



INTERAGENCY COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS

Housing for all = A Stronger Montgomery

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/homelessness | HousingForAll@montgomerycountymd.gov

Hybrid Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 18, 2023 | 3-5p

Present or represented

Andrews, Chelsea
Bohorquez, Margarita
(representing: Ruschelle Reuben)
Chesney, Amanda
Crowel, Raymond
Dickersin-Prokopp, Christopher
Goldman, Jeff

Grey, Ebony
Habte, Asmara
Hall, Courtney
Harris, Amanda
Hidalgo, Manny
Hill, Terence
Kelly, Kathryn

Lewis, Robin
London, Sharan
Nico Losi, Renee
(representing Karishma Sheth)
Sinclair-Smith, Susie

Absent

Hegel, Connor
Nigam, Aseem
Talley, Angela
Seidel, Stan

Welcome | Introductions | Remarks – Jeff Goldman, Chair

Jeff acknowledged Dr. Raymond Crowel for his work on the ICH. Raymond will retire on January 31, 2023. Raymond commended the staff of SEPH and the members of the ICH for their work to serve individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Montgomery County.

Approval of the November 2, 2022, Meeting Notes (VOTE) – Ebony Grey, Co-Chair

Sharon London moved to approve the minutes and Christopher Dickersin-Prokopp seconded the motion. No objections. The motion carried and the notes were approved as written.

Review ICH 2022 Annual Report | Highlights, Gaps and Opportunities – Amanda Harris, Chief, Services to End and Prevent Homelessness

- **Eviction and Prevention:** Amanda highlighted that as of January 15, the SEPH team has distributed \$93.9 million of federal funding resulting in 12,000 households avoiding homelessness.
- **Homeless Prevention Index:** The SEPH prioritized those at most risk of homelessness by use of the homeless prevention index resulting in the reduction of those entering homelessness for the first time decreasing by 32%. The index looks at community level indicators, those who have judgments, scheduled evictions and low income.
- **Expansion of RRH (Rapid Rehousing) and SHaRP (Short-term Housing Resolution Program)** has resulted in greater number of exits from emergency shelter to permanent housing. The RRH and SHaRP have been successful in decreasing the number of people returning to homelessness to less than 20% (8 out of 10 people are successful). People of color are doing well with the programs and are returning at a rate lower to the overall demographics.
- **Rental Assistance Program (RAP)** has increased from \$200 to \$503. SEPH is now able to increase the RAP subsidy to stay in line with the current central market rates.
- **Direct Cash Assistance Program:**
 - The Exit Bonus Program (\$5,000 for individuals and \$8,000 for families) has allowed 125 households to exit homelessness. The program is designed to give those exiting homelessness the funds/tools to resolve their own homelessness by perhaps a starting a career opportunity, purchasing a car to get to work, buying a plane ticket to move closer to family, etc. Less than 18% of those receiving the exit bonus have returned to homelessness.
 - MoCo Boost Guaranteed Income Pilot includes assisting 100 households experiencing homelessness (35 families and 65 individuals) will receive \$800 a month for 2 years. The program was targeted to households most likely to return to homelessness. There is no results data at this time, but extensive research will be done on this pilot to determine whether participants’ housing stabilized and family

life improved—have they returned to homelessness, have they increased their income, are their children getting better grads, etc.

- **Gaps in the Homeless CoC**

- Insufficient care coordination with other systems of care
 - Example: Health care system's significant shift for telehealth which is difficult for people who are homeless
- Denial of affordable housing and not enough vouchers
- Lack of access to affordable housing and market rate housing
 - Example: Housing discrimination because of rental history, poor credit, criminal background
- Lack of services to meet the needs of a growing aging population in permanent housing programs.
 - Example: Not enough in-home health care to allow seniors to age in place

- **Funding Recommendations**

- Rents have gone up and we need more money to serve more people.
- Recommending \$10 million in funding for Eviction/Homeless Prevention
- Recommending \$750,000 for DHHS A&D to help seniors stay in the homes and age in place.
- Execute on opportunity to use home funding to purchase hotel or other property to provide affordable living quarters.

- **Legislative or Regulatory Changes Requested:**

- Support "just cause" eviction legislation at the state level.
- Advocate that HOC review eligibility criteria on criminal background and rental history
- Develop an independent pathway to investigate housing discrimination and illegal practices at housing complexes that is not client driven
- Increase the availability of affordable housing, set aside unites or local homeless preference in multifamily housing developments using federal, state and local financing and public housing authorities

Jeff commends ICH and the County for the tremendous progress despite a public health emergency and the economic downturn leading to rising housing costs.

Amanda Chesney agreed that the progress is impressive, thoughtful and data driven. Amanda commended that at the beginning of the public health emergency jurisdictions across the country was flooded with federal dollars to help prevent homelessness. There was no real direction on how to disperse the funds. Montgomery County SEPH came up with a plan to get the funds to people in need. She recommended that the best practices that were used be documented so we can build on the process.

