.

Jan Demers (Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity): We have one person who monitors our Facebook page. She works in our development office. We have 4 people who can monitor it.

Kevin Pounds (ANEW Place): Ours is pretty simple. It serves as the voice of what we are doing, and what those who partner with us are doing. The fundraising is secondary. What makes it work is it gives people snippets of news that they can read in under 30 seconds. Building a shed, holding a dinner, etc. Once we had someone who steadily did it (2-3 posts a week), then the # of people following it went up. We have 3 people who can post on it. I post maybe once a week.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): Is there one person who oversees it?

Kevin Pounds (ANEW Place): It's just the 3 of us who work together.

Johnny Quezada (Committee on Temporary Shelter): Ours is moderated by one person and open to everyone to comment on it. There's a lot of information in those comments.

Chris Brzovic (Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity): Has it been unmanageable?

Johnny Quezada (Committee on Temporary Shelter): No. It seems to be working fine.

Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community): I would err on the side of transparency, if possible. I think the evidence that we are hearing is that it's not likely to be a big problem.

Kevin Pounds (ANEW Place): I think that when people comment negatively, it doesn't necessarily reflect badly on your organization, because people understand that it is just one person's opinion.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): Some of our local news sites have some really vicious comments and trolling.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): That's true. I would be less concerned with people who use our services posting inappropriate things, and more concerned with comments from those who are not sympathetic to the plight of those who are homeless. Those comments could be triggering to our users.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): I think about all the reasons we might communicate; to gain visibility, credibility, to share information, etc., and there are different ways to communicate. Facebook might be good for one thing, and a website for another, etc. It might be good to spell out what we are going to use each one for.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): A communications plan.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): Yes. Who we want to communicate what to, and how to do so. Some things might be posted multiple places. For instance, if people who are looking for services would go to Facebook, we need to make it easy for them to find that information.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): A couple of things you can do on Facebook are put that sort of info. on the "About" page. Also, as a page, I could "Follow" the Facebook pages of our partner organizations (ANEW Place, CHT, COTS, etc.).

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): I like that idea of "following" those pages.

Marcy Esbjerg (Community and Economic Development Office): I see a lot of Facebook events with all positive posts. CEDO runs a "My Brother's Keeper" event with Spectrum, and you can use a hashtag and have it show up on all of their feeds too. It's not a lot of time or a big issue. In 2017, I think it's so common to have one and it's easy to start a Facebook page. I'm on Facebook every day. I'm the admin along with a couple of other people. I'd be happy to be an admin along with Paddy.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): There is a company where they have volunteers to help people build their followings.

Marcy Esbjerg (Community and Economic Development Office): It's Champlain College who does it.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): I'm wondering if Paddy could get in touch with the group at Champlain College.

Members of this committee could be part of this Facebook organizing group with Paddy. Anybody who wants to volunteer to be part of it.

Paddy, Marcy, and Stephen volunteer to work on the Facebook proposal.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): I think it's wonderful to get a plan developed, but it would have to come back to the Steering Committee.

Marcy Esbjerg (Community and Economic Development Office): Are you saying we need Steering Committee approval to start a Facebook page, even if it's just us posting on it?

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): Yes, because there may be members of the Steering Committee who don't want us to have one.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): I just want to get their buy-in. That's how we work.

Marcy Esbjerg (Community and Economic Development Office): That seems unnecessary.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): I think we should start with Facebook and get started, but I think it should be blessed by the Steering Committee first.

Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community): But before we talk to the people at Champlain College, we should know who our audience is.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): Facebook is good at reaching a broad audience. People who are homeless, professionals, young people, older people, etc.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): I see it being good as a way to invite people to events. To solicit volunteers with the warming shelter, etc.

Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community): I agree with what Paddy said about it reaching a broad range of people.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): Emily, are you still on the line?

Emily Higgins via phone (VT AHS DCF Office of Economic Opportunity): It's been a great discussion. There are pros and cons. I think the most important question is what is our goal, and who decides what gets posted. It's a good way to raise visibility, and is easier than a website.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): Does the balance of state have a Facebook page?

Emily Higgins via phone (VT AHS DCF Office of Economic Opportunity): No.

Marcy Esbjerg (Community and Economic Development Office): The Champlain College thing would be a broader discussion. It wouldn't make sense to meet with them just to talk about Facebook.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): Can we put in on our November Steering Committee agenda?

