

Chittenden County Homeless Alliance (CCHA)

Strategic Planning Committee Meeting

August 29, 2018

Champlain Housing Trust, 88 King Street, Burlington, VT – 2nd floor conference room

Minutes

Attendees:

Paddy Shea, **CCHA**

Diana Carminati, **United Way**

Steve Lunna, **UVM**

Lacey Smith, **BPD**

Stephen Marshall, **The Homeless Community**

Margaret Bozik, **CHT**

Dylan Foote, **STEPS**

Travis Poulin, **CVOEO**

Brian Smith, **VT-DMH**

A Discussion of a Communications Plan – Internal & External

THESE 4 ITEMS WERE OFFERED AS GOALS FOR OUR INTERNAL COMMUNICATION PLAN:

- Ensure transparency among members
- Improve efficiency, effectiveness, and appropriateness of communication efforts
- Build and strengthen connections with members and other interested parties
- Provide consistent messaging about what the CCHA is, what role it plays in the community, and how people can be involved with the CCHA.

GOING FORWARD, THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WERE INDICATED OR DISCUSSED FOR IMPROVED COMMUNICATION IN GENERAL:

- A better understanding of what we each do in our work towards reducing homelessness, with care given to limiting the sheer quantity of information given, as well as the potential misunderstanding about Coordinated Entry's role in relation to the other agencies. Specifically, **a full roster of the organizations, and what they do, for our external communication plan. Possibly presentations, a 2 page summary, etc.**
- **The website** clearly plays a role in terms of offering information about all the alliance agencies.
- Internal communication should be free but **external communication should governed by policies**. One attendee gave the following example about why

policies would be useful: “For instance, right now just about anyone can join our listserv. What if one of them started sending out tons of emails about their own organization’s fundraisers, or the vitamin sales they do on the side? We would want to be able to tell them that’s against our policy.”

- **Meeting minutes** came up as a point of disagreement. **One point of view** is that we may want to phrase items as having been discussed in general and decided in general. This allows for more freedom of expression during the meeting. In other words, minutes are distinct from a transcript. **Another point of view** is that maximum transparency is important.
- **External outreach** will be important so that people who need services can get them. And, to involve the community, to the widest extent possible, in developing solutions.
- **Sending out agendas** are one tool for prompting discussion, though they need to be detailed enough.
- **Information overload** is something to remain mindful of. One attendee commented: “About 3 people have asked to be removed from the listserv because they don’t want to get so many emails.”
- **One solution may be two separate lists.** One for those who are really involved, and one for membership at large. And notifications of meetings should probably go to everybody on both email lists.
- One comment noted that there is value in seeing **how decisions were arrived at.**

HOW TO INFORM NEW MEMBERS

A question was posed about “on-boarding new committee members.” Several points were made to address this:

- **Reading the minutes from previous meetings** is helpful.
- There is an **already established practice** of sending new members a CCHA brochure, a meeting schedule, links to the website and Facebook page, and explaining how the Listserv works.
- Reference was made to **the membership committee** which wasn’t (or isn’t) very active.
- Someone raised the idea of a **“buddy system”** which is employed by some organizations. New members get paired with a buddy and they can meet for coffee.

- ☀ An **active recruiting phase** once a year was suggested.
- ☀ It was tentatively decided that **when someone new starts coming to meetings**, we should try to get them as involved as possible right away. This could/ should be a role for both the Secretary and the Outreach and Membership Committee. The Secretary should begin serving on this committee.

A Discussion about Who is Responsible for the Communications Plan

This Committee (the Strategic Planning Committee) will make the communications plan.

- **Engaging individuals with lived experience of homelessness** is one crucial piece and “we have had some success with that, thanks to Stephen Marshall’s efforts, and thanks to having a Community Meeting at the Salvation Army, and at the library with the city council, etc.” We should have a routine effort to do interviews with people in the homeless community.
 - ☀ **We should consider employing some sort of SurveyMonkey** (an online survey tool), or similar instrument, to allow people to give feedback. **One concern was raised about “something that is ever-present, vs. an annual event.”** Interviews with individual people would be helpful either as a supplement or as a primary tool.
 - ☀ **One of our Community Meetings could focus on getting feedback** from people with lived experience of homelessness.
 - ☀ **We should ask** “What’s going well?” and “What could we do to improve?”
 - ☀ **As part of every financial assist at CVOEO**, we could do a short survey. Currently CVOEO solicits feedback every 2 years where we send out surveys

SOME PITFALLS TO WATCH OUT FOR:

- Though we **have to be careful that people don’t come away with the impression that things will be fixed quickly.**
- Sometimes, when receiving feedback currently, **it can be hard to tell why people are upset:** because of how they were treated or because they didn’t get a service they wanted.

- **In some cases we will get feedback that is very specific to a certain agency**, rather than a CCHA issue.
- **We may get good feedback about frontline staff** which is good but narrowly focused.
- **If we ask our organizations to report on the feedback they have gathered** from clients, the feedback could be too broad since many organizations work on things other than homelessness.
- **There are different ways to collect feedback. We will have to look at it more.** Perhaps we could ask the United Way's Consultative Committee for some help on this. We will come back to that for a future agenda.
- **We should also do an intra-alliance survey**, like we did in 2012. (Do we have a copy of the survey from 2012?)
- **We might consider including landlords** in the future. Currently we have CHT, BHA, and Cathedral Square at the table, but not yet the private landlords. Retention services might be offered to the landlord as well as the tenant.

DECISIONS MADE

- ✓ Active outreach to new members from their first meeting. This could/ should be a role for both the Secretary and the Outreach and Membership Committee. The Secretary should begin serving on this committee.
- ✓ Surveying members of the homeless community with survey tools online, through CVOEO, at community meetings and one-on-one.
- ✓ Continue considering how to collect feedback from the homeless community. Ask the United Way's Consultative Committee for some help on this.
- ✓ In the longer term, do an intra-alliance survey (and obtain the one from 2012 in preparation).