Courtney Hall underscored that the RRH program is successful, and the program should be expanded. Once note is that we ensure that referrals to the program are appropriate to continue to have success. Gaps around the care coordination system one recommendation have more substantial coordination with the behavioral health system. So that as the emergency response system we can provide more adequate, safe and effective care to those who are experiencing homelessness and seeking care.

Susie Sinclair-Smith shared that it is great to look back call on the successes achieved despite the challenges of the last few years. Susie emphasized the importance of the partnership between the non-profit homeless service providers and Montgomery County Government SEPH in achieving these outcomes. Interfaith Works and MCCH operate emergency shelters and having the array of resources provided by SEPH to help the people we serve has been effective.

Amanda Harris reiterated the sentiment that the non-profit partners are essential in executing the ICH mission, keeping people safe, and being flexible and willing to agree to implement the new programs that were started. Regarding behavioral health, it is a conversation that we continue to have particularly around crisis response. The commitment is to the people, so we move people in and out of programs in the effort to find the right fit to

provide them with permanent housing. This is done by viewing the process as a full continuum--providing higher level of intervention, move-up vouchers, etc.

Intersection of the Federal Strategic Plan, our local plan, and the Built for Zero Framework – Amanda Harris

The Federal plan is no longer focused on population-specific goals but has broadened to look at reducing overall homelessness by 25%. This plan acknowledges the role the Federal Government and agencies play in ending homelessness. Though the emphasis on data sharing, providing templates and ensuring that the right people are at the table including people with lived experience.

Montgomery County has implemented a person-centered approach by focusing on populations (Veterans, chronically homeless, families with children, seniors, and youth). Each initiative that the County has completed has resulted in learning to develop more effective business (partnering better with the VA, better assessment tools, development of a by-name list, a coordinated entry system, and prevention diversion strategies.)

Montgomery County is now looking at all populations by creating a more effective system. *Amanda* shared a chart that compared the alignment between the Federal Strategic Plan, Built for Zero and the County's Plan in building foundational pillars and solution pillars. (See Presentation Slides 10-13).

Amanda Chesney shared the need of the non-profit homeless providers for help with infrastructure costs. The providers who are doing the actual work have many costs (staff, technology, etc.) It would be helpful if some of these costs were supported by Federal and/or State dollars. The State of Maryland does a lot on capital investments for programs but not the operational funding.

Community-wide Meeting Update:

The meeting was held on December 14 and was well attended. Many non-traditional partners and advocates attended. Twelve people completed the survey and only one person was not satisfied. The goal of the Community-wide meeting was to set the stage for the work ahead.

- *Jeff Goldman* commented that he was impressed by the diversity of participants, the energy of the groups and positive ideas that were presented.
- *Ebony Grey* expressed that she sat with the youth group and was very impressed with the energy. She shared that what is needed is to organize and bring together an active Youth Committee to ensure that the work happens. This is true of all the ICH Committees. There must be consistency to ensure we continue doing the great work.
- *Sharan London* expressed that she appreciated the mix of people that attended and the planning and presentation by the Built for Zero representatives.
- *Susan Sinclair-Smith* thought the meeting was great and the planning of the Community Solution representatives was appreciated. It is important to figure out how we can surface the lessons learned, build on them as we continue to engage partners' ideas.

Functional Zero—A Shared Aim

- Functional zero mean = the number of households actively experiencing homelessness must be less than or equal to the monthly rate at which households achieve stable housing (based on a 6-month average).
- Currently, there are 610 people experiencing homelessness in our community. Functional zero would mean there would be around 89 people at any given time. We have a way to go to accomplish the goal of functional zero.
- See Presentation **Slide 15** outlined a timeline for reaching functional zero and gave the current numbers of those experiencing homelessness by population.

Six-month milestones and progress as of January 17:

Working Group	Goals by June 2023, we will have...	Progress as of January 17
Youth	A fully operational Coordinated Entry System for Youth	CES Subcommittee first meeting held January 11, 2023
Families	An average length of time from ID to Move-in of 45 days	Currently at 204 Days (Goal 45 Days)
Seniors	Decreased the number of seniors entering homelessness each month by 50% (from 6 to 3)	Current inflow +3 (as of Jan. 13, 2023)
Vulnerable Adults	An average length of time from assigned to housed of 45 days	Currently at 254 Days (Goal 45 Days)
Veterans	No more than 7 Veterans experiencing homelessness (down from 10)	Current active number is 16 (+6 from last report. All are assigned to housing placement. Several awaiting move-in)
Other Adult-Only Households	Housed 350 individuals	158 Households housed in PSH/SHARP/Exit Bonus since Dec. 15, 2022

Rocks and Levers

- A big rock can be any obstacle stopping you from reaching your goal or any opportunity to reach your target
- A lever is something you can use to get the big rock out of the way.

