

OHS Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

September 21, 2023

Front Steps Housing & Services

9am

Members present: Dr. Michael Seidman, Barb Karam, Chris Knestrick, Kris Harsh, Yvonne Conwell, Mary McNamara, Paul Mosher, Clare Rosser, Natasha Wynn, Linda Uveges, Fred Berry, Beth Graham, Angela Glassco, Melissa Graves, Elaine Gimmel, Mike Sering, Raymond Mills, Loh.

Members absent: Karen Anderson, Dorivette Nolan, Michael Wackers, Marcia Zashin, Kristi Mouncey, Karen McHenry, Peter Schindler, Teresa Sanders, Ania Lashay.

Others present: Brittany L, Allison Gill, Jaki Salter, Luke Drotar, Erin Rearden, Megan Scheck, David Gretick, Melissa Sirak, Shawna Gurley, Cassandra Upchurch, Sharon Parries, Candace Robinson, Michael Bernot, Christie Sozio, Ebony Clayton, Yvonne Conwell, Jenny Eppich, Ed Gernerchak, Ed Abshire.

1. Welcome and open remarks
 - a. Elaine Gimmel, Chair called the meeting to order at 9:04am
 - b. Elaine introduced David Gretick, the new CEO of Front Steps, who hosted today's meeting. David shared about the services provided by Front Steps.
 - c. All advisory Board members need to update their annual Conflict of Interest forms today and turn in at the close of the meeting, or complete later and email it to the Advisory Board Chairs.
 - i. Melissa Sirak clarified that it is acceptable to have a conflict, the committee just needs to be aware of this.
2. Decision issues
 - a. Fred Berry, Chair asked for review and approval of the Advisory Board minutes from 5-18-23.
 - i. Bethany Graham motioned
 - ii. Barb Karam seconded
 - iii. All were in favor, motion carries
 - b. Fred Berry asked for review and approval of the Advisory Board minutes from 7-19-23.
 - i. Bethany Graham motioned
 - ii. Elaine Gimmel seconded
 - iii. All were in favor, motion carries.
 - c. OHS Advisory Board members update
 - i. Fred Berry introduced a new nominee for Advisory Board membership, Starlette Sizemore, who was nominated by the ADAMHS Board as their new representative/designated seat on the Advisory Board.
 - ii. Elaine motioned to elect Star
 - iii. Beth seconded

- iv. All were in favor, motion carries.
- d. Approval of 2023 NOFO Project Listing & 2023 NOFO Consolidated Application submission
 - i. Fred asked Howard Burchman to present.
 - ii. Howard shared that the CoC application is very close to completion; the only thing remaining is approval from this Board to review the ranking list of projects.
 - iii. Changes include FMR changes for applicable projects – HUD decided that the FMR 2022 rent amounts would be used, rather than the 2023 FMR amounts, so some grantees had to change their rent amounts and thus adjust their budgets. Howard made sure to ask for every dollar we are eligible for as a CoC and apply for all of the bonus dollars eligible for, including DV bonus.
 - iv. HUD asks that before we submit the NOFO application to HUD that the Board votes to approve the project ranking as submitted. Elaine clarified that if you are a recipient or sub-recipient of funding, you should abstain.
 - 1. Loh motioned to approve the NOFO application, Chris Knestrick seconded.
 - 2. While open for discussion, Chris asked if having to use FMR 2022 will be a burden to be able to afford units. Howard clarified that this money will be dispersed in 2023 and will be adjusted to the 2023 FMR. The application requires that 2022 FMR is used, but 2023 FMR will be dispersed because it will be during that grant period. He also clarified that rent reasonableness really drives what can be paid. Elaine further clarified that it depends on the grant period, and that this FMR is a barrier currently, but will be better next grant period.
 - 3. Melissa asked Howard what he sees that we need to work on to get maximum points. Howard stated a lot of these are out of our control – for example, it is difficult to show a decrease in unsheltered homeless due to outside factors and system struggles. He cited the economy as an issue as well.
 - v. Discussion having completed, Fred then called for a vote for final project list and application approval. All were in favor, with the following abstentions: Elaine Gimmel, Barb Karam, Cheryl Thomas, Mike Sering, Jennifer Harrison, Paul Mosher, and Fred Berry. Motion carries.
 - vi. Approval of PSH Policy standards
 - 1. Fred asked Matt White to present.
 - 2. Matt stated the PPC Committee has presented program standards as related to emergency shelter and RRH, many PSH standards also apply to RRH. Agency management, fiscal operations, data, facility standards, and participant rights are the categories of standards.
 - 3. These standards were sent in an email prior to the AB meeting.
 - 4. Fred asked for a motion to approve the PSH Policy standards.
 - a. Barb motioned, Natasha Wynn seconded.

