



INTERAGENCY COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS

Housing for all = A Stronger Montgomery

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

Hybrid Meeting | Rockville Memorial Library and Zoom Link

Wednesday, March 22, 2023 | 3-5p | **Approved May 24, 2023**

Present or represented

Bohorquez, Margarita
(Rep: Ruschelle Reuben)
Bridgers, James
Burton, Scott
Chesney, Amanda
Goldman, Jeff

Grey, Ebony
Habte, Asmara
Hall, Courtney
Hill, Terence
Kelly, Kathryn
Lewis, Robin

Phillips, Mary
(Rep. Andrews Chelsea)
Seidel, Stan
Sheth, Karishma
Shuman, Beth
Sinclair-Smith, Susie

Excused

Dickersin-Prokopp, Christopher
London, Sharan

Absent:

Hidalgo, Manny

Welcome | Introductions | Remarks – Jeff Goldman, Chair

Approval of the January 18, 2023, Meeting Notes (VOTE) – Ebony Grey, Co-Chair

Courtney Hall moved to approve the minutes and Stan Seidel seconded the motion. No objections. Ilana Branda abstained from voting. Motion carried and the notes were approved as written.

Zero for All Campaign Updates – Elise Topazian, Systems Improvement Advisor, Built for Zero | Community Solutions

Elise introduced the other members of the Montgomery County (MC) Zero for All Planning Committee:

<i>Ilana Branda</i> Acting Chief, Services to End and Prevent Homelessness (SEPH)	<i>William Hegwood</i> Career Coach The Career Catchers	<i>John Mendez</i> Executive Director Bethesda Cares
<i>Niambi Powell</i> Housing Program Manager City of Rockville	<i>Rozina Adhanom</i> MC Continuum of Care and ICH Coordinator, SEPH	<i>Ashley Richards</i> Data and Research Manager, SEPH

Elise Topazian shared a video which gave an overview of the methodology behind Built for Zero and reiteration of the ultimate goals of the campaign. MC has been successful in ending veterans' homelessness and we are working to change systems and end homelessness for all populations.

Niambi Powell reaffirmed the Commission adopting the large goal to end homelessness for all populations by the end of 2025. This is an achievable goal because with the concerted efforts of our partners and agencies we reached the goal of ending veterans' homelessness. We can apply that same dedication and effort to reach the larger goal of ending homelessness for all populations.

William Hegwood reviewed the working groups and shared PowerPoint Slide 10 that stated the 6 population groups and the 6-month milestones.

6 Working Groups 6-Month Milestones – How are we doing?					
Working Groups	Goal:	Baseline 12/15/22	1/1/23	2/2/23	3/1/23
Youth	A fully operational Coordinated Entry System	No data for this measure but CES sub-committee is meeting regularly, and this measure is on track.			
Families	An average length of time from Id to move-in of 45 days	61	102	53	30
Seniors	Decreased the number of seniors entering homelessness by 50% (from 6-3)	6	3	8	2
Vulnerable Adults	An average length of time from assigned to house of 45 days	48	-	52	-

Veterans	No more than 7 veterans experiencing homelessness	10	11	11	11
Other Adult-Only Households	Housed 350 individuals (Cumulative from 12/15/22. Exits to housed destinations)	0	82 (+82 since baseline)	191 (+109 since prev month)	282 (+91 since prev month)

Ilana Branda outlined that ICH has an existing robust system and has done a tremendous amount of work to reach our goals and milestones. ICH has 6 Committees, 3 subcommittees and 3 workgroups. The plan to is to integrate the Built for Zero work into our existing committee structure.

Help to accomplish the work: *Ilana* announced that Bethesda Cares will Co-Chair the campaign and serve as the dedicated champion of the campaign. *John Mendez* will be the lead at this time. Bethesda Cares will recruit and hire a Built for Zero Campaign Coordinator who will connect all systems and coordinate the work of the ICH Committees. Bethesda Cares and the Campaign Coordinator will be accountable to drive the subpopulation results.

