**Statewide Homeless Council**

**January 9, 2018**

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

**Location: MaineHousing, 353 Water Street, Augusta, Maine**

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

**Attendees:** Cullen Ryan (RII), Donna Kelley (RII), Melanie Lamore Gagnon (RII), Chet Barnes (DHHS-SAMHS), Josh D’Alessio (RIII), David McClusky (RIII), Boyd Kronholm (RIII), Rob Parritt (RI), Bill Higgins (RI), Elizabeth Szatkowski (RI), Peter Merrill (MH).

**Guests:** Donna Yellen (Preble Street), Alley Smith (Veterans, Inc.), Chris Bicknell (New Beginnings), Donald Lynch (Families and Children Together), Julie Roberts (Maine BVS), Allison Gallagher (MaineHousing), Susie Whittington (VA Maine), Ginny Dill (Shalom House), Mary Francis Bartlett (City of Augusta)

**Minutes:** Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing)

**Minutes** of December 12, 2017 were reviewed. Donald Lynch (FACT) was on the phone but was not listed as attending. APPROVED as Amended.

**Announcements:** None.

**Policy Committee:** (see Policy Committee notes posted on [www.mainehomelessplanning.org](http://www.mainehomelessplanning.org) for full details)

**Federal:**  Congress passed another short term Continuing Resolution to keep the Government funded for the next couple weeks. The new Tax Bill that was passed will increase the deficit by billions over the next several years, making it likely that PAYGO will go into effect and that there will be further cuts to already vulnerable programs. Sequestration effects loom unless Congress takes action to raise the spending caps. These will affect HUD and funding for homeless services.

**State:** Currently looking at two bills which would provide resources to address the opioid crisis and one bill to expand BRAP. Part of this second proposal would change the tenant portion of the rent from the current 51% to 30%, bringing it in line with other rental subsidy programs. However, this would be a $1.5 million difference. Even if funding is provided to cover this it would take one and a half to two years for things to even out. If funding is not provided (which seems more likely) BRAP would need to eliminate about 200 vouchers to balance their budget, leaving a turn-over of only about 80 to 100 vouchers annually, which would be prioritized for Category 1 applicants. One of the opioid related bills would open up BRAP to SUD populations. BRAP has been a successful program due to its limited focus on MH and the Department is concerned that redirecting BRAP would weaken the program. They are supportive of the creation of another type of subsidy for the SUD population.

**Continuum Updates:** MCOC is focused on developing Maine’s Coordinated Entry System, still hoping to have it up and running by the HUD deadline of January 23. There have been a number of Board meetings around this effort, and lots of turbulence right now due to a last minute change to our software vendor. A new committee has been created and will meet tomorrow to address CE and look at all the options in order to make recommendations to the Board as to whether or not we should implement what we have or delay implementation, and miss the deadline. The annual PIT count is also January 23!

**RHC’s:** RIII- no meeting. RII – no meeting. RI – did meet, talked about the new Tax Bill.

**LTS:**  Portland lists 1 through 4 are collectively down to just 38 people and list 5 is already down to 47. Bangor was down to just 1 person last month but is now at 2. The By-Name list is very helpful in terms of focus and coordination of effort. PCHC received a 5 year SAMHSA Grant for their WISH Program (Wellness Integrated Supportive Housing) which will provide 24 units of housing and Navigator services for highly vulnerable individuals.

**DHHS Updates:**  The Department is putting funding forward to respond to the SA crisis and is working with Preble Street to develop an 8 bed pilot program for people in recovery.

During Bob Pulster’s recent visit to Maine he discussed the USICH criteria for “Ending Chronic Homelessness”, which is no more than 3 people in the community, or less than 0.1% of the total homeless population for the community as reported in the last PIT. According to the most recent reports from MaineHousing, Maine has 13 CH individuals. If we can bring that down to 3, we can state that we have solved Chronic Homelessness in Maine. Ten of the individuals on the list are currently at Preble Street’s Florence House Safe Haven program. Because it is a “Safe Haven” project, its numbers are included along with emergency shelter and unsheltered figures in CH reports. Chet wanted to make it very clear that this was not a criticism of that program – it is doing exactly what it was designed to do and doing it well. The average length of stay of these folks is typically very long. One resident has been there 6 years. If there was HUD money in the development of the project, it would still be bound by those covenants, so we would need to get HUD approval to reclassify the beds. This might allow us to remove them from the CH reports, but it does not address their housing needs. Is there something else we can or should be doing to help them move to Permanent Housing – PNMI, PSH, or Hospitalization if needed? We will need to look at each person case by case and find a solution for each one, not try to apply a one-size-fits-all fix. DHHS has vouchers available for each one, but will they use them, and how would we ensure they get the high level of care they need?