- b. During discussion, Loh asked that everyone who did not have a chance to read these standards in the email to read them after this meeting, as there are standards very important and these provide dignity for those we serve.
 - c. Discussion ended, and a vote was called. All were in favor, motion carries.
- 3. OHS Board member solicitation
 - a. Fred shared that there will be communication via email soliciting new Board members. The applications will be due by October 18th. The following seats are open: 6 designated, 2 at large, 2 HSPA seats, and 2 persons with lived experience.
 - i. Elaine clarified that HSPA seats are for agencies that provide specific types of services that are federally funded, to the homeless. This can include RRH as well as outreach services.
 - ii. Melissa clarified that designated seats are communicated through OHS. Melissa encouraged members to remember that the lived experience seats do not have to be currently homeless
 - iii. Fred encouraged that we keep diversity in mind when electing new members
 - iv. Governance committee is going to be updating bylaws to have Board terms align with chair terms, and make sure that the third chair is for the youth advisory board.
 - v. Barb asked that the Board consider a representative from an agency serving older adults, as there has been a surge.
 - vi. Sheryl asked that there be a representative who works with or identifies as transgender.
 - vii. Another member expressed that she has been at Norma Herr for almost two years and has still not found housing. Elaine shared that EDEN staff went to Norma Herr and will be going to LMM to make sure people are applying for programs – in particular, there are openings at Buckeye currently. Elaine is making sure EDEN is communicating with the shelters more so they are having their clients apply. Elaine said she will take the member's concern to the YWCA to see where they are with applications.
 - viii. Loh expressed concern that the buildings are located in areas that are not safe. Often they are located in areas that have high crime and drugs, and this really impacts the ability of residents to get sober and recover.
 - ix. Another member asked where the women will be moved while repairs are made to the building. Elaine provided an update that they are working on identifying an alternate location to temporarily house the women staying at Norma Herr.
 - x. Loh expressed concern about continued construction impacting the homeless, it seems that their lives do not matter because there is continued construction that impacts their ability to continue to safely shelter. Melissa thanked Loh and stated she agrees that it is not an ideal situation, and will increase communication and will ask guests of Norma Herr for input. Will also be designating time at this meeting at a future date to discuss Norma Herr updates.

4. Unsheltered strategic plan update

- a. Matt White presented.
- b. Workgroup has been meeting for several months and developed a draft of recommendations for people coming from unsheltered location, improving and expanding shelter capacity, and housing justice for all people who are unsheltered.
 - i. These recommendations were presented to the homeless congress meeting and solicited feedback on if these recommendations will contribute to a reduction in unsheltered homeless, and the overwhelming majority thought yes.
 - ii. They also asked questions about services that people would benefit from – expanding employment, working on benefits applications, working on treatment options and connecting people to resources.
 - iii. Next step is to revise the plan based on this feedback, reconvene, and then the workgroup will finalize the plan and bring it back to OHS
 - iv. Looking to reconvene in October, and at the next OHS meeting, have a plan to review and adopt the recommendations.
 - v. Loh asked if people had to attend the first meeting to attend the next one, Matt stated they are permitted to attend regardless of first meeting attendance.
 - vi. Melissa shared gratitude and appreciation for the work of this group.
- c. Allison Gill also presented on this topic.
 - i. Allison provided an update on behalf of HMIS.
 - ii. In support of this unsheltered plan, OHS looked at how the CoC could expand use of the HMIS db and additional functionality. OHS has utilized current Planning grant dollars and initiated weekly meetings to explore assessments and data collection – for example, an encampment assessment. Currently, the Outreach Project Team is working to finalize an encampment assessment, which provides information on location, if there is water available, number of guests, etc.
 - iii. Also convening leadership outreach group to get general feedback on where we can improve and services provided.
 - iv. Allison discussed GIS (geographic information system mapping), which allows the user to look at an encampment on a map and overlay that with layers of information regarding services available at or near a location (i.e. medical services). Other layers can also be viewed through this, for example, funding, council districts, etc.
 - v. At the end of October, there will be a training by BitFocus for outreach service providers on the encampment assessment which will also include field work using the tool out in the community on phones and iPads to test this out. End of November BitFocus will provide formal presentation to the Advisory Board.
- d. Chris thanked Matt and Melissa for the work on the strategic plan. He expressed that this will really help move forward progress on ending unsheltered homeless in the community. Chris asked about the survey that was put out about unsheltered services – what was the result of that survey? Allison stated the leadership group is going to review results of survey and share with the Advisory Board in November.

