

Chittenden County Homeless Alliance (CCHA)

Steering Committee Meeting, May 7, 2020, 9:00 AM

Online meeting

ATTENDEES:

- Chris Brzovic, **CVOEO**
- Jane Helmstetter, **AHS**
- Jan Demers, **CVOEO**
- Margaret Bozik, **CHT**
- Garen Nigon, **Community Solutions**
- Amy Carmola, **UWNWVT**
- Chelsea Alsofrom, **Pathways**
- Elaine Soto, **Howard**
- Kim Colville, **VCIL**
- Elizabeth Kanard, **CHCB**
- Emma Beers
- Jason Brill, **VA**
- Kevin Pounds, **Anew Place**
- Lacey Smith, **BPD**
- Laura Wilson, **CS**
- Laura Zeliger, **BHA**
- Liz Whitmore, **BHA**
- Louise Masterson, **ICA**
- Meghan Morrow Raftery, **ICA**
- Patrick Sheehan, **COTS**
- Rita Markley, **COTS**
- Robyn Stattel, **ESD**
- Sarah Russell, **CVOEO**
- Stephen Lunna, **SSVF@UVM**
- Travis Poulin, **CVOEO**
- Nicole Kubon, **STEPS**
- Will Towne, **SPECTRUM**
- Todd Rawlings, **CEDO**
- Lily Sojourner, **AHS**
- Someone represented as: 603 217 7935

DRAFT

- Unless quote marks are used, all speech is paraphrased.

CCHA Budget Report

- Laura Wilson/ Cathedral Square: We're under budget for all categories including salary and benefits but we're also not taking in any revenue. **Here are the CCHA financials through the end of March.**
- Laura Wilson: We could probably go about nine more months if we don't take anything in.

United Way Covid Recovery Fund

- Travis Poulin/ CVOEO: Amy Carmola has approached us on behalf of United Way. They have set aside 30K for the use of housing supports related to the Covid crisis. They want feedback from CCHA for how those funds could best be used in a coordinated manner. The executive team discussed it; our suggestion is to use those funds primarily as a backup to the existing HOP funds and for the housing review team to assist people with back-rent and security deposits. Having a fund that doesn't have the same level of restrictions as HOP will be very useful. I might suggest that perhaps 4 or 5 thousand of that 30K be used for the outreach folks who are going to the motels right now as guests are trying to get ready to rent with BHA or WHA, etc. Sometimes as clients work on their rental applications, they need money that isn't available in any other grant, for example, to get appropriate identification.
- Jane Helmstetter/ AHS: We also might need funds to support data entry.
 - Jan Demers/ CVOEO: We do have some capacity to help that situation as well — it's in the grant we have through HUD.
 - Margaret Bozik/ CHT: Let's not use any of this funding for Covid-related back-rent until we see if the legislature is going to pay for that.
- Kim Colville/ VCIL: If the legislature doesn't help people out with back-rent, I'm wondering if there's a way we could expand the number of months of back-rent we fund. We're currently looking at people needing 3 months of back rent at least.
 - Travis Poulin: The housing review team has self-imposed a 2 month limit on back-rent, partly due to the level of financing. We have (unclear) amount left in HOP and another 25K left in the revolving fund. We're hoping that the legislature comes through.
- Nicole Kubon/ STEPS: Around the HRT funds, you might be able to create a separate set of criteria or screening.
- Todd Rawlings/ CEDO: The city is looking at using some of its Covid-specific CDBG funds to use for rent relief. We're currently working with HUD to try to make these funds available for back-rent. We will be coordinating with Travis and the other non-profits to make sure it gets distributed. Also regarding **the 2020 Action Plan**: This is where the city proposes how we will use our CDBG and home funds. That's about 700K, but we'll also be doing an amendment to our action plan where we incorporate Covid-specific CDBG funds. And we have about 450K for that. Both of these will be circulating for comment.

- Margaret Bozik: We were on a Neighborworks call with Charlotte-Mecklenburg. They're already using CDBG funds for rent relief.
 - Todd Rawlings: We don't have an issue around using it for rent relief. The issue arises around using it for back-rent. Right now, HUD's position is we can only use it for rent going forward. I'd be happy to talk to anyone who's managed to work successfully with HUD on allowing back-rent.