Donna Yellen thanked Chet for all the work he and the Department have been doing, and for acknowledging that this is not a criticism of Florence House. When it was developed, the Safe Haven component was intended to be a form of Permanent Housing, but HUD changed the rules along the way and it is now listed with shelters in these reports because residents maintain their homeless (and Chronically Homeless) status in order to potentially qualify for other targeted programs. Some of the clients would probably benefit from a PNMI type situation, but others would likely have trouble transitioning to any other setting. The Safe Haven beds are located on the first floor of Florence House, along with the shelter beds but in a separate area. There are ¾ height walls so each client has a “space” but it is not a room. There are no doors, only curtains, so this would not meet the physical criteria required for PNMI or any sort of voucher program. It was suggested they might transition better if everyone were moved as a group. Donna explained that that would not necessarily help – some of them do not get along very well. They have good relationships with the staff, but not really a sense of community with each other. Maybe this is an issue that MCOC could look at?

**Policy Proposal for Housing People with Substance Use Disorder:** Cullen reviewed the list of key components and took feedback from the group. There was concern that any such program would need to be very flexible. What works for a single individual may not work for a family. We cannot place sex offenders in or even near the same building were we are serving families or DV survivors, even if they are all in a recovery program. There need to be criteria to identify and address issues for specific sub-populations.

This idea started out as just a variation on BRAP. The more layers we add on the harder it will be to get support for it, and the harder it will be for clients to access it. We need something totally new – not just redesigned BRAP, or redirected resources. We need a new type of program and a new way to fund it. The recovery plans need to be as individualized as the situations and circumstances of each individual client, and need to focus on their safety, and meeting their needs. Recovery is a process, often long term, some people enter recover up to 14 times over the course of many years. We need to look at all the related costs – detox, treatment, services, etc. - not just the housing component, and compare that to the ‘cost’ of someone with SUD being on the street. As for the 30% for rent – most of these folks will have no income when they sign up. We need to focus on the housing side and let the opioid task force work on the services that will be needed. MOTION to accept the changes outlined today. PASSED. SHC will try to get this language into a future LD.

**MaineHousing Updates:** Cullen welcomed Peter Merrill, MaineHousing’s Interim Director now that John Gallagher has retired. Introductions were made around the table and Cullen gave a brief summary of SHC history, purpose, and current goals. Peter shared some of his thought about the need for services to address the opioid crisis, changes in the Federal Budget, and MaineHousing’s role in helping to end homelessness.

-The STEP reports are still being put together and will be ready by next month’s SHC meeting. SHC is looking for information on the length of time people are in the program, the number of STEP clients who return to homeless, and other outcomes such as how many end up getting BRAP, Section 8, or other subsidies, vs the number who are actually able to pay their own rent upon completion. Also, how do VI-SPDAT scores line up with getting into STEP and with where people end up.

-Discussion of the MaineHousing Action Plan was tabled, as Dan Brennan was not able to join us today.

**Next Press Release Topic:** The last press release came out Dec 29th. Rob and Josh helped with the final version. Feedback - It was good to see something about homelessness with a positive perspective. Our next release should come out in March. If legislative results are good we could talk about that. What about something sooner that would call attention to the bills in the legislature before they go to vote – maybe drum up some public support? Talk about cost savings, quality of life, and community involvement. Again, the emphasis should be on developing new resources, not redirecting existing ones. What about rotating the name of the author - nothing against the good work Cullen has done, but to show the depth and breadth of SHC membership? Members noted that some organizations have internal barriers to attaching names to press releases or opinion pieces. What about some success stories of people who have achieved housing stability? This could be a good way to work in both the recovery and the cost savings angles, as well as the need for more support.

**Populations:**

**Youth:** Every three years, programs funded byFYSB (Family and Youth Service Bureau) and RHY (Runaway and Homeless Youth) get reviewed. All three such programs in Maine (New Beginnings, Preble Street, and Shaw House) were visited last year and have been told they are out of compliance because their shelters house youth under 18 in the same facility as youth 18 to 21. This was allowable at the time the programs applied for funding but FYSB apparently changed the criteria. The Maine programs appealed the finding and were told they would need to open separate facilities if they want to continue to serve both populations. They are appealing again. The rule says that ‘Basic Center’ programs can serve the broader age range, if their state regulations allow it. Maine’s do (Maine law actually goes up to 24 yrs old). MOTION that SHC support a letter to our delegation asking for clarification of, or a change to, the FYSB policies that would allow youth service providers in Maine to serve youth under 18 and youth 18 to 21 in the same facility. PASSED. Rob pointed out that this would impact adult shelters too, since any 18 to 21 year olds not able to stay at one of these three programs would likely end up at an adult shelter.