5. RRH Update

- a. Melissa presented.
- b. There are challenges with RRH as it relates to workflow, referrals, and resources.
- c. They have been working on balancing everything to finalize how we will move forward. Resources from COVID have been exhausted. If we don't change how referrals are coming in, we will exhaust all of our resources and will not be able to do 12 months of RRH assistance.
- d. The backlog of people waiting for RRH is probably close to a year. The list of clients was reviewed for who has active and valid RFLAs and those households will get RRH.
- e. We are getting back to basics – starting 10/1 clients must have enrollment confirmed with EDEN in order to submit a RFLA to apply for RRH. EDEN will have to put an interim cap on enrollments. Will be revisiting any changes to the PPC, and will be coming back to the Advisory Board with any changes as well. One member asked if there would be all the changes in writing, and Melissa confirmed that they will be sending this in writing to everyone.
- f. Elaine stated this is specific to RRH, not related to RRH for DV/HT survivors. January-September has an increase of 100 more households served. No one wants to decrease assistance terms, because it sets people up to fail when they can't get the full 12 months that will really help to get them stable in housing. They are going to go back to the pre-COVID standards and implement standards and protocols that are easy to understand and navigate and do not create a burden for clients.
- g. Jessie Beck, Director of Rental Assistance at EDEN, shared that there are very real challenges with financial and program administration of the RRH program. This has been a very thoughtful process, and EDEN is doing the best we can with their resources to try to make changes to improve.
- h. One guest asked what the dollar amount is that they have a shortfall to serve clients through RRH. EDEN is working with OHS to determine this. City of Cleveland, ESG, CoC/HUD, State dollars through OHS, DV grants are the main sources of income – they are only looking at public funding to assist with RRH dollars.
- i. One guest asked if some YHDP dollars can be used for RRH, Melissa stated that a little YHDP could be used for this, but it would be about 30 HH served through TH-RRH.
- j. One guest asked if there is data on returns to homelessness after RRH – Allison stated there is a decrease in returns to homelessness, but it is thought that this is related to giving the full 12 months of assistance.
- k. Elaine shared that they have been utilizing the CHMA EHV as well to assist with long term subsidy for those who need a longer-term subsidy.
- l. Another member wondered if some families need longer subsidy in RRH and some might need shorter subsidy, which could be a way to generate some funds. Allison shared that the data doesn't show that a reduction in subsidy would result in positive outcomes in terms of not returning to homelessness.
- m. Jessie shared that there are still 230 families waiting for assistance with housing, many needing RRH.
- n. Chris shared there are at least 5 unsheltered families, and another member shared there are 52 homeless families waiting for housing.

- o. Cassandra Upchurch from Famicos asked about what happens when a tenant's RRH voucher ends at 12 months. Elaine shared if there were resources, they could transition to PSH, but there isn't an option for that right now. The tenant would have to be able to afford the rent on their own to avoid eviction. Jessie stated the importance of having a case manager work with the client during their RRH tenure to make sure they have a plan so this doesn't happen. Jacki Salter from Family Promise shared that monthly contact through CM has been increased to weekly contact, and one time a month has to be in person.
 - p. Melissa shared that we are one of the only CoC that still have resources left from COVID and that provide 12 months of RRH assistance.
 - q. Paul asked if there was a program and specific model that is used for RRH CM. Jackie shared that plans are individualized based on family needs. Allison shared that there are assessments that are done to try to determine if a family will be successful in RRH.
 - r. Loh shared that because of lack of funding, agencies that serve the homeless cannot hire qualified workers. Current workers only know some of the options available for housing, not all of them. This creates a problem wherein people who are homeless are not provided all of the options available to them, so they are not successful.
 - i. Dr Seidman wondered if the real issue was really standardization within the system.
 - ii. Another member stated he thinks it is both standardization and lack of funding.
 - s. Fred asked for one or two more comments and then we would move on to stay on agenda.
 - t. Mike Sering stated the need for standardization with minimum meetings with CM staff.
 - u. Elaine stated she will be submitting application for homeless system/CoC which will assist with strategic plan implementation. 34 agencies will be able to refer to this program, and it will be an online application that provides rental and utility assistance.
 - i. ESOP will be partnering with this program for those 55+
 - ii. Virtual training will be provided, and assistance can go back to arrears that occurred in 2020.
 - iii. Will have designated staff working with clients who have been on subsidy very long term (back to the 1990s) to get them transitioned to a regular HCV because they don't need extra services they just need the subsidy. This will help to free up several hundred household resources.
6. CoC PSH/Supportive Services Update
- a. Elaine presented.
 - b. EDEN has confirmed a provider for the buildings that Frontline is no longer serving with CM services. Will provide that agency name at a later date.
 - c. Elaine thanked Melissa for connecting them with Catholic Charities to get food at two of the buildings that needed it.
 - d. Elaine thanked all those who have chipped in during this transition time when Frontline is ending services and before the next agency takes over. Frontline will exit all buildings by December 1, some prior to that date.
 - e. Elaine thanked Dr Seidman as EDEN now has a MOU with the Mobile Clinic for Metro Health so the clients can get services.