COVID RELIEF HOUSING FUND DISCUSSION

Narrative from Margaret Bozik's email to the group prior to the meeting:

First, some context: Vermont received \$1.25 billion in funds under the federal CARES Act to address COVID-19 related needs. The legislature is moving fairly quickly to make decisions on how to spend that money. CHT and other housing organizations were encouraged to get a "stake in the ground" in as quickly as possible so that housing needs would not be overlooked. That's what triggered the \$106.5 million COVID Relief Housing Fund proposal sent out as an attachment with the agenda.

There will be a lot of competition for the \$1.25 billion, and there are no guarantees that any of it will be coming our way. But we continue to advocate. Getting your input is important!

***I'm attaching a spreadsheet** that shows first, on the tab labelled CHT HVT prop, the reasoning behind the original request for \$106.5 million. Second, the first tab of the spreadsheet shows an updated request specifically for Chittenden County. You'll see that it includes some things that weren't in the original proposal. The third tab has some comments thus far, and some responses.*

All of this is an estimate at this point, and nothing is written in stone. But we do want to test the assumptions to try to be as accurate as possible. It's important to know also that the rules on how the money can be spent continue to evolve. We know that expenditures have to be related to the pandemic and that costs have to be incurred (and perhaps paid) by December 31, 2020.

The reaction thus far in the legislature has been generally positive on rent relief (i.e., back rent to cover COVID-related nonpayment). They are wrestling with eligibility on capital funding for new housing. Money for physical changes to shelters to allow them to safely serve more people under the distancing requirements will likely meet eligibility requirements.

- Margaret Bozik: I'd like to invite questions on this.

- Todd Rawlings: My understanding is that the 1.25 billion would come to Vermont as a reimbursement. Is the idea that the state would borrow against that, provide funding, and then submit their request to the Treasury? When do you think that we would need to get access to that funding to fully spend it down by the end of the year?
 - Margaret Bozik: I can't answer the first question as to how the money flows. On the second question, my assumption is that, for example, on the shelter projects, some of that will be acquisition projects, so it could be spent pretty quickly. The renovation portion of it could be completed by the end of December assuming an available workforce. But I'll let Rita, Kevin and Nicole speak to the specifics of what they're looking to do with their shelters.
 - Rita Markley/ COTS: We have 4 shelters and only one has a sufficient number of bathrooms. In order to help prevent transmission, we need to add bathrooms. The other thing is to lay out and divide up spaces a bit differently so we can ensure there's at least 6 feet between beds. The last thing is to address air circulation and air quality.
 - Kevin Pounds/ Anew Place: We've been talking to the city about converting supply containers. Turning 20 containers into individual livable spaces, including bathrooms, showers, site prep, etc. — this is what we're thinking about for approximately 25K per unit.
 - Nicole Kubon/ Steps: Our goal is to purchase and renovate one of the local motels. Right now we have a 7 room shelter.
 - Jane Helmstetter: One of our priorities as a continuum is more access to low barrier space.
- Margaret Bozik: My guess is that certain amounts will be designated by the legislature for certain projects. And RFPs will have to be submitted.
- Sarah Phillips/ OEO: There's a robust state level effort to put together a strategy for a phased approach to re-housing people. We'll have something more concrete to offer very soon.

EMERGENCY MOTEL AND COORDINATED ENTRY UPDATE

- Rita Markley/ COTS: We launched outreach teams focused on the motels with the highest concentration of people going through homelessness. (We are still looking for 2 people for an additional team.) On their first day, the outreach teams were able to connect 3 people with their stimulus checks that those people didn't know they were eligible to receive. Outreach teams are doing two kinds of assessments: 1. For everyone, short-term, immediate needs 2. For those who have not already gone through the vulnerability assessment, they will begin doing those or updating them if they were previously in Coordinated Entry but had not stayed connected. We already have people filling out housing applications and working on obtaining their IDs. It's a great team made up of people from Turning Point, COTS and CVOEO. We'd love others to join us. We have a coordinating meeting twice a week.

