

**INTERAGENCY COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS**

**Meeting Summary Notes  
Wednesday, June 24, 2015**

**Members** (Present)

Ahluwalia, Uma S.  
Belk, Baleh D.  
(rep: Brissett  
Chapman, Sheryl)  
Cohen, Ethan  
(rep: Spann, Stacy)  
Crowel, Raymond  
Fox-Morrill, Priscilla  
Fredericks, Denise  
Green, Robert  
Horton-Newell, Amy  
Kaufmann, Louise  
Khan, Nadim, A.  
Kirk Susan  
Leventhal, George

Newton, Bridget  
Pesquera, Marcos  
Roynestad, Brian  
Sinclair-Smith, Susie  
Snuggs, Clarence  
Thames, Jeffrey O.  
Tracey, Brian  
Wilds, Moses

**Members** (Excused)

Berner, Debra  
Bohorquez, Marta  
Davis, Betsy  
Seidel, Stanley

**Member** (Absent)

Delegate Craig Zucker

**Staff**

Ball, Kim  
Black, Sara  
George, Leslie  
Hochron, Jean  
Huggins, Gloria  
Kelly, LaSonya  
McMillan, Linda  
Sierra, Sharon  
Soni, Nili

**Guests**

Cooper, Holly  
Frazier-Bey, Jimmy  
Holloway, Samuel M.  
Stanaitis, Nikki  
Todd, Chapman  
Yancey, Yolanda

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**Welcome | Introductions | Approval of March 18 meeting notes**

The March 18 meeting notes for were approved with one corrections (Mayor Muriel Bowers will be corrected).

**Committee Updates**

Nadim Khan highlighted the activities of the four Committees. Details of the Committee activities were distributed prior to the meeting.

**Continuum of Care 10-Year Strategic Plan – Action Plan for Year 1**

Amy Horton-Newell led a discussion of the prioritized action items for year one that were identified from the 10-year Strategic Plan for Ending Homelessness survey. The goal of the discussion was to identify a list of critical players who could complete the action item templates and begin implementation of the 10-year plan.

Question: George Leventhal asked what are the different sources of vouchers and how are they allocated. What formulas determine who are awarded vouchers? Is the process open to political influence or is it a robotic formula-driven process?

Ethan Cohen of the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) explained that the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers are a sub-set of the larger Housing Choice Voucher program. It is a formula-driven process and is based on area affordability which determines how much of the funding / subsidies will be used. Exceptions to increase subsidies are granted by an individual’s demonstrated need. The HOC has funding for about 7,000 vouchers but the actual utilization is smaller based on exception and program requirements.

➔ **Action:** Ethan will research the HOC formulas and the mechanism of how vouchers are awarded and forward the answer to the Commission before the next meeting.

Question: Mr. Leventhal suggested exploring private funding streams. He asked are there new mechanism that can be explored such as encouraging the private sector such as Church congregations to adopt a homeless family? Who would be responsible for brainstorming these approaches outside of government entirely?

Brian Tracey, Chair of the new Resource Development Committee, suggested several approaches:

- Broadening rental subsidies on an individual tenant levels by providing vouchers for individuals and families experiencing homelessness
- Increasing the supply of affordable housing by approaching developers and building constructors and providing incentives to accept vouchers which could include subsidies, low-income tax credit

The Resource Development Committee first planning meeting discussed compiling an inventory of suitable affordable housing sites and possible incentives to encourage developer to include those with low-income as tenants.

Question: Jeffrey Thames asked whether Montgomery County has a list of tax-sales properties waiting to be sold at tax auctions that could be converted to groups home for those experiencing homelessness by independent non-profit organizations.

➔ **Action:** Clarence Snuggs, Co-Chair of the Resource Development Committee, will research the question and report back to the Commission the inventory of such properties and the possibility for their use by non-profit organizations to house homeless residents.

Clarence shared that to provide “more than a roof,” it would take a 3-step process:

1. The acquisition of properties by identifying the volume of possible scattered sites appropriate for group homes.
2. The redevelopment or rehab of the property to make the site is suitable for occupancy.
3. The ability to operate the home effectively and to provide supportive services to the residents.

Ethan Cohen shared that the established HUD payment standards for the region (Montgomery County, Prince George’s County and the District of Columbia) prevent many Montgomery County voucher holders from leasing apartments because the rents are out of the affordability range. Providing low-income housing tax credits to private developers would help to encourage them to lock a number of units for low-income residents for a specified number of years. This would open the opportunity for voucher holders to rent available units.

Susie Sinclair-Smith shared one important resource to explore Section 811 as a funding source to help people experiencing homelessness who has disabilities.

Uma Ahluwalia shared two ideas to consider:

1. Explore funders by getting local banks to come together.
2. Help families with workforce development strategies so that the use of vouchers is a temporary solution and maintaining permanent housing is sustainable.

### **Objective Three: Increase Access to Housing Options**

**Strategy:** Support rental subsidies through federal, state and private resources targeted to those experiencing or most at risk of homelessness.

**Action Items:**

1. Explore new sources of public and private funding, not only for rental subsidies but for all aspects of support necessary for stable affordable housing
3. Convene/develop multiple groups: corporate; faith-based; foundations to identify and seek federal state/local/philanthropic funding, cultivate political leaders to maximize our connections with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and other relevant local, state and federal agencies.

➔ **Team members assigned to Objective Three | Action Items 1, 3**

Brian Tracey, Clarence Snuggs, Bridget Newton, Linda McMillian and Ethan Cohen

**Objective Three: Increase Access to Housing Options**

**Strategy:** Preserve and expand supply of affordable rental homes where they are most needed through federal, state, local efforts.