Kevin Pounds (ANEW Place): But what is the goal?

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): Community education and involvement.

Marcy Esbjerg (Community and Economic Development Office): I won't be at the November Steering Committee meeting, so someone else would have to present it.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): I can do that.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): Could you three who volunteered put something together about the goals, what you would post, and the amount of effort required?

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): We have a Point In Time Count coming up in January, and it could be a tool for outreach for that.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): It might be helpful for us to have 2 keepers of the page that are not necessarily the co-chairs.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): We could post about our meetings, the Here to Help clinics. If it's not a CCHA event, maybe it would need approval.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): Would it be helpful for Coordinated Entry.

Chris Brzovic (Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity): I think it's a no-brainer to have a Facebook page. We should just do it. With Coordinated Entry, we have to be transparent about our goals and processes. Facebook is a great web presence. It's a means of getting info. to new people.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): So, you'll add it to the November agenda?

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): Yes.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): Can it be on there as a vote instead of just a discussion item?

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): Yes.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): Can the group send it out ahead of time?

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): Yes.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): That's why it's important to have a proposal.

Marcy Esbjerg (Community and Economic Development Office): It's easiest to start off strict, by just posting CCHA events.

4. CCHA Strategic Plan/Mutually Reinforcing Activities List (Diana Carminati)

See Appendix A: CCHA Quarterly Meeting Feedback Connected to Mutually Reinforcing Activities.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): We'll move on, and Diana will show us the notes from the June Quarterly meeting.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): We had the June Quarterly Meeting at the Salvation Army, and we talked about 4 different discussion questions, and took notes, and Paddy transcribed them.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): With Jane's help.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): And I took them, and connected them to the Mutually Reinforcing Activities/Strategic Plan goals.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): Thank you so much for doing that.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): It was interesting to see how things connected. The first one talks about how people get connected to services.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): Maybe we should take this and go back to the homeless community for additional feedback.

Marcy Esbjerg (Community and Economic Development Office): I am concerned about continually going back for more feedback, because we've already asked for feedback twice now. Instead, I think we should act on the issues that have come up the two times we have gotten feedback.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): I think acting is important. For instance, the things we voted on at the spring quarterly meeting with the funders collaborative and the June quarterly meeting with the homeless community.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): We've been working on coordinated entry to make it easier for people to access services. What else can we do?

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): If there was one set of information that consistently looked the same to everyone in the community.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): The CCHA Coordinated Entry committee has talked about having a logo to alert people of all the partners that are part of our network; a decal that our partners could hang on their doors or in their lobbies.

Chris Brzovic (Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity): What were the 2 goals?

Marcy Esbjerg (Community and Economic Development Office): Streamline the system and ongoing supports.

Chris Brzovic (Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity): Coordinated entry will definitely help with streamlining the system, but it's not a panacea. We still need to do other work to help with ongoing supports, etc.

Marcy Esbjerg (Community and Economic Development Office): Are there other things we can do to streamline the system in addition to coordinated entry? For instance, a universal housing application.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): We already have one.

Marcy Esbjerg (Community and Economic Development Office): But I am talking about for the individual.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): Anywhere you accept tax credits you have to accept the universal application. Our CHT one is shorter than the universal application though, so we prefer it.

Marcy Esbjerg (Community and Economic Development Office): So, you all have a slightly different application (BHA, CHT, COTS)?

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): But, we all have to accept the universal application if people want to fill out all 43 pages.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): I would like to see all of this standardized so that people know what applications they could be filling out to get various kinds of support.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): Could there be a common application that's maybe not 43 pages, but rather a fraction of that, that could work for all of our local housing programs?

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): Affordable housing is the 3rd most regulated industry in the country after health care and pharmaceuticals. So, we probably couldn't have a common 10-page application.

Johnny Quezada (Committee on Temporary Shelter): Maybe not a 10-page one, but maybe a 20-page one.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): I don't think you would get there though, because there are different requirements for each program.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): For instance, Johnny, you don't have to ask the Rural Development questions.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): Could it be a tiered application?

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): People need ID, their rental history, etc.