Population	ROCK	LEVER
Youth	Siloed Providers	Standing Youth Committee meeting with update
Families	Barriers and delays in accessing HOC housing, childcare subsidies, and TCA	Assigned liaisons to increase efficiency
Seniors	Inconsistent Values and Service Philosophy amongst systems of care	Improved coordination between agencies; state and local advocacy and education to increase care quality
Vulnerable Adults	Provider capacity to service complex trauma/language/culture needs and behavioral health to help stay in housing	Hire Spanish + Amharic and other staff at front door shelter to best identify needs. Incentivize bi-lingual staff. Cultural competency training
Veterans	Lack of communication with/from VA	Read-only access to DC HMIS
Other Adult-Only Households	Unemployment and Under employment	Subsidized employment Targeted workforce development Retention supports
Universal (Multiple Groups)	Lack of Access to Affordable Housing and Not Enough of it	Tracking and reporting housing discrimination; building more units; dedicated units for people exiting homelessness

What do we do now?

We need to determine where the work fit among our current committee, sub-committees and workgroups. (See Slide 23-25 for the Committee/Workgroup Structure).

Ebony Grey commented that the work rests with us as ICH members but also with the community and recommended:

- To get the word out to the community that we need their help to support the committees and workgroups.
- Require each committee to report out quarterly. To share their goals, milestones, and timelines.
- To publicize the committee/workgroup meeting schedules to allow the public to know when they meet so they can plan to participate.

Amanda outlined that our ultimate goals are:

- Reducing homelessness
- Reducing the flow
- Providing housing

Dr. Kathryn Kelly asked that for-profit providers be recognized and appreciated for the work that they do. There needs to be funding advocacy for for-profit agencies also because many are small businesses that are not incorporated or have shareholders. For-profit agencies are members of the community who exist to serve the community. In addition, many volunteer boards ask for free work that could be done by people who are paid staff. The members of the boards could be the “think tank” to guide the work and not be asked to make use their limited amount of time to dedicate to many board projects.

Amanda Harris shared that the County does have staff that oversees and drives the ICH work. *Rozina Adhanom* is the ICH Coordinator who attends every workgroup and committee meeting. *Obiajulu Ogan* provides administrative support by helping with the agendas, minute taking, etc. It is the expectation of each Commissioner that they serve on at least one committee. There is a need for accountability and ownership by each member of the ICH. Ensuring that Committees meet and accomplish their goals. The work of the ICH is part of the work that we all do.

Next Steps—County Staff will:

- Map the work (rocks and levers) around the current committee/workgroup structure.
- Highlight and identify additional rocks and levers.
- Develop a reporting mechanism to inform the ICH of the progress of each committee/workgroup.
- Create a community reporting method (perhaps scheduled email updates).
- Establish and publicize ICH committees/workgroups meeting schedule.

Partnership and Funding Committee Update (VOTE)—Mary Gies

Mary Gies is the Deputy Chief of Staff for Councilmember Friedson and homelessness is part of her portfolio. She also serves as Chair of the Partnership and Funding Committee. One of the missions of the committee is to recommend and promote partnerships with private organizations, businesses, corporations, philanthropic organizations, or foundations, and any municipal, state, or federal government agency to improve the County's ability to prevent and reduce homelessness.

Today, the Partnership and Funding Committee is asking the ICH for approval on a **Letter of Commitment to Collaboratively End Homelessness in Montgomery County** document that was part of the read ahead materials. The purpose of the document is to give the Committee permission to move forward with the work by approaching entities to establish partnerships and ask for funding. (Document attached).

Sharon London motioned to adopt the letter of commitment. *Amanda Chesney* seconded the motion. Motion approved. *Chelsea Andrews* abstained from the vote because this was her first meeting.

Announcements Upcoming Events:

- Wednesday, January 25 | Annual Point in Time Count. The results will be published in the spring.
- Lead for Impact — a leadership development program for members of the CoC is about to start their fourth cohort sessions. An invitation and more information will follow.
- *Correction and rescheduled:* Thursday, October 16 | Homeless Resource Day at The Activity Center at Bohrer Park, Gaithersburg. Homeless Resource Day will focus on services and connecting people with resources.

HOC resuming leasing enforcement:

Chelsea Andrews, Executive Director of the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC), shared that she is excited to work with the ICH commission. Chelsea served on the CoC in Alberta County, California where homelessness and unsheltered homelessness is extremely high. Chelsea expressed that she is looking forward to bridging the gap and using the experience she gained in California to create a more streamline and boarder CoC here in Montgomery County.

Chelsea also shared that over the last two years because of the COVID health crisis, HOC made the decision to hold off lease enforcement. HOC funding has been impacted by this decision. This year HOC will begin the activity of enforcement but want to do so in a coordinated effort. To accomplish this, HOC will start a process to educate our partners by hosting virtual meetings to ensure everyone understand the timeline and resources available to residents. Our objective is to also reach out to residents and clients so that they are prepared and have the opportunity to take the advantage of resources to avoid housing instability.

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 22, 2023, Hybrid meeting, Rockville Memorial Library, Rockville.

Meeting adjourned.