**Action Item:**

2. Identify additional funding sources to reduce housing development costs in order to facilitate the development of rental units affordable to lower income households with an emphasis on those with the lowest incomes (e.g. at or below 30% of area median income).

➔ **Team members assigned to Objective Three | Action Item 2**

Brian Tracey, Clarence Snuggs, Bridget Newton, Linda McMillian and Ethan Cohen

**Objective Six: Integrate Primary and Behavioral Health Services with Homeless Assistance and Housing Programs**

**Strategy:** Increase availability of behavioral health services, including community mental health centers, to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

**Action Item:**

1. Assess population to determine who is at risk, identify availability of services and understand barriers to services.

➔ **Team members assigned to Objective Six | Action Item 1**

Raymond Crowel, Amy Horton-Newell, Yolanda Yancey, Representatives from Interfaith Works and the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless

**Objective Seven: Advance Health and Housing Stability for People Experiencing Homelessness with Frequent Contact with Hospitals, Criminal Justice, and for Unaccompanied and Youth Aging Out of Public Systems**

**Strategy:** Improve discharge planning from hospitals, Veteran Administration Medical Centers, psychiatric facilities, jails and prisons to connect people to housing, health support, income and work supports and health coverage prior to discharge.

**Action Item:**

1. Expand relationships with hospitals and jails to promote planning and services.

➔ **Team members assigned to Objective Seven | Action Item 1**

Marcos Pesquera, Jeffrey Thames, Jean Hochron, LaSonya Kelly, Representative from Behavioral Health and Crisis Services-Athena Morrow, Representatives from the State and County's Departments of Corrections

**Zero: 2016 Initiative**

Zero: 2016 is a national effort of 71 communities across the country who have committed to ending Veteran homelessness by December, 2015 and chronic homelessness by December, 2016.

Montgomery County’s goal is to house 56 Veterans who are Montgomery County residents experiencing homelessness into permanent housing by December 31, 2015.

- This does not mean that there will never be a veteran experiencing homelessness but, rather, that the community has reached sustainable functional zero.
- Functional Zero = Homeless Veteran ≤ Veteran Monthly Housing Placement Average
  - Functional Zero means that the average amount of veterans presenting as homeless is equal to or less than the expected placements for the month.
  - Example if three veterans present as homeless each month and three veterans are housed monthly using VASH vouchers the functional number is zero.

There were 24 veterans identified during the Montgomery County Point-in-Time survey conducted in January. That number was doubled to arrive at the goal of 56 veterans.

<b>Chronically Homeless – 33%</b>	<b>Episodic and Short Term Homeless – 67%</b>
Need Permanent Supportive Housing	Do Not Need Permanent Supportive Housing

85%	15%	37.5%	37.5%	25%
VA eligible	not VA eligible	Rapid Rehousing, VA Eligible	Rapid Rehousing and Other Housing, Not VA Eligible	Self-Resolving

<b>Montgomery County Projected Targets Based on Available Data</b>				
<b>7</b>	12	14	14	9
Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VA)	Veteran Permanent Housing w-Supports (VPH)	Supportive Services for Veteran Families SSVF (VA)	Veterans Rapid Re-housing (VRRH)	No intervention necessary

Chapman Todd explained that the master list is prioritized and updated daily and currently there are 30 names on the list. These are individuals who have been assessed by the Vulnerability Index and Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) scoring tool as needing some form of housing. In addition, representatives from the Veterans Administration and the Federal Government, who provide funding for veteran homelessness, are actively engaged in the process by attending meetings and examining the master list of homeless veterans in Montgomery County.

Uma shared that DHCA and DHHS has made past efforts to engage landlords to assist low-income resident who are at risk of homelessness by implementing preventive strategies. One proposed strategy was to accept rent twice a month instead of once to lessen the burden on low-income residents. Landlords have not been receptive to the proposed strategies.

➔ Action: Contact the City of Gaithersburg (Maureen Herndon, Community Services) who currently has a similar program with city landlords to discuss their program.

Nili Soni emphasized that the issue is that once a veteran is identified as meeting the criteria and there is a plan in place, there are no affordable housing units available. A commitment from landlords or department to serve this population is needed. It was also shared that having blocks of units in close proximity to each other would be helpful for the case managers serving the veterans and it would assist the band of brothers to support each other.

### **Regional Council to End Homelessness:**

In April, there was a Homeless Regional Summit that formed the Regional Council to End Homelessness in the District of Columbia, Prince George's County and Montgomery County. Uma updated the Commission that an Operations Committee has been formed to implement the Council's initiatives. The Committee's goal is to forward specific strategies by November. The document will be circulated to advocates including the Inter-agency Commission on Homelessness for review and comment.

There is a fair amount of mobility across jurisdictions. The need is to collaborate to ensure that the limited resources are being utilized efficiently. The District is working with the Community Foundation of the National Capital Region to build an open 211 systems. One strategy being explored is pulling the data systems together (Montgomery County's InfoMontgomery and 311, Prince George's County's United Way 211 and the system that the District is building) to see what housing and/or shelter is available across the jurisdiction.

Virginia wants to join the Regional Council to End Homelessness. Once the Operations Committee determines the direction the Council is going, we will then we will reach out to Virginian Counties into the effort.

Clarence suggested that the Housing Directors of the three jurisdictions meet to discuss services and goals. Uma suggested that Clarence attend the upcoming Retreat scheduled for July 23.

### **Next meeting**

Wednesday, September 16 at 3:30-5:30 p.m. at the Rockville Memorial Library, 21 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference.