**Statewide Homeless Council**

**April 11, 2017**

**9:30 AM to 2:00 PM**

**Location: MaineHousing 353 Water Street Augusta Maine State Housing Authority**

**MaineHousing Conference Room, behind Reception Desk**

**SHC meets regularly the second Tuesday of each month**

**Attendees:** Cullen Ryan (CHOM), Donna Kelley (KBH), William Higgins (HVJ), Boyd Kronholm (BAHS), Jenny Stasio (FCS), Elizabeth Szatkowski (TOA), Josh D’Alessio (PCHC)

**Guests:** Cindy Namer (MaineHousing), Ginny Dill (Shalom House), Melanie LaMore Gagnon (Safe Voices), Dan Brennan (MaineHousing), Alley Smith (Veterans, Inc.), Chris Bicknell (New Beginnings), Gayle Erdheim (Dept. of Education), Craig Phillips (Tedford Housing), Chris Roberts (HUD), Melissa McEntee(RGH), Mary LaRoche (Dept. of Corrections), Stacy Latakakos (TOA)

**Minutes:** Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing)

**Minutes from the March 28,** **2017** meeting were reviewed and accepted as submitted.

**Policy Committee:** (please see Policy Committee notes, attached, for full details)

**CoC Updates:** Neither CoC has met since the last SHC meeting. They are moving ahead with the Merger, and with the opening of the CoC Registration Process, due May 1st, will try submit the request and get approval in time to register as one merged Continuum of Care.

**Regional Homeless Council Updates:** Again, nothing new since last SHC.

**Long Term Stayers Updates:** Portland numbers continue to decrease. Bangor has seen a few LTS’s that were housed return to shelter recently when their short term subsidy ran out. Coordinated Entry and increased Data Sharing may lead to increases in our LTS numbers as more people in rural areas are identified as meeting the criteria.

**DHHS Updates:** (No DHHS representatives present.)

**MaineHousing Updates:** Preliminary PIT numbers show the overall count was down slightly and that the Chronically Homeless number (self-reported for the PIT) was about 200 for the state. We are still putting together the final figures with charts and graphs for the Maine Report, and entering all data into the HDX system for submission to HUD.

-The Youth Addendum data is also still being analyzed. The preliminary numbers from that were used for Phase Two of the Rural Youth Peer Network Grant that was recently submitted, but since that was specifically intended to include youth who were ‘couch surfing’ or otherwise at risk of homelessness, those figures will not match the Youth numbers that will be reported to HUD for the PIT.

-Based on the proposed federal budget, it appears that MaineHousing’s HCV program is going to be oversubscribed by about 200 vouchers. That will need to be brought down through attrition as people come off the program before new vouchers can be safely issued again. Approximately 30 to 35 households exit each month, so the freeze will be about 6 months – though there are other variables involved.

-The MaineHousing plan to utilize the National Housing Trust Fund award is also now temporarily on hold as the RFP included placing Project Based Vouchers in the developed units.

-The new CoC funded TBRA program will, hopefully, be available in the next few months. It is designed similar to the current STEP Program, but has more of a rural focus and allows for up to two years assistance.

**Press Release Topics:** Camden National Bank has a “Hope At Home” fund that provides money to homeless shelters. They have raised about $200,000 so far. When customers apply for a mortgage they can check a box to indicate which shelter they would like the bank to contribute to. We need to be sure they have the most up to date list of shelters. It was suggested we include this program in a press release along with the annual state homeless statistics and the newly revised Plan in July.

**The Maine Plan To End Veteran Homeless:** Adria discussed some of the changes and updates made since her last visit. She briefed the Governor and it went well. The biggest feedback was that the plan needs to include “Measurable and Observable” results, and that anything you need the Legislature to do must be spelled out clearly and precisely.

-Maine’s Veteran’s Committee is now part of SHC as well as the CoC’s.

- 211 is the contracted referral source for the state, and needs to add Veteran related questions to their intake process. Currently, VA services are getting zero referrals from 211. Training will be needed on the questions and services available to Veterans.

-HMIS needs to generate a “By-Name List” of homeless Veterans and increase the number of non-CoC related agencies that are licensed HMIS users in order to improve data around those who are at risk of homelessness.