Ilana encouraged Commissioners to serve on at least one of the ICH Committees. The need is for ICH members:

- To represent and focus on the work so we can meet our goal to end homelessness for all populations by the end of 2025.
- To advocate for program support and policy updates in your agency to achieve better client outcomes.
- Identify areas of intersection and opportunities of collaboration between the CoC, agencies, and the community.
- Share your knowledge and expertise with our community.

John Mendez shared the results of a survey that Bethesda Cares conducted in Downtown Silver Spring. The survey was like the Point-in-Time count with an additional question—What type of housing intervention do you prefer? There were 114 people experiencing homelessness who responded and 98 express their preference was permanent supportive housing (their own apartment); only 6 responded that they prefer transitional housing, and 0 people responded emergency shelter. What did we learn? People experiencing homelessness need to be heard and they overwhelmingly are telling us they need and want housing. Housing development and opportunities are the investments we should be making in our community.

John shared a table that shows from 2009-2013, the numbers of those literally homeless in our jurisdiction was stagnant. In 2013, when the CoC intervened with Community Solutions’ first campaign, *Inside not Outside*, the numbers began to decline. What did we learn? When we respond to what the clients need, they will participate, and the numbers will decrease (41% decrease since 2013). This is the result of our investment and creating a coordinated entry system.

What do we need from this point forward:

- To hold ourselves accountable.
- Ensure we are listening to the people experiencing homelessness to give the results they need.
- Drill down and talk to our frontline staff to find out the tools they need to help their clients get into housing.
- Create and use a coordinated entry system to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

Questions and Comments:

Susan Sinclair-Smith expressed that this is exciting news about the progress of the Built for Zero campaign but added the fact that non-profit provider agencies are recovering from COVID and experiencing staff shortages should be factored into the efforts to end homelessness. The capacity to serve and move clients into housing may be limited because agencies including government agencies are short staff and looking for case managers. The push for goals is important but a purposeful conversation about capacity would be helpful to ensure that housing placements last, and the clients have the resources they need.

Courtney Hall stated that he also is excited to reach the goal of making homelessness rare, brief, and one-time only. He expressed the need to make sure it is Housing First not Housing Only. People who exit homelessness to permanent housing need to have support.

John Mendez suggested that training sessions be held to train new staff to understand and use Housing First. *Ilana* shared that there is training funding and the County has an informal solicitation open to recruit housing first trainers. The goal is to make the training available to all staff and partners within the CoC.

Amanda Chesney shared that for providers to do the work there is a need for people who are properly resourced to do the job. At times, providers do not have enough funding to retain case workers to help people with their housing options; so, the work is backlogged. *Amanda* suggested that this body supports an effort to push the Government to help provide competitive salaries to recruit, hire and retain staff (both case managers and administrative staff). To ensure people experiencing homelessness are assisted and get housing in a timely manner. Also, explore the possibility of creating an Ombudsman to investigate complaints.

Courtney suggested conducting a cost-benefit analysis to explore competitive salaries and returns on the investment to present to the County Executive and County Council to support the need for funding necessary positions. The most important returns would help people experiencing homelessness to exit homelessness quickly.

Committee and Workgroup Reports:

Strategic and Planning Committee Updates – *Ilana Branda*

Strategic and Planning Committee – The current strategic plan goes through December 2023. *Ilana* shared PowerPoint slides (Slides 19-22) that stated the mission, vision, value of the current strategic plan and the current strategies.

What we need to do now is:

- Update the bold goals to align with the *Zero for All* campaign.
 - previous goals were to end homelessness for all by the end of 2023.
- Update expected outcomes and planned actions under each strategy and
 - Utilize the rocks and levers work initiated through the *Zero for All* campaign.
 - Identify the strategic framework verses strategic plan. Change would give:
 - additional time for community input and engagement
 - ability to continually update/modify to align with *Zero for All* campaign milestones.

Outcome and Improvement Committee (OIC) – *Ashley Richards, Chair*

Ashley provided two major updates:

- *Deborah Taylor*, Program Manager at Bethesda Cares, has volunteered to be the Co-chair of the OIC.
- The OIC is updating the following and will hopefully present the updated documents and information at the next ICH meeting:
 - System performance memo
 - System performance data with goals for the next fiscal year

Peoples' Committee – *Lisa Lowe, Chair*

The activities of the Peoples Committee include:

- Reviewed shelter contracts and provided recommendations. Currently waiting for updates on which recommendations were implemented.
- Learned the NOFO scoring process and reviewed all applications and scored them as part of the allocation process.

- Engaged with shelter residents to provide a voice, build relationships, and give an advocacy agenda.
- Supported the installation of the Pulse for Good Kiosks in the shelters. Shelter residents have a way to now share feedback in real time.
- Created a brochure to recruit new members.
- Advocated that people who are discharged from mental health or substance abuse facilities are directed to a higher level of care than back into the homelessness system.
- What would we like from the ICH?
 - More meaning engagement
 - List of committees and subcommittees. What kind of work do they do? When do they meet?
 - Have someone with lived experience on the committees and workgroups.
 - A means to better report our work to the ICH so there is no duplicating of efforts.
 - Conduct training sessions so members of the Peoples Committee can learn who does what in the CoC.

Racial Equity Workgroup – Ralph Belk, Chair

The workgroup meets virtually the third Thursday of the month at 3p and is currently focusing on Strategy 1 of the Strategic Plan to reduce racial disparities across the system. Current activities of the workgroup are:

- Equity training entitled, “Let’s talk about race.”
 - Started Fall of 2022 with 10 sessions; 250 people registered.
 - Goal to train the entire CoC consisting of 700 people.
 - Group exploring starting round 2 of trainings by looking for training contractor.
- Data analysis
 - The workgroup has been working on data analysis for 3 years in partnership with the Corporation of Supportive Housing (CHS) who have a data sharing agreement with the County and a memorandum of understanding.
 - Goal to look at other systems, their disparities, and the impact on homelessness (mental health, criminal justice, child welfare, etc.).
 - Some of the findings
 - Black and African American households have a higher rate of touching the homeless system.
 - White, Hispanic, and Latino households are more likely to exit to permanent housing but return to homelessness at a higher rate.
 - Workgroup reaching out to community by conducting interviews to start communication with those with lived experiences who were served through our homeless services.
- Metropolitan Council of Government equity action plan
 - Workgroup supporting the development of peer advocates to help our consumer navigate by inviting certified peer advocates to our next meeting.
 - In addition, we are looking at metrics to determine, “how are we doing?” in addressing racial disparities in the County.

Workforce Development Workgroup – Stan Seidel, Chair

Workgroup activities are:

- Formed case management training program that has served 277 clients.
- Welcomed new members—Montgomery Works and Career Catchers
- Stan arranged for presentations from:
 - Street Wise, a mentoring organization and Easter Seals who shared information about the homeless veterans’ program and their program for people with disabilities.
 - Other organizations presented information about employment services at no charge.
- The goal is to get homeless veterans’ employment (full time or part time) or entrepreneurships so they can be self-sufficient.

- Stan encouraged the People’s Committee, ICH members and other providers to attend the Workforce Development Workgroup meetings to learn and network with these organizations so information and resources can be shared with the people we serve.

Youth Workgroup – Alycia Chunev, Chair

Alycia works with the Collaboration Council and is the Project Director for the MoCo Reconnect Center (Montgomery County’s Drop-in Center).

- Updates:
 - Currently, the Youth Workgroup’s core team is Alycia, Rozina and the members of the Latin American Youth Center. Workgroup in the recruitment phase seeking others to join the committee from the community.
 - The group’s goals are to (1) create a youth coordinated entry system by the end of the fiscal year and (2) conduct a robust youth count to understand the level of youth homelessness in Montgomery County.
- Youth Action Board (YAB)
 - Currently, there are 8 members on the YAB, and all have lived experience of homelessness. The YAB are developing their guidelines and priorities.
- MoCo Reconnect update:
 - Since ribbon cutting in June 2022, the center has served 107 young people. Services ran from meals and showers to case management and providing eligible youths diversion dollars.
 - Shepherd Pratt has partnered and serves youths including the LGBTQIA community providing navigation services. Shepherd Pratt also provides mental health services for all youths.
 - Created a newly dedicated Street Outreach Team.
 - Early May will be hosting a community conversation at the drop-in center.

