**Statewide Homeless Council**

**May 8, 2018**

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

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

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

**Members:** Cullen Ryan (RII), Melanie LaMore Gagnon (RII), Chet Barnes (DHHS-SAMHS), Rob Parritt (RI), Bill Higgins (RI), Elizabeth Szatkowski (RI), Dan Brennan (MaineHousing), Josh D’Alessio (RIII), Donna Kelley (RII), Boyd Kronholm (RIII)

Members not able to attend: David McClusky (RIII)

**Guests:** Donna Yellen (Preble Street), Alley Smith (Veterans, Inc.), Fran Walsh (Families and Children Together), Allison Gallagher (MaineHousing), Ginny Dill (Shalom House), Mary Francis Bartlett (City of Augusta), Cindy Namer (MaineHousing), Cheryl Harkins (HVJ), Ed Jordan (Citizen), Don Lynch (Families and Children Together), Susie Whittington (VA Togus), Mary LaRoche (DOC), Alice Preble (DHHS OCFS)

**Minutes:** Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing)

**Minutes** of April 10, 2018 were reviewed and approved as submitted.

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

**Federal:**  The “Farm Bill” proposal would cut SNAP benefits and impose work requirements. The FY18 Budget Omnibus does have some improvements – sadly, bringing us back up to about 2009 levels. HUD Secretary Ben Carson’s proposal to increase tenant portions of rents and minimum tenant portions could destabilize many households, potentially doubling current levels of homelessness.

**State:** The Governor’s veto of LD1771 – An Act to Stabilize Vulnerable Families, LD 1892 – An Act to Clarify The Prescribing and Dispensing of Naloxone Hydrochloride by Pharmacists, and LD 1740 – An Act to Establish the Crimes of Criminal Forced Labor and Aggravated Criminal Forced Labor - were overridden, but the legislature adjourned, leaving some 100 bills on the table, many with bipartisan support.

**MOTION:** SHC send a letter to the Legislature recommending they reconvene for a special session to address the remaining bills. Seconded and **PASSED.** Cullen will draft and send the letter.

-The PBS News Hour was recently in Maine. We now have the 3rd highest levels of hunger & food insecurity in the county, due in large part to SNAP cuts, similar to what the federal government is considering.

**Continuum Updates:** Coordinated Entry is now up and running. Oxford Street Shelter has implemented it with no major issues or increased work load so far. They are collecting information on paper forms for next day data entry. There are still CE trainings scheduled for the next R2 and R3 HC meetings. Still working on CE Policies and Procedures document. The NOFA is likely to be out soon – possibly next month – and the CoC is looking for more people to actively participate in that process.

**RHC’s:** All three RHC meetings were/will be focused on Coordinated Entry Training.

**LTS:**  Portland now has 6 lists with ‘manageable’ numbers. The 6th started with about 80 people and is already down to about 40. Stability in housing is at 96.5%. Bangor currently has 6, some only just having reached the 180-day mark. All have vouchers or are on wait lists for housing. Tedford has started a list.

PCHC has incorporated the LTS concept into their WISH initiative, and they are working on their Vivitrol program, Opioid Health Homes, and Affordable Housing Work Group, developing a report to submit to the City Council. Even though LTS numbers are down, the initiative continues to bring attention and energy to homeless efforts in the area.

**DHHS Updates:**  CoC S+C Contracts are now in place. A new RFP for PATH will be issued soon. Still working to develop a post-treatment housing component for recovery populations. BRAP will still need to focus on serving Priority 1 clients, even if the proposed tenant rent changes do not go onto effect, because they still need to bring the overall budget back to sustainable levels. The proposal has brought a lot of attention to the program, which has given DHHS the opportunity to educate members of the legislature.

-Chet and Donna will be conducting a national webinar this afternoon promoting PATH as a best practice.

-OCFS is working with TA and developing an RFP for supports for Youth experiencing homelessness. They are hoping or an October release with projects starting up in July of 2019.

-There are 12 new PNMI beds coming to Bangor, through OHI, and more are in the works for Portland and Biddeford. Anyone can take an online training to administer the ANSA, but the LOCUS is more involved.