- $375K has been made available to provide grants to reduce service gaps. Adria is creating an RFP to provide low barrier financial assistance. It needs to be helpful and flexible. Using Easter Seals as a model.

- Need to increase the number of Supportive Housing units. Start by looking at existing stock and how it could be better utilized.

- Need to clarify and enforce existing rules and regulations, engage with PHA’s, engage with Landlords, promote the landlord assistance fund and protections for landlords who rent to Veterans. Provide federal bonding for homeless veterans to ‘insure’ veteran tenants.

-Establish an Office of Maine Homelessness – not sure where that would be but there needs to be accountability – and an annual State of Homelessness Address.

-Establish standard MOU’s for data Sharing, training for Law Enforcement, Coordinated Entry…

-Create a Commission to review laws that create or contribute to homelessness.

- Dept of Labor should be part of SHC.

Adria concluded by saying that, while the Plan is still unfolding, tomorrow it will be public record.

**The Maine Plan To End and Prevent Homeless:** (morning and an afternoon discussions combined here.)

The new draft keeps the basic goals but has been re-organized to remove lots of redundant material, and has been color coded by population to make it easier to find related information. Members provided the following feedback and suggestions.

-The Plan should site all data sources for statistics to make it easier for people to verify and update as needed. Any number that is an estimate needs a disclaimer. Real, verifiable numbers should be used whenever possible. -Including any ‘best guess’ numbers reduces the overall credibility.

-The Youth numbers seem low. The Plan uses the HUD/HMIS definitions, which are much narrower than the definitions used by other homeless youth programs. It was suggested we use the State’s RHYHMIS definition.

-It should include definitions for all terms and populations that the general public might not be familiar with.

-We need to be careful not to get stuck on data. It’s important to get it right, and Coordinated Entry will help improve some of these figures, but for most areas, if we don’t have a solid number, National statistics would be close enough and verifiable. The plan should really be focused on the Causes and Cures, not the numbers.

- If the National numbers are in line with local numbers, that’s fine, but that may not always be the case and we should use Maine specific data wherever we can.

-We also need to start looking at other sources for data that we have available; The CAPER, Performance Measures, AHAR’s – not just PIT and Annual Stats.

-It should be more consistent with what information is or is not included. Eliminating redundancy is good, but if someone were to take out one page, or one chart, to make a case for a specific population, would it included all the relevant information they would need?

-Need to incorporate and promote Housing First in the document. All the emphasis on Services seems to imply that those need to happen before anyone can be housed and that is no longer the model we should use.

-Cullen reminded everyone that we do not need to get this exactly perfect here today. This will still go out the Regional Councils and other groups who will also provide feedback. It is a work in progress.

- The term “Ensure” appears many times. Can the SHC really ‘Ensure’ that any of these things will happen? SHC can encourage, advocate, work toward, and recommend that certain things happen, but does SHC have the authority or the responsibility to ensure they happen?

-SHC can ensure that we do what we say we will do – the things we have some control over like ensuring that the Governor and the Legislature are fully informed on issues, but we cannot ensure that they will make the decisions we recommend.

-Also, even when other entities are mentioned – MaineHousing, DHHS, etc. – the language is still about how SHC will ensure, encourage, or recommend that they do something – which puts it back on SHC, not on them. Why not say “MaineHousing will…” or “DHHS will…”

-The “we” in the Plan is not just the SHC. It is all the agencies and all the people that have an interest in the Plan. The SHC is drafting the Plan on their behalf.

- It should be looked at as the “Maine Plan”, not the “SHC Plan”, but we cannot even get most state agencies that are required to be here to attend regularly – there is a disconnect.

-In some ways the Plan is intended to be a broad, philosophical overview. No one is looking at this at the end of each year and asking if we accomplished everything we said we would.

-But that may be exactly why other entities are not invested – as Adria said in describing the Veteran Plan, it needs to be Measurable and Observable. We need to be able to report out on this – maybe not all aspects, maybe not the more philosophical parts, but anything that can be measured, should.