- Chris Brzovic: We put together a Coordinated Entry team, including people who regularly participate in CHRC meetings, and we had a meeting with the motel workers, including Nicole, Linda, Travis, myself, Stephanie. We scheduled an assessment training on Friday. We decided to revise our assessment a bit for this population. It's a quick one-pager now. We added a couple of questions about where people were coming from prior to their ESD stay and to try to start getting good information about what people's situations are without being invasive. **Right now there are 399 households in motels right now,** literally homeless and we know almost nothing beyond that.

After doing a lot of cross-checking, what we've learned is that:

- 108 of the households — of the aforementioned 399 — are currently active on our master-list.
- 38 guests were historically enrolled in Coordinated Entry but are no longer active.
- 49 people have been previously referred but never actually connected with Coordinated Entry.
- 238 households (detailed above) are known to our system in one way or another.
- 168 households are unknown to our system.

We're looking at a doubling of our by-name list. This is a huge spike in in-flow. We need to learn more. And we have to triage here and make new prioritization decisions.

- Jane Helmstetter: We clearly need more support.
- Kim Colville/VCIL: Chris, do you know how many people were migrating into or out of Chittenden county when Covid hit? Have we been just missing all these people?
 - Chris Brzovic: We don't know. We're working on it though.
 - Kim Colville: It's kind of a wakeup call.

SHELTER UPDATES

The Recovery Center

- Jan Demers/ CVOEO: We had our last debriefing last night. We're closed down now.
- Margaret Bozik: Question for Sarah. Is the Essex Fairground now going to replace the Holiday Inn?
 - Sarah Phillips: It's hard to find one site to meet all needs. Essex will meet some needs but not for a lot of folks.

WARMING SHELTER

- Kevin Pounds/ Anew Place: We've been in conversation with the city and state about extending our stay in the campers into the warmer weather. We're working out the details on that. It looks promising. Parks & Rec have been amazing.

SPECTRUM

- Will Towne: We are still staffing 24/7. But things are going well. Shelter is operational during the day. Our biggest struggle has been emphasizing the seriousness of the situation to the kids that we work with. People want to leave and hang out with their friends. One silver lining has been that some kids feel so cooped up that they're itching to go get jobs.

COTS

- Rita Markley: Things are going well. We have a similar struggle as Will, trying to educate people about maintaining distance. We're looking at what our maximum capacity will be when people return. At our family shelters it's hard because we don't have any programming right now. People's patience is wearing thin.

STEPS

- Nicole Kubon: We are not staffed 24/7. We check on shelter residents twice a week. Everyone is doing well. We have 4 households in shelter right now. We're very grateful to Feeding Chittenden.

PRIORITIZATION CHANGE DUE TO COVID-19 EMERGENCY

- Chris Brzovic/ CVOEO: The C.E. Committee is recommending that the Steering Committee authorize **this addendum**. We developed it in consultation with our CHR group. In summary, we're proposing that we be permitted to take into consideration, during our case conferencing at CHR meetings, Covid-related vulnerabilities that are not sufficiently captured by the current vulnerability assessment. All decisions would be made through the committee and all would be documented.

So we're aligning these additional priorities with the hyper-vulnerable category as described by the CDC. In particular, when folks have health conditions that are "not well controlled." We're also looking at sleeping location. This would not guarantee prioritization, it just allows us to take these items into account.

VOTE To Accept the Addendum

MOTION to accept the Addendum: Laura

SECONDED: Travis

No further discussion.

All YES.

VETERANS COMMITTEE UPDATE

- Steve Lunna/ SSVF @ UVM: We have currently 10 veterans on our active by-name list but one will be leased up by the end of the month. One seems to be MIA and will probably come off our list in the next cycle. I want to let everyone know that SSVF at UVM has a significant funding increase to pay arrears rent and pay hotel stays for eligible veterans so if you know of a vet who's struggling, please have them call our office.
 - Stephen Lunna's email address: **Stephen.Lunna@uvm.edu**

FINAL ITEMS:

- Meghan Morrow Raftery/ ICA: We got an email from the Washington County Coordinated Entry lead to let us know that the Barre Community Justice Center wants to start entering coordinated entry data, so we wanted to inform both CoCs because it's a "shared" system...

And suddenly, the meeting was over.

NEXT MEETING: June 4, 2020

Please go to cchavt.org to find the Built for Zero dashboard, upcoming meeting dates, etc.