-New Beginnings is participating in the “100 Day Challenge” in Franklin County to try to house 55 youth who have been identified as homeless in that area. There will be an online dashboard available on the 100 Day Challenge website to track progress on the effort.

-KBH hopes to have information next month from the Chapin Hall Homeless Voices for Youth Count.

**DV:** Safe Voices is working with MaineHousing and DHHS to develop a 6 bed Safe House for single adult victims of trafficking in Androscoggin County.

**Families:** Don Lynch from FACT (Families and Children Together) in Bangor has been working closely with Josh and Boyd as they step in to provide services to homeless families in that area. They are hoping to develop a physical shelter eventually, but for now they have applied for service only ESG funding through MaineHousing to provide services as a shelter without walls. FACT has been providing services like this for 25 years. They were recently certified as a sanctuary provider, they use trauma informed models, and they are very interested in working with the children of these families to prevent ongoing/future negative impacts of homelessness. Josh added that Coordinated Entry will be so important to this effort in order to establish that there really is a need in the Bangor area.

**Single Adults:**

**Veterans:** The Homeless Veterans By-Name list was at 108 as of November. 37 of them are not eligible for VA Heathcare; 33 are in GDP Programs; 19 have VASH vouchers but have not leased up yet; 43 are connected to SSVF; 28 are Chronically Homeless; and 32 do not have a housing plan in place yet. (these categories are not mutually exclusive – someone may be counted in more than one).

-On January 31st there will be a statewide community meeting of the MCOC Maine HVAC committee from 3:00 to 4:30 at the Bangor Savings building on Western Ave in Augusta to examine “The Status of Veteran Homelessness in Maine”

-One of the Veterans served by Preble Street has been invited to DC to talk at a forum on Veteran’s and Hunger, specifically in regard to the SNAP program and time limits.

**Age 55+ and Medically Compromised:** nothing new

**Substance Use Disorder**: covered above

**Review of 2017 Goals:** -We defined Functional Zero for Maine.

-We did provide an annual report to the legislature, but it is basically just of list of meeting dates, and how many people attended – is does not provide any information about what was discussed or accomplished. Probably best to wait until we have a new administration before we propose making changes to this.

-What can we do to become more structured and accountable?

- Improve attendance? It has been better, overall, but still not consistent.

-Make SHC part of any homeless dialogue - ongoing

-The Blueprint, 1115 waiver, and other efforts involving DHHS – ongoing

What would the group like to focus on for 2018?

* Develop 2 reports; one for the legislature according to their requirements, and one for us/public consumption. If we tie Accountability into the report it will lend credibility to our efforts. We do so much, it would be good to assemble it all in one place and share it.
* We also need to improve our website. More SHC focus. More user friendly.
* **2018 Goals**: Let’s focus on just a few big items – not try to do everything all at once
  + The Recovery Subsidy
  + Access to Health Insurance
  + Ending Chronic Homelessness in Maine

**The Prioritization Chart:** A version of the Chart was rushed through the approval process so that it could be submitted at part of the 2017 CoC NOFA, but we knew it would need to be revisited soon. Suggestions:

For the Shelter Plus Care beds, change “Dedicated” to “Prioritized” to match the language now being used.

All the numbers need to be updated – or removed. They change all the time, but they are helpful to establish the level of need for each group – it’s a snapshot. We can drop the ‘Process’ column – it does not provide enough information to be helpful. Youth do not appear until the 4th row down, aren’t Youth a priority population? Yes, but this chart is not saying one population is more important that another, it is simply a tool to help target the most appropriate resources to those who need them. Many Youth Providers do not like the VI-SPDAT. Is there another tool that could be used? There is a Youth specific version. And it’s in HMIS. Any change would need to be approved on several levels.

**Other Business/Announcements:** Josh suggested that anyone who was ever CH or a LTS should retain that status for eligibility. CH is a HUD definition and specifies a timeframe. We can change LTS though.

-HVJ is working to develop a Homeless Bill of Rights – send them any thoughts or suggestions.

**Next Meeting: February 13, 2018**