

Concord Plan to End Homelessness
Meeting Notes
September 25, 2013

Committee Members Present: Nicole Schultz-Price, Patrick Tufts, Susan Howland, Cathy Kuhn, John Hoyt, Dan Andrus, Jackie Whatmough, Maggie Fogarty, Tim Sink, Jerry Madden, Jim Bouley, Maureen Ryan

Others Present: Amy Lockwood (facilitator), Ellen Fries, Bill Davis, Wendell Ford, Harold Coffey, Linda Newell, Keith Thibault (SW Community Services, Keene), Mark Swann, (Preble Street, Portland, ME)

Minutes

Patrick Tufts moved to accept the May meeting minutes. Jackie Whatmough seconded the motion. The group unanimously approved the minutes.

Presentation: Preble Street in Portland, Maine

Mark Swann presented information about Logan Place, a permanent housing complex Preble Street developed for chronically homeless individuals. Preble Street partnered with Avesta, a housing developer, to complete the project. The goal of the project was to offer a true “housing first” option for chronically homeless people – meaning that the only requirements of residents are that they pay 30% of their income toward rent and they act like a good, respectful neighbor. They do not have to be sober or have a steady working source of income.

Mark presented compelling statistics demonstrating that by offering these 30 individuals housing, city resources spent on homelessness has dropped astoundingly. Specifically, police and emergency calls, urgent health care costs, and other resources dropped significantly. In addition, the homelessness rate dropped 10% and has stayed at the same level since 2005, after a decade of annual increases in the homelessness rate over time.

The project was initially funded through a combination of federal and other resources. On an ongoing basis it’s funded through a combination of public contracts and private donations.

Mark stated three high priority keys for success in carrying out a project like this:

1. A key leader (politician, church leader) needs to back the project fully and be willing to provide public leadership for it;

2. A partnership with a housing authority to provide long term Section 8 rental support is critical; and
3. The sponsoring group needs to think big and be willing to act big.

Presentation: Second Chance for Success, Keene NH

Keith Thibault of Southwest Community Services presented information about the Second Chance for Success housing development for ex-offenders in Keene. This project was initiated after homeless service agencies in the region realized that about 30% of the homeless people in the area were ex-offenders who were unable to secure stable housing and other resources immediately after release.

SW Community Services partnered with the Cheshire County Department of Corrections to build this set of 12 apartments for fully-released ex-offenders. The project is designed to offer a safe, secure stable place for residents to live for 3-18 months while they establish work and other resources so they can live fully independently in the community.

This project was funded primarily through a CDBG grant and NH Housing Special Needs Housing Funds. Ongoing operating funds come from resident rent payments (based on income, which has been higher than projected as residents have been able to find work), and is backed by a Keene Housing Authority subsidy equal to \$5/day/bed, or about \$22,000/year.

Group Discussion of Presentations

Patrick Tufts led a brief conversation about initial thoughts related to the two presentations. Some comments included:

- Preble Street serves a relatively small population but has a huge positive financial impact in the community
- The question was raised: is the goal of this effort to reduce the cost of homelessness or to impact a large number of homeless people positively?
 - o There is ample data showing that by addressing the needs of the small, high-need chronically homeless population, funds that were previously spent repeatedly assisting these people are freed up to assist people with shorter term or less intense needs related to homelessness
 - o The group agreed that having access to some of this data would be helpful
 - o Dan Andrus is working on an assessment of the cost of homelessness in Concord today – this data would also be helpful

- Patrick and others reflected on two areas of particularly high interest over the course of the committee's work: an active day center for homeless people, and the concept of a housing-first permanent housing project like Logan House

Update on Community Outreach

Susan Howland reviewed preliminary results from two online surveys being circulated in the community: one for homeless people and the other for general community members. The deadline for the survey is September 30 – final results and trends will be assembled after that date.

Maggie Fogarty reported on two group discussions about homelessness, one with service providers and one with homeless individuals. The results of those and other group discussions will also be assembled with themes for the committee.

Two business community meetings are planned for October – the Chamber will meet on the 10th and a group of downtown merchants will meet in mid-October.

The group agreed all of the planned outreach will be helpful in combination with the housing first related data it has requested.

The group agreed that before making more broad public announcements, it should do more development of planned strategies so the public has something to comment on.

Next Steps

- The Planning Team will meet on October 1 to develop next steps between now and the next Steering Committee Meeting
- The Planning Team will work on assembling the cost of homelessness data Dan has been working on as well as some national data demonstrating the cost effectiveness of housing first approaches.