The group got to page 10 of the Plan before the meeting was adjourned. Discussion will continue next month.

**Populations:** **Veterans:** **Age 55+:** **Youth:** **DV:** **Families:** not covered other than in the context of the Plan.

**Other Business:** none

**Next Meeting:** May 9, 2017 from 9:30 to 2:00 at MaineHousing.

**Policy/Advocacy Update – 4/5/2017**

**Federal Legislation Update:**

**FY2017 Appropriations – Continuing Resolution (CR) –**Congress passed a short-term CR on 12/9, signed by the President on 12/10. **The CR maintains the FY17 spending cap of $1.07 trillion and keeps the federal government funded through April 28, 2017**. To fit under mandated spending caps, the CR includes an across-the-board cut of 0.19% to funding levels for defense and non-defense programs. Now lawmakers must negotiate another budget deal - either a full-year CR or final spending bills - to keep the government operating until 9/30/17. Some conservative members of Congress are urging their leadership to enact cuts to federal spending levels in any final bill.

**Every State Will Likely Lose Housing Vouchers If Congress Doesn’t Boost Funding for 2017 –** Under a continuing resolution that freezes voucher funding for all of 2017 at last year’s level, for example, vouchers for more than 100,000 families would be unfunded, a loss of assistance that would be greater than what the 2013 sequestration cuts caused.

**Impact of Fiscal Year 2017 Funding Proposals on the Number of Households Using Housing Vouchers, completed by CBPP:**

| **State** | **Number of households using housing vouchers, 2016** | **Number of housing vouchers cut under Senate bill, 2017** | **Number of housing vouchers cut under continuing resolution for 2017\*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ME** | **11,818** | **-142** | **-579** |

**HUD Funding Prospects (from CBPP):** On 3/8 the House of Representatives took what is hopefully a major step toward enacting a final fiscal year 2017 funding bill for HUD and other agencies.  The House-passed Defense appropriations bill now goes to the Senate, where it is likely to be transformed into an omnibus funding bill that includes the remaining federal agencies.  Word is the Senate will endeavor to pass such an omnibus bill before April 7, when Congress will adjourn for two weeks.  The current Continuing Resolution expires April 28, leaving little time for the House and Senate to come to agreement.  
   
**President Trump’s proposed budget (from CBPP)**: President Trump released his “skinny” budget on 3/16 – a budget blueprint for FY 18 (the full budget will likely be submitted to Congress in May). The President’s FY 18 budget blueprint includes a $6.2 billion—or 13.2%—cut to HUD programs compared to FY16 to help offset a $54 billion increase to defense spending. Specifically, the HUD budget:

* Eliminates CDBG, HOME and Choice Neighborhoods.

According to CBPP, the budget says the federal government will continue to help 4.5 million households pay the rent, but it provides no details on funding for HUD’s rental assistance programs, which helped nearly 4.9 million households in 2016. But preliminary budget documents leaked the week of 3/6 indicate that the President’s proposals in the full budget request will likely include significant rental assistance cuts, including:

* Public housing cut by $2 billion, or 30%.
* Housing Choice Vouchers would be funded at $19.3 billion, about $300 million below the 2016 level, and about $1.7 billion below the amount estimated to be required to renew all vouchers in 2018. This is equal to 200,000 vouchers being lost.
* Cuts that would result in about 25,000 homes for seniors and people with disabilities being lost.

**Effect of the President’s FY 18 HUD budget cuts on Maine (per CBPP analysis):**

| **State** | **Vouchers Cut** | **Public Housing Funding Cut** | **CDBG Funding Cut** | **HOME Funding Cut** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ME** | **-1,071** | **-$6,290,625** | **-$16,494,704** | **-$4,303,357** |

The NLIHC has a national sign-on letter, asking Congress to lift harmful spending caps and to fully fund affordable housing programs. You can sign the letter here**:** <https://nlihc.wufoo.com/forms/urge-congress-lift-spending-caps-fund-thud-bill/>

**National Housing Trust Fund:**  With President Trump’s proposed cuts to NDD programs, and the potential effect on housing programs (see above), funding for the HTF could face significant budget cuts and other threats this year. In the past, Congress has proposed to gut the HTF and to use its funding to fill holes in the HUD budget. Congress must instead ensure that all affordable housing programs—including the HTF—are fully funded. The HTF is the only federal program designed to build and preserve housing affordable to people with the lowest incomes. We must ensure that the program is protected – not eliminated.