7. YHDP update
 - a. Ebony Clayton presented.
 - b. Will be hosting a public event about the proposals that were submitted under the YHDP grant. Reviewing applications and will be doing interviews for applicants soon. Hoping to make final selections by the end of September, early October at latest. Implementation phase will involve training for providers (TH, RRH, SS only programs). 3 applications were received. Melissa thanked them for their efforts.
8. 2020 Lakeside Update
 - a. Mike Sering presented.
 - b. Purchased building and nearing completion – this will provide 120 beds.
 - c. This is not about increasing bed capacity but increasing the quality of what is provided to guests of 2100.
 - d. It will include partially enclosed living quarters to provide privacy. Building a connector for the 15 feet between the two buildings. Hoping to be done with this by end of November. Melissa thanked LMM for their work on this.
 - e. Loh asked if there would be a grand opening. Mike stated this would probably happen in coordination with the city/county.
 - f. Loh stated this new building would really help with emotional and mental well-being for guests. Asked if there would be enough bathrooms, Mike said yes. Asked if there would be renovations to 2100. Mike said yes once they are finished with 2020 Lakeside they will renovate 2100. Mike said work has begun on one bathroom at 2100.
9. Initiative Reports:
 - a. RRH report is in the packet, please refer to that.
 - b. Veteran Homelessness report – Luke reported.
 - i. System performance measures were provided with 90 day lookback periods.
 - ii. 89 veterans were homeless.
 - iii. CH numbers have fallen significantly over last few years, into single digits now.
 - iv. Veterans are housed on average within 80 days of coming to shelter. Had an influx in September – highest number in the last 3 years.
 - v. Getting people on housing plans, two-thirds are actively working housing plans. Have seen a large increase in number of older adults presenting as homeless. This seems to be a new issue.
 - vi. One member asked about discharge status eligibility. Luke stated dishonorable or bad conduct/general court marshal are not eligible for veteran specific services but they are still tracked. Those who didn't serve long enough to be discharged are eligible.
 - vii. One member asked where the influx is coming from (33 individuals). 20 had been homeless prior. And two-thirds of that 20 had contact with veteran housing prior. So they are looking at what went wrong in that previous housing placement and trying to put those individuals on a rapid housing plan to get housed.
 - c. Ending Youth Homelessness
 - i. Ebony reported. Information was provided in the packet. 38 exits, 18 to permanent destinations.

- ii. If there are other data items you would like to see, please let Ebony know.
 - iii. Cheryl Thomas shared concern about the vast majority of homeless individuals being black.
 - 1. Christie Sozio shared about workgroups that are focused on this exact issue.
 - 2. Allison shared that there are race and ethnicity dashboards that are used for committee work.
 - 3. Star asked if there was a lot of kids aging out of foster care in the youth. Ebony stated there might be, Christie said she thought it was around 20% but that around 40% touched the foster care system at some point. Allison confirmed.
 - d. Unsheltered Report
 - i. Chris Knestrick reported.
 - ii. Numbers of individuals sleeping on the streets has increased in our county. 247 unsheltered on the BNL for August.
 - iii. Outreach has adjusted assessment and engagement with those who are unsheltered, and are seeing an increase. It seems to be felt more in the community as well.
 - iv. Elaine asked about prioritizing who they outreach to. Chris shared their prioritization and reiterated that they are not Mobile Crisis. Chris discussed going to encampments within 24 hours if they are new to them, and prioritize based on need as well as new clients. Encouraged people to call NEOCH about anyone who is homeless to get them services.
10. Melissa Sirak briefly discussed CE redesign
- a. They are going to start redesigning CE the last quarter of this year, working with Matt White to move this forward.
 - b. We were awarded a CE expansion grant, which includes 4 additional navigators to go into shelter to connect guests with resources for housing.
 - c. Will be piloting a few things within this process – warm handoffs to CE, screening process, etc. Hoping these changes will be seamless, nothing is set in stone.
11. Elaine reminded everyone about the COI forms, please turn this in via email if members didn't turn in today.

Having no further business, meeting adjourned at 11:09am.

Submitted by Megan Scheck 9/28/2023