**Prioritization Chart:** This was initially developed by the SHC but has since been adopted by the CoC, which means it now has to incorporate some HUD specific elements in order to meet CoC requirements. Cullen has incorporated changes and suggestions from SHC and others into the version presented here today, and has included a one page “How to use this chart” set of instruction to help people who may not be familiar with the concept, background, and lingo. Several more suggestions were made at today’s meeting, including additions to the definitions ‘key’ at the bottom of the chart, clarifying that STEP and HTS are not funded by ESHAP, and changing “Bednights” to “Length of Time Homeless” so it is clear that the chart also applies to people who are unsheltered. There was a **MOTION** to accept this 2018 version of the Chart and Instructions – with the changes agreed to here today. Seconded and **PASSED.**

**MaineHousing Updates:** Dan announced that Lauren Bustard will now be the Director of Programs at MaineHousing, overseeing HCV, EHS, and Homeless Initiatives, among other duties, and Allison Gallagher will now be Director of the HCV Department. MaineHousing is drafting the next NHTF RFP. There will be about $3M available for housing development for homeless and other special needs populations. We are expecting about a $1.5M increase to FedHOME this year. There will be a webinar later today on the new 811 NOFA, MaineHousing will be applying for that as well. PIT numbers have been submitted to HUD and we are working on the MaineHousing PIT Report. The HUD submission is just the numbers, whereas the MaineHousing version includes charts and graphs and some analysis. (It was suggested that PIT is not an ideal to measure homelessness. Even Norm Suchar from HUD acknowledged this in a recent listening session with CoC representatives in Boston, but he also pointed out that politicians and the media love the PIT – it is an event, it is made for sound bites, and it is a concept that is easy to explain, so were stuck with it for now.) No major changes to MaineHousing HCV. We did take a big hit on admin amounts last year because HUD bases the amount on where the most vouchers are located, which for MaineHousing is in Oxford County, which has the lowest admin rate in the state. Changes to way admin is calculated on billable ports – vouchers that move from one jurisdiction to another – also resulted in losses for MaineHousing. It was mentioned that having one centralized Section 8 wait list for the state, while it sounds good in theory, can create a barrier for folks with certain issues, like frequent relocation, or trouble remembering appointments or deadlines. Can there be some sort of accommodation to allow worker to be more involved? Dan said he would be happy to bring such concerns to the PHA directors group if someone could provide him a list of bullet points. Donna and Mary will draw one up.

**DV funding through the CoC:** The next CoC NOFA will include funding specifically for DV providers for RRH, CE, and/or Services. We do not have a lot of details on this yet – a lot will depend on exactly how it is structured in the NOFA, but certainly something we should be prepared to apply for.

**SUD Subsidy:** Representative Shana Bellows put forth a bill to develop Recovery Housing. If funding becomes available, what sort of housing would we develop? A lot would depend on the availability of other necessary components. DHHS is exploring national best practice models. The National Association of Recovery Residences has models available, but they are not a certifying entity. There are other programs that do include certification. There are 4 popular models: Peer Run, Monitored, Supervised, and Clinical. The vast majority of recovery residences are peer/volunteer run, and they are typically not well regulated. We should make sure any state funding is tied to some level of licensing or certification. How do we make vouchers work in situations where the client might only be renting a room, for an unspecified amount of time? Leases and other ‘requirements’ that come with most vouchers will create a lot of barriers for this population. For Mental Health clients, DHHS prioritizes the individual, not the project. Client choice is important. We could target subsidy to those who have been through a treatment program, so they do not end up back at a shelter. Donna Kelly mentioned that agencies used to be able to lease ‘HUD Homes’ (properties that were seized or foreclosed on) for $1, and sub-lease them as congregate housing. Maybe something similar could be done again. Sometimes a group setting, shared living, is more supportive than being alone in a scattered site apartment. Someone who was homeless when they entered treatment would likely still qualify as homeless at exit, so they would be able to access homeless housing projects. Some subsidies could be used for ‘group living’ situations if folks agree to live as a ‘household’. Dan said he would like to meet with providers who are working with this population to find out more about exactly what it is people need, and what really works for them. Mary, Donna, Rob, Josh, and Joe McNally (volunteered in absentia) will set up a meeting with Dan.

