

# CHITTENDEN COUNTY HOMELESS ALLIANCE (CCHA)

## Strategic Planning Committee Minutes

January 15, 2020, 3:00 – 4:30, Champlain Housing Trust

### Attendees:

- Sarah Russell, **CVOEO**
- Lacey Smith, **BPD**
- Kevin Pounds, **Anew Place**
- Margaret Bozik, **CHT**
- Travis Poulin, **CVOEO**
- Chris Brzovic, **CVOEO**
- Samantha Tremblay, **STEPS to end Domestic Violence**
- Jonathan Farrell, **COTS**
- Jane Helmstetter, **AHS**
- Amy Carmola, **United Way**

### Review of Recommendations from the Consultant around Retention

*21. Experiment with new off-ramps to the Master List. Consider: a. Piloting a program that matches people with housemates and offers support services that might allow the matches to be successful.*

- Should we pursue this?
  - General Consensus: No.
  - The concerns are liability and oversight, among others.
- Sarah Russell/CVOEO: It puts people more at risk when it doesn't work because when someone moves out, who keeps the subsidy? who keeps the unit? etc.
- Amy Carmola/ United Way: What if there's a way to just help people find matchmaking services?
- Travis Poulin/ CVOEO: I refer people to Pathways peer support. Also, we do help people fill out applications for Homeshare, though it has a fee.
- Amy Carmola/ United Way: Can we provide the equivalent of a bulletin board?
  - It raises the question around what our obligation is if we see a bad match happening?
- Chris Brzovic/ CVOEO: Is the idea that we can use 2 or 3 bedroom apartments for pairs or groups of individuals?
- Margaret Bozik/ CHT: Just FYI, our new project in the Old North End has 52 people on the 1-bedroom waitlist and approximately 30 on the studio list. And there are 4 households on the 2-bedroom list and 6 on the 3-bedroom list. We're having trouble filling the 2 and 3 bedrooms in some cases.
- Sarah Russell/ CVOEO: Do you rent to two single adults in a 2-bedroom as long as they income-qualify?
- Jane Helmstetter/ AHS: Maybe there is model in the world somewhere we can look at – there's some research to be done.
- Travis Poulin/ CVOEO: I will ask our lawyer about liability issues around having a bulletin board.

- Kevin Pounds/ Anew Place: We had a discussion recently about this and decided there are too many variables.
- Jane Helmstetter/ AHS: Let's just seek out some guidance around this.
- Chris Brzovic/ CVOEO: I can ask Community Solutions about this issue.

*21. Experiment with new off-ramps to the Master List. Consider: b. Expanding landlord liaison programs and landlord guarantees.*

- Sarah Russell/ CVOEO: Landlord guarantees can be highly successful.
  - Lacey Smith/ BPD: In Costa Mesa, homelessness is prioritized; they have a CoC like ours but “on steroids.” Way more involvement from churches and business owners. And they meet weekly. Large buy-in from private landlords. Let's spend some time trying to pull in businesses.
  - Kevin Pounds/ Anew Place: When we spoke to a group of landlords, they said risk pool alone would determine whether a lot of landlords would take people.
  - Sarah Russell/ CVOEO: DOC keeps \$15,000 in an account to guarantee 10 housing units for recently released prisoners and this seems to satisfy landlords most of the time. They know that they can get \$1500 in damages if their tenant disappears. It's just for the first 12 months. This would be good investment for us.
  - Jonathan Farrell/ COTS: We have a similar program. We guarantee up to 3 months rent. That's the cap. Then there's also money for legal fees, damages and back rent. The only thing we've paid out was back rent.
  - Margaret Bozik/ CHT: For us, risk pools are meaningless because we're looking longer term. A guarantee is much more meaningful if you can get someone out in 30 days or 90 days.
  - Jonathan Ferrell/ COTS: We coupled ours with services. Almost like a property manager.
  - Margaret Bozik/ CHT: **Should we pursue fundraising for risk pool of money?** This could be administered through Coordinated Entry.
    - Amy Carmola/ United Way: How common is this?
    - Jonathan Ferrell/ COTS: For our program it's lack of references or poor references that are most common – with it understood that they have the funds to pay rent.
    - Sarah Russell/ CVOEO: Let's start a small pilot. Maybe the CHRC could start this conversation including about eligibility.
    - Margaret Bozik/ CHT: Can CHRC come up with the numbers of people this could serve?
    - Sarah Russell: Jenny at Pathways is the person to talk about this because she's the housing search person at Pathways.
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## **Developing Concise Taking Points to take to the Legislature and other Groups**

- Chris Brzovic gave a great speech about this at the Homelessness Awareness Day. Lack of Permanent Supportive Housing was the emphasis. [Find his remarks here.](#)
- Margaret Bozik/ CHT: It would be great to emphasize apartment size: the lack of studio and 1-bedroom units specifically. Ideally, we could use precise numbers. We need landlords that have that size who are willing to rent to this population and we need additional development.