Chris Brzovic (Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity): I agree, but I don't think this is an early actionable step. Maybe we could work on streamlining into a universal application later. But, we could focus on moving the person who is in need of assistance through the system into housing. We could set up something where we set up with a standardized practice for after the assessment is done. E.g. for

people who are experiencing chronic homelessness, these are the services available and the next steps. That would complement coordinated entry to streamline the experience for the client.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): If people need help filling out the application, we have to help them. We looked at the CCHA VI-SPDAT list, and about 80% of them are not on our BHA list yet.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): We had this same conversation with the Vermont Rental Subsidy meeting. There are different levels of support across agencies and within agencies. How do we address that issue? Why do some people monitor that and others don't? So, a checklist would be great.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): And does that fall within coordinated entry, or do we need another group to establish those guidelines?

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): I think it would be great if we could bring together the supervisors for our agencies, to see what their processes are and how we could uniformly address this.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): You probably have checklists, so we could share them.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): What are the organizations? CVOEO, COTS, BHA, ANEW Place, Steps, Safe Harbor, VCCI (Vermont Chronic Care Initiative), Pathways, Spectrum, ESD Reach Up case managers, Vermont Cares, Voc Rehab, the Chittenden Clinic.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): I am happy to be involved in this, but my staff aren't housing navigators, per se, but we do housing case management.

Jan Demers (Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity): But you have criteria that is about retention.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): Yeah, I'm happy to be there.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): It would be interesting to look at a journey from the consumer's eyes. For instance, I call 2-1-1 and they send me to coordinated entry, and then they send me to...

Chris Brzovic (Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity): But we are developing policies that will be in place soon, so in January, it would look a lot different than it looks now.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): Yeah, we'd have to look at the arc of the journey how we would like it to be. What does that journey look like for the people?

Jan Demers (Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity): I'm wondering though if it makes sense, because of a capacity issue, to wait until January until we start this. It would be great to talk to the supervisors because they have such an intimate knowledge of the way things work. It would encourage a collaboration between the agencies when the leaders are at the table. After coordinated entry is in place, this could be a year-long project.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): I agree with you. A lot of it will ride on the coordinated entry thing. It's an exploration process to see what people are currently doing.

Jan Demers (Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity): I am thinking about capacity. I would love to have Sandrine there, and I need her input to make sure it is practical and can be applied, and she is working on several big projects right now, and I can't ask her to do more. But, in January, I could ask her to be involved because her plate will be a little less full then.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): I hear what you are saying, totally, but I want to start drumming up some interest in this. I talked to Nicole Kubon today about the Vermont Rental Subsidy, and I am going to start thinking about people within these organizations who might be good to speak with about this project. We should consider what the current practice is now and what it could be.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): And we could look at evidence-based practices that exist for service provision to move people from homeless to housed.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): We would look at a process for every worker who is trying to help someone go from homeless to housed, and stay housed.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): No, that's a separate thing, because it can take a different set of skills to get someone housed vs. keep them housed.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): But we need to look at the whole picture.

Marcy Esbjerg (Community and Economic Development Office): Capacity has been brought up multiple times. The question is how do you move forward with change when your agency doesn't have the capacity? It's like this constant butting head because we want to move forward but agencies don't have the extra capacity.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): But we need to create efficiencies.

Marcy Esbjerg (Community and Economic Development Office): How do we get that across and get buy-in?

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): Steps to End Domestic Violence is a crisis provider, but does not focus on housing retention. That is perfectly reasonable for their mission. But, someone else needs to pick that part up.

Jan Demers (Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity): I am very hopeful because this could revolutionize the way we are doing things.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): So, talk to your supervisors now because I will be getting in touch with them.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): Would this be another committee, or a sub-committee?

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): I think it's a Strategic Planning issue, and I suggest we spend most of our November meeting talking about this. I believe in using "futurization" because

when you look at your dream of where you want to end up, it's easier to figure out how to get there without getting caught up in the muck and the mud.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): And then we can figure out who the partners and teams are that individuals pass through.

Johnny Quezada (Committee on Temporary Shelter): We want to be comfortable handing people off to the next partner.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): Thank you very much, and next time Diana will be facilitating this meeting.

*** Next CCHA Strategic Planning Committee meeting: Wednesday, November 15, 2017, 3:00-4:30 PM, Champlain Housing Trust, 88 King Street, Burlington, VT – 2nd floor conference room.