Dan also suggested that SHC agendas and meetings can sometimes feel redundant, covering the same topics over and over without result. It is important to follow up on some things, but often there is nothing new in a particular area. This lead to a thoughtful discussion, which continued even after Dan had to leave the meeting. Open ended discussions can often lead to new and creative solutions – people can bounce ideas off each other without having to focus on immediately finding just one right answer. These meetings are very long, and much of the time is spent going over updates or information from other meeting that many of the members present attended. Much of that sort of information is also available for people to read outside of SHC. This group was originally created to advise the Governor and the Legislature, and in the early days that was an important part of the work. Maybe the next administration will re-establish that connection. We should look at the legislative language again – maybe we could make some suggestions there that could re-frame things. Is there any funding, maybe through MaineHousing, that could help facilitate some sort of workshop for SHC to reexamine our structure, vision, the Plan, etc.? People do spend a full day a month at these meetings, not to mention all the work that Cullen, Scott, and other do in between the meetings. Cullen said he appreciates all the feedback. We want SHC to be purposeful, productive, and worthwhile for all.

**Possible Press Release Topics:**

**Populations:**

**Veterans:** The By-Name-List is up to 143 now, from 110 back in October. They are now using HMIS, so more data is being recorded, but it also means anyone who identifies as a veteran gets added to the list, even if they only spend one night at the shelter. The VA requires that once a veteran is identified, they stay on the list for 90 days, so that may be part of the reason for the increased numbers. There were 31 Chronically Homeless Veterans on the list in October. This is now down to just 13. The Cabin in the Woods will be opening soon. Photos are posted on the MaineHousing Facebook page. MaineHousing’s HMIS Team are working with the new VASH PHS providers to ensure they are able to utilize their new vouchers quickly. James Gagne will be leaving Preble Street’s Veteran’s Housing Services at the end of the month. James has done great things for the veterans he has worked with and as chair of the Coordinate Entry Committee. He will be missed.

**Families:** Portland is still seeing more families than they can accommodate at the shelter, and more families are accessing meals at Preble Street every day. Most of the families at the city shelter are immigrants/refugees and therefore not eligible for federally funded housing programs. Lewiston/Auburn also has a large immigrant/refugee population, and extremely limited family shelter options and fewer resources than Portland – how do they handle things? What about other cities across the country? In Bangor FACT is getting lots of calls from families that do not meet the stricter HUD definition because they are either double up or in substandard housing. Even if they get a family that falls under the definition, there is no family shelter in Bangor, and the closest ones, HOME, Inc. and Emmaus, have waiting lists just to get into shelter. Many of them might qualify for Shelter Plus Care or other subsidies but they need the documentation/verification of homelessness to get an application. There are no other vouchers available.

**Youth:** YHDP Application was submitted!

**DV:** CoC funding, as mentioned earlier. Still working on the new database. Trainings on Danger Assessment.

**Single Adults:** MaineHousing’s Chronic Homeless numbers from HMIS seem very high.This may be due to the number of ‘self-reported’ CH records. The ‘calculated’ CH number is lower. We need to clarify this.

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

**Substance Use Disorder**: See above

**Possible Press Release Topics:** Cost of Homelessness, Updated. Dispelling the myth that helping immigrants costs too much. The impact of taking away benefits and safety net programs. Would be good to counter recent Portland Press herald story. Editorials are already starting to point out that the situation is the result of many years of cuts to supports.

**Other Business/Announcements:** As mentioned briefly earlier,HUD recently hosted a “Listening Session” with Norm Suchar for New England CoCs. Several folks from Maine attended and we had a chance to ask some questions related to improving and streamlining the CoC process. Specifically, we asked about multi-year funding (not likely, due to annual federal budget issues); year-long lease requirements as a barrier, death of clients in housing negatively impacting data; CH methodology is flawed, especially allowing for self-reported CH status. Norm was not able to answer everything at the time, but seemed open to looking into these, and concerns raised by other CoCs.

**Next Meeting: June 12, 2018**