- Sarah Russell/ CVOEO: How about developing three possible areas of advocacy – with three talking points each.
- Lacey Smith/ BPD: Has CCHA ever asked for money from the City?
  - Margaret Bozik: Not since 1994. Individual agencies have made requests but not the alliance as a whole.
- Lacey Smith: There's a lot of discussion around homelessness at the state level but it's not clear to me that there is much discussion at the city level. There's no one I'm aware of at City Hall who's working on this issue.
  - Kevin Pounds: What would we ask for precisely?
- Lacey Smith: The City has the ability to manage grants. There are untapped resources. When we lost Marcy, we lost a specific advocate. Right now we have a collaborative applicant but not someone who works in advocacy or policy around this issue.
- Chris Brzovic/ CVOEO: **What I would ask for is PSH. We need PSH for about 45 individuals (this number comes from case conferencing at CHRC). And we need 3 FTEs to do this service work – we need to ask for something concrete like this. ([The Maine report was referenced.](#))**
- Lacey Smith: City Councilors need to hear this.
- Kevin Pounds/ ANEW Place: Let's say the City came up with the money for these 45 PSH units. Who would they give the money to?
  - Lacey Smith: Hopefully there's an MOU between the Howard Center and the City. There's a model/ template for this, in other words.
- Sarah Russell: Let's say we went to the city and they gave us exactly the monies we requested. What if we – the CCHA continuum -- had an RFP process to decide where the money should land? This would put us in a leadership role.
  - Margaret Bozik: We're just talking about 2 agencies really: Pathways or CHCB. We could ask those two.
  - Sarah Russell: My idea is that they would have to provide a specific level of service to those specific people.
    - Jane Helmstetter: The enormous amount of paperwork that has to be done afterward has to be considered.
  - Lacey Smith: The City has the capacity to manage grants where smaller non-profits may not have that capacity. The infrastructure to manage grants lives within the City. They may also be able to find grants, to allow grant money to come into the City.
  - Margaret Bozik: Right now BHA is managing grants. Pathways and Safe Harbor do the paperwork.
  - Chris Brzovic: We still have to make sure we have the units. And we should stagger the on-boarding of FTEs. Take on one caseworker at a time.
  - Margaret Bozik: I do think the City could come up with 100K out of the general fund. Or 75 Burlington / 25 South Burlington.
  - Sarah Russell: How about other stakeholders?
    - Kevin Pounds: Business owners tend to want us to take care of the problem today or next week. Not in the next year. Not everyone has this mindset, but many do. We do a regular event: "lunch & learns." We buy lunch for local businesses and do a Q&A without any judgement. We try to listen and answer questions if we can. Or just take notes. Harassment of employees has come up.

- Margaret Bozik: Behavioral problems may or may not be connected to homelessness and it's also more of a public safety issue.
- Coming back to the talking points:
  - 1. **Chronic Homelessness:** We know that with 100K, we could house 15 people off of the chronic list, which would reduce that list by a third which would result in X estimated savings.
  - 2. **Prevention/ Retention:** When we start to get our consumer surveys back, we'll know that X is the main reason people are losing their housing and here's what we could do to address that. We don't know this yet.
    - Kevin Pounds: Leah will start doing these surveys soon and plans to come to the next meeting. We want her to do a more in-depth case study for 15 – 20. The key thing will be how to identify that 15 to 20.
      - Let's take some from Harbor Place as we'll get a greater variety.
      - Let's take a randomized group from the master-list.
      - Let's not forget DV individuals as well.
  - 3. **Still open for discussion .....**
- Sarah Russell: A recent AHS report: 48 percent of all evictions in the state in the last year were people who were previously homeless.
  - Margaret Bozik: I wonder what their dataset is. Are they only taking information from those who are reporting under the new 15 percent rule? I can say that 51 percent of our (CHT) evictions last year were people who had previously experienced homelessness but our population is distinct.
- Kevin Pounds: The issue mentioned at a housing summit was single family zoning.
  - Most people need small units, yes. Refugees may be one exception.
  - Margaret Bozik: When the state decides what kind of housing it's going to put its money into from the property transfer tax, maybe we should require a certain number of smaller units. But we're not going to develop our way out of the lack of 1-bedrooms any time soon so we need to partner with the private market.
- Amy Carmola/ United Way: Another possible talking point: families.
  - Margaret Bozik/ CHT: Good idea, especially as a subset of prevention/ retention we can focus on families. We're doing well with housing families.
    - Sarah Russell/ CVOEO: True, but only when units are subsidized. The majority of subsidy that BHA has available for households of those experiencing homelessness are going to be FUVs or NED vouchers and families don't typically qualify for NED vouchers. In other areas of the state, the continuum signs onto the MOU for the FUVs. This was news to me recently. I want to know how closely there is coordination between identifying families for FUVs and Coordinated Entry. FUVs are outside the system currently. They're a resource for families engaged with DCF. So a point of advocacy may be that Coordinated Entry be a part of the selection of families for FUVs. Or at least coordinate with the master-list. This would improve collaboration with DCF and Reach Up. C.E. should be part of the FUV system.
- Amy Carmola: Another possible talking point: let's say what's working well.
  - Let's look for data around success rates for people currently housed with PSH.

- Another success: We have made it easier for people to get into the system. The fact that all the case managers sit in one room together each week has helped all involved. And the case managers are invested. This is the biggest success.
- Sarah Russell: I wonder if we could invite someone as an audience to test these points.
  - Maybe a communications specialist.
  - We could also bring it back to the larger group.
  - We could test them at a community meeting as well.
  - A family talking point could be really important.
- Margaret Bozik: What about self-sufficiency tool? A measure of gains made in self-sufficiency. Does anyone have one?
  - Travis Poulin/ CVOEO: In some sense we do. We chart their most pressing needs.
  - Self-sufficiency can mean you have the resources you need to be stable but not that you're necessarily independent.
  - Sarah Russell: We settled on the term **resiliency**. We created a “customer satisfaction” survey. The question is, how do you measure “better off”? If clients know where to go when they need help again, this is resiliency.

**AGENDA for the next meeting:**

- Beta testing report
- Establish a timeline for implementing the survey with everyone in C.E.
- Advocacy points – more discussion
- Self-sustainability/ Self-sufficiency matrix/ Resiliency tool

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**Next Meeting: Feb 19**

Go to [cchavt.org](http://cchavt.org) to find minutes archives, upcoming events & dates, etc.

Please send corrections to [edacosta@vhfa.org](mailto:edacosta@vhfa.org)