**The Affordable Care Act (ACA):** The House Republican health plan unveiled on 3/6, was pulled from the House floor and will not be considered in its current state.

***NEW –* S. 743: A Bill to Strengthen the United Stated Interagency Council on Homelessness:** Senators Collins and Reed introduced legislation on 3/28 to strengthen and eliminate the sunset for the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). Referred to the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

**Senate Democrats Unveil Comprehensive Infrastructure Plan, Affordable Housing Included:** Senate Democrats unveiled their infrastructure plan: A Blueprint to Rebuild America’s Infrastructure. The $1 trillion plan aims to create over 15 million jobs, and addresses issues including broadband internet, downtown revitalization, water and sewer, schools, roads and bridges, and also includes investments for public and affordable housing.

***NEW –* H.R. 161: Services for Ending Long-Term Homelessness Act. – Sponsored by Representative Hastings (Florida).** This bill would amend the Public Health Service Act to establish a grant program to provide supportive services in permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals and families, and for other purposes. Referred to the House Energy and Commerce committee.

**H.R. 948: The Common Sense Housing Investment Act, to help end homelessness and housing poverty through comprehensive tax reform. – Referred to House Ways and Means, Financial Services committee*.*** According to the NLIHC the [*Common Sense Housing Investment Act*](http://cqrcengage.com/nlihc/app/thru?ep=AAAAC2Flc0NpcGhlcjAxBuGrlqP3Tp_K3rEdOWjgZeJ_hryGlWg6W1-Ie7x-bYwgcrCzEvvjb3EyWJGKtkq4DRQja4hjOcWqz23UlCVubtpNTPbYa70emTvSF167-1pXOTkBF64RLMTUxap557_93WQOGSGjLVaPdtfEZaxL3FiKksM3qt8yiGwSRimIg3UbuvAzrzb7xo0bboFv55pXZbMPQ9mQpjGZJEkn-8nCj9CVpJTW5ZcspS596EsAZ6s&lp=0) calls for modest reforms to the mortgage interest deduction, a $70 billion tax write-off that largely benefits America's highest-income households, and reinvests the significant savings into providing affordable housing for people with the greatest needs. The bill would boost funding for the Housing Trust Fund, the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, public housing, and rental assistance solutions-without adding any costs to the federal government. The reforms are simple and bipartisan. First, the bill reduces the size of a mortgage eligible for the tax break from $1 million to the first $500,000-impacting fewer than 6% of homeowners. Second, the bill converts the mortgage interest deduction into a tax credit. This would allow 15 million more low and moderate income homeowners who currently do not benefit from the mortgage interest deduction to get a much-needed tax break. The United for Homes campaign-including more than 2,300 national, state, and local organizations and elected officials in all 435 congressional districts-strongly endorses H.R 948.

**H.R. 6378: To amend the Public Health Service Act to revise the amount of minimum allotments under the Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness Program. *– No new action/update.*** Sponsor: Rep. Peter Welch [D-VT], co-sponsor Rep. Cramer, Kevin [R-ND].

**H.R. 4888: Ending Homelessness Act of 2016** – ***No new action/update.***Introduced on 3/23 by House Financial Services Committee Ranking Member Maxine Waters (D-CA).

**S.993/H.R.1854, The Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act – *No new action/update.*** Introduced by Senators Franken (D-MN) - Cornyn (R-TX) and Representatives Collins (R-GA)-Scott (D-VA).

**State Legislation Update:**

* **Governor LePage released his 2017-2018 Biennial Budget late on Friday, January 6, 2016**. **The budget targets many areas of DHHS’ spending, with a stated goal of “stabilizing DHHS.” – *Public hearings on the biennial budget will be held between 2/6 and 3/8. The full Biennial Budget schedule can be found online:*** [***http://legislature.maine.gov/uploads/originals/detailed-biennial-ph-schedule-blocks.pdf***](http://legislature.maine.gov/uploads/originals/detailed-biennial-ph-schedule-blocks.pdf)

**Areas of interest include:**

* + Eliminating eligibility of "able-bodied parents" with earnings over 40% of the Federal Poverty Level from Medicaid. – The Public Hearing for this portion was held on 2/21; budget block work sessions began the week of 2/27. – **Summarized in its memo to the AFA Committee, the HHS Committee voted 7-6 against this initiative; the minority voted of the Committee voted the initiative as proposed.**
  + Eliminating eligibility of 19 & 20 year-olds from MaineCare. – The Public Hearing for this portion of the budget was held on 2/21; budget block work sessions began the week of 2/27. **Summarized in its memo to the AFA Committee, the HHS Committee voted 7-6 against this initiative; the minority voted of the Committee voted the initiative as proposed but with the recognition that the department needs to submit language to accompany this initiative.**
  + Eliminating the General Assistance Program. (Part ZZZ). The Public Hearing for this portion of the budget was held on 2/22; budget block work sessions began the week of 2/27. **Summarized in its memo to the AFA Committee, the HHS Committee voted 7-6 against this initiative (as well as the initiative that would eliminate the program for non-citizens, part HHHH); the minority voted of the Committee voted for both sets of initiatives as proposed.**
    - **General Assistance Minority vote:** Six members of the HHS Committee voted to include additional changes to the General Assistance program. This minority initiative would do the following: (1) eliminate GA for an individual that has timed off of TANF until a period of 5 years has passed and (2) make an applicant for GA who voluntarily abandons or refuses to use an available resource without just cause ineligible for 120 days from the date of abandoning the resource.
  + Reducing the maximum lifetime cap for TANF, from 60 to 36 months. (PART FFFF). The Public Hearing for this portion of the budget was held on 2/22; budget block work sessions began the week of 2/27. **Summarized in its memo to the AFA Committee, the HHS Committee voted 7-6 against this initiative, as well as the initiative to eliminate coverage for individuals with drug felony convictions (Part EEEE) removing most good cause exemptions; the minority voted of the Committee voted for Part FFFF as proposed, but amended Part EEEE to allow an individual to qualify for TANF after a period of 10 years has passed since the completion of incarceration for a drug felony conviction.**
  + Repealing the provision that requires DHHS to provide a food supplement program for non-citizens, who would otherwise be eligible for SNAP benefits but for their immigration status. (Part KKKK). The Public Hearing for this portion of the budget is 2/22; budget block work sessions began the week of 2/27. **Summarized in its memo to the AFA Committee, the HHS Committee voted 7-6 against this initiative; the minority voted of the Committee voted the initiative as proposed.**
  + Repealing the provision that requires DHHS to provide supplemental security income for non-citizens, who would otherwise be eligible for Supplemental Security Income but for their immigration status. (Part KKKK). The Public Hearing for this portion of the budget was held on 2/22; budget block work sessions began the week of 2/27. **Summarized in its memo to the AFA Committee, the HHS Committee voted 7-6 against this initiative; the minority voted of the Committee voted the initiative as proposed.**
  + Repealing the provision that requires DHHS to provide a financial assistance to non-citizens, who would otherwise be eligible for TANF benefits but for their immigration status. (Part KKKK). The Public Hearing for this portion of the budget was held on 2/22; budget block work sessions began the week of 2/27. **Summarized in its memo to the AFA Committee, the HHS Committee voted 7-6 against this initiative; the minority voted of the Committee voted the initiative as proposed.**
  + Full funding for the HOME Fund – Following a joint hearing with the Appropriations Committee, the Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development (LCRED) Committee voted unanimously to support full funding for the HOME Fund in the coming biennium. If this proposal is ultimately adopted, it will likely lead to the Fund’s highest level of funding in decades.