Alycia concluded by expressing that support from the ICH is needed and welcomed. ICH members were invited to visit the MoCo Reconnect Drop-in Center to see the progress.

Partnership and Funding Committee – George Leventhal, Co-chair

- The Committee has developed a shared vision statement which is guidance to all funders, government, and private funders to align with the strategic plan adopted by this commission.
- Conducted outreach to strengthen partnerships in the real estate sector and among landlords.
 - Recruited new member: AOBA (Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington), an organization representing landlords, has joined the Committee and a small multi-family owner association.
- The Committee has had lively conversations about the real challenges that face landlords and how DHHS and SEPH can provide necessary backup and support, by:
 - Not simplifying the issue. Try to address the stigma or prejudice. Brief landlords ahead of time.
 - Supporting landlords includes recognizing that many tenants who were homeless may not always pay their rent or pay on time.

Communication Committee – Rozina Adhanom

The Committee has not been meeting and needs to reconvene in view of upcoming events (Homeless Memorial and Homeless Resource Day). All were encouraged to consider joining the Communication Committee. New partners and provider staff are needed. Contact Rozina to express your interest.

System Coordination Committee – Ilana Branda

- The Committee is looking at the recruitment, retention, and capacity issues.
- CES subcommittee is meeting and establishing a workplan reviewing our system ensuring it is strong and working as intended.
- The Committee will report back to the ICH in May.

Jeff thanked the committees and all who reported out. There is a need to ensure that the work of the committees is not siloed but we work together to establish our strategic plan milestones and goals.

Public Comments:

Courtney Hall revisited the idea of the champion for the Built for Zero campaign and expressed concern on how the decision was made. What was the thinking and timeline she was involved in making the decision from the January and March meeting? Courtney asked for some background in how the decision was made without input from the ICH membership.

Ilana Branda reiterated that the ICH reconfirmed their commitment back in December to end homelessness in Montgomery County. SEPH staff needed help to meet the capacity for Built for Zero and to drive the campaign. Securing a champion and eventual Campaign Coordinator was an operational decision and SEPH felt that it did not need a vote by the ICH.

Courtney expressed that we need to explore and define the role of the ICH in the Built for Zero campaign and other activities involving the homeless continuum. It is reasonable that commissioners be briefed on **major decisions** (not all but major decisions) and could weigh in.

Jeff Goldman suggested that the ICH and staff update the Governance Charter to clarify when decisions come to the full Commission and when they are done administratively.

Susan Sinclair Smith agreed that clarity is needed because at times staff-driven initiatives are advertised with the ICH as co-sponsors when the commission has not been briefed (i.e., the Communitywide Meeting).

Announcements Upcoming Events:

- Lead for Impact—Leadership Development Program applications for the fourth cohort will be available in April.
- The 2023 Community Homeless Memorial is scheduled for Thursday, June 8 at the EOB/Circuit Court Plaza.
- The 2023 Nadim Khan Memorial Homeless Resource Day in Gaithersburg has been postponed from May until October. The Planning Committee will start to work on the resource day soon. If anyone wants to volunteer for the planning committee, please contact Gloria Huggins.

David Cristeal announced that the City of Gaithersburg is drafting a consolidated planning process which will provide emergency assistance for residents and will prevent evictions and homelessness. The draft document will be available and posted on the City's website from April 4-May 5. *David* encouraged the ICH to review and comment on the document.

Rozina announced that she will be contacting ICH members whose terms have expired or are about to expire to discuss re-applying for appointment.

Amanda Chesney announced that COG has a regional fair housing plan that is open for comments on its website. She encouraged ICH members to review and comment.

Next meeting: Wednesday, August 2, 2023, Hybrid meeting, Rockville Memorial Library, Rockville.

Meeting adjourned.