Bills of note:

* **LD 136**, **An Act Regarding the Eviction Process**, sponsored by Sen. Scott Cyrway (R-Kennebec), would expand the causes for a 7-day notice of termination of tenancy listed in 14 MRSA §6002 to include the following three additional reasons:
  + The tenant or the tenant's guest or invitee is the perpetrator of violence, a threat of violence or sexual assault against another tenant, a tenant's guest, the landlord or the landlord's employee or agent;
  + The person occupying the premises is not an authorized occupant of the premises; or
  + The tenant provided false information on the tenant's rental application.
* **LD 33**, **An Act To Adjust the Lifetime Limit for the Receipt of TANF Benefits**, sponsored by Sen. Eric Brakey (R-Androscoggin), would change the lifetime limit on receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families benefits from 60 months to 36 months.
* **LD 36**, **An Act To Create a 9-month Time Limit on General Assistance Benefits for Certain Persons**, also sponsored by Sen. Brakey, would limit the general assistance benefits for a person without dependents and who is capable of working to a maximum of 275 days every 5 years.  **Public hearing: 4/10 at 9:00 am in front of the HHS Committee (Cross Building, Room 209).**
* ***NEW –* LD 10 "An Act To Build Greater Accountability into the General Assistance Program by Increasing the Penalty for Falsely Representing Information on an Application for General Assistance."** Sponsored by Representative Picchiotti. **Public hearing: 4/10 at 9:00 am in front of the HHS Committee (Cross Building, Room 209).**
* ***NEW –* LD 219 "An Act To Prioritize Use of Available Resources in General Assistance Programs."** Sponsored by Senator Brakey. **Public hearing: 4/10 at 9:00 am in front of the HHS Committee (Cross Building, Room 209).**
* ***NEW –* LD 220 "An Act To Align Time Limits in the Municipal General Assistance Program and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program."** Sponsored by Senator Brakey. **Public hearing: 4/10 at 9:00 am in front of the HHS Committee (Cross Building, Room 209).**
* ***NEW –* LD 221 "An Act To Amend the Laws Regarding the Municipality of Responsibility for General Assistance Applicants Released from a State Correctional Facility or County Jail Facility."** Sponsored by Senator Gratwick. **Public hearing: 4/10 at 9:00 am in front of the HHS Committee (Cross Building, Room 209).**
* ***NEW –* LD 1109 "An Act To Improve General Assistance Reimbursements."** Sponsored by Senator Chipman. **Public hearing: 4/10 at 9:00 am in front of the HHS Committee (Cross Building, Room 209).**
* ***NEW –* LD 970, An Act To End Homelessness by Expanding Housing Support Services**, sponsored by Rep. Erik Jorgensen (D-Portland), would establish the Housing First Assistance Program at MaineHousing. Under the program, would work with emergency shelters and other crisis responders to provide permanent housing and support services to chronically homeless individuals and families, including those addicted to opiates. The program would follow the core Housing First program elements, including not disqualifying or evicting a resident due to alcohol or substance abuse, a criminal record, poor financial history or lack of an income. The bill includes $675,000 per year for two years to establish and provide 24-hour supportive services for 30 housing units. Public hearing held on 3/27 at 1:00 pm in front of the Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development (LCRED) Committee (Cross Building, Room 208).
* ***NEW –* LD 832, An Act To Carry Out the Will of the People of the State of Maine by Ensuring the Issuance of Bonds To Support the Independence of Maine's Seniors (EMERGENCY)**, sponsored by Sen. Roger Katz (R-Kennebec), a bill similar to his LD 382, calls for the $15M in senior housing bonds approved by the voters in November 2015 to be issued. The bill would remove the requirement that the State Treasurer issue the bonds at the discretion of the Governor. There are conditions under which the bonds would not be issued, e.g., if issuance would adversely impact the State’s credit. **Public hearing: 4/5 at 1:00 pm in front of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs (State House, Room 228).**
* ***NEW –* LD 735, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Support the Independence of Maine's Seniors**, sponsored by Sen. Amy York (R-Cumberland), provides for a $50M bond issue for senior housing. This is MAHC’s bill and is the original amount proposed to the Legislature two years ago. It would provide $40M for new multifamily units, with at least one facility in each Maine county, $5M to rehabilitate existing affordable senior housing facilities, and $5M for home repair and weatherization of existing homes of low-income seniors. The bond proceeds will leverage an estimated $75,000,000 in private and other funds.