**Statewide Homeless Council**

**February 12, 2019**

**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), Josh D’Alessio (RIII), David McClusky (RIII), Donna Yellen (RI), Tracey Hair (RIII), Chet Barnes (DHHS-SAMHS), Donna Kelley (RII), Lauren Bustard (MaineHousing)

Members not able to attend: Cheryl Harkins (RI), Elizabeth Szatkowski (R1), Elise Johansen (RII).

**Guests:** Ginny Dill (Shalom House), Meaghan Void (City of Portland, OSS), Christi Staples (CSH), Boyd Kronholm (BAHS), Arwen Agee (VA), Rich Hooks Wayman (VOA), Alice Preble (DHHS-OCFS), Tia Knowlton-Basford (MaineHousing), Brandi Farrington (KBH), Dave MacLean (City of Portland), Mary Beth Twomey (TOA).

**Minutes:** Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing)

**Minutes** from December were approved at the January Retreat. Notes and a Summary from the retreat were posted, but as these are not ‘minutes’ of a regular meeting, no vote was required.

**State and Federal updates:**

**Federal: Continuing Resolution–** On Friday 1/25 Congress passed and the President signed a “clean” short-term CR, funding the government until 2/15, ending the longest government shutdown in history.

**FY19 THUD Appropriations bill -**The House and Senate have come to agreement on the FY 19 T-HUD bill, which would provide approximately $1.3 billion more funding for HUD programs vs. the FY 18 enacted funding. However, it still must be passed in Congress and signed by the President

**Ending Homelessness Act of 2019** **–**to provide a path to end homelessness in the United States, and for other purposes, by;

* Authorize $1 billion between 2020 and 2024 to address the unmet needs of homeless populations
* Authorize $500 million for special purpose rental assistance for persons and households who are homeless
* Authorize $100 million to provide outreach services for persons and households who are homeless or formerly homeless
* Authorize $1 billion in 2019 for the National Housing Trust Fund and $50 million dedicated for project-based voucher assistance or project-based rental assistance prioritizing persons and households who are homeless
* Authorize $20 million in McKinney-Vento funding for technical assistance to align health and housing systems
* Permanently authorize appropriations for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants Act
* Permanently reauthorize USICH

H.R. 508: Trafficking Victims Housing Act of 2019

H.R. 232: Landlord Accountability Act of 2019

H.R. 715: To amend section 428 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to provide incentives to grantees under the Continuum of Care program to re-house all former members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes

S. 8: Preserving Our Commitment to Homeless Veterans Act –

**State:** Governor Mills was sworn into office on 1/2/19. She has pulled Maine out of its approved Section 1115 Medicaid waiver that would have imposed work requirements on Medicaid recipients, as well as impose monthly premiums.

**Bills of note:**

* LD 48, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Invest in Housing for Persons Who Are Homeless
* LD 184 – An Act To Amend the Veterans' Homelessness Prevention Coordination Program
* LD 459, An Act To Include Homelessness in the Laws Governing Emergency General Assistance
* LD 447, An Act Regarding the Substance Abuse Disorder Continuum of Care
* LD 80. An Act To Create the Department of Substance Use Disorder Services
* LD 195, An Act To Continue MaineCare Coverage for Parents During the Rehabilitation and Reunification Process
* LD 510, An Act To Authorize Funding for Transitional Housing for Women Veterans and Their Families
* LD 613, Resolve, Concerning the Adoption of Rules To Carry Out the Purpose of the Bridging Rental Assistance Program –
* LD 501, An Act To Provide Funding for the Homeless Veterans Center in Caribou
* LD 578, To Create a Pilot Program to Assist the Transition to Recovery of Persons Suffering from Opioid Use Disorder
* LD 46, An Act to Establish a Substance Use Disorder Clinic at the Cumberland County Jail

Cullen shared DRAFT Letters of Support regarding LD 48 and LD 195, as well as a brief “Introduction to the Statewide Homeless Council”. There was a **MOTION** that SHC send a letter to support LD 195. **PASSED**. Before we got to the other letters it was suggested that SHC should have its own letterhead for such things (the DRAFTs were on CHOM letterhead). It was suggested SHC could have a standing policy to always weigh in on proposals that would impact the Plan – authorizing the Policy Committee to do so. Several members were not comfortable with this, given that Policy Committee meetings are often not well attended. SHC is specifically tasked with being advisory to the Governor, Legislature and so on, and should not delegate that responsibility to a sub-committee. The Policy committee should continue to make recommendations for the SHC to vote on – if need be, voting can be done electronically between meetings in the interest of time.

**MCOC Updates:** All Renewal Applications that were included in our most recent NOFA submission have been approved and awarded funding. Only 2 of the 7 New Project proposals were approved. One is for a CHOM Bricks and Mortar project to create 4-1BR units for CH/LTS in Penobscot County. The other is for the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence to hire a staff position to assist with their DV specific Coordinate Entry process. HUD has not yet released any De-briefing or Scoring information. Continuum Level Registration for the FY2019 NOFA has already begun.

**Regional Homeless Councils:** **R1**: Elizabeth Szatkowski has changed jobs and resigned as a Region 1 Representative to SHC. Cullen and other members expressed their appreciation for Elizabeth’s many years of service. Discussion at the R1 meeting included feedback from the SHC Retreat, better coordination with Public Health, and setting up trainings on the use of Narcan and safe needle disposal. **R2**: talked about issues in the Lewiston area where there is no real family shelter. Chris Bicknell has stepped down as a Region 2 Chair – Alice Preble will assuming that role. R3: only 3 people attended the last meeting. There was an article in the BDN saying Maine is close to ending long term homelessness. Despite that, Josh said the length of time people are remaining homeless in Bangor is increasing and the warming center is full every night. Tracy said HOME Inc’s Women’s shelter is full, which is very unusual, and they have opened up their classroom space for people to stay there. The PIT numbers in Bangor were the highest they have been in years, and Hope House is seeing more and more people entering with SUD – specifically opioids.

**Long Term Stayer Updates:** Bangor is at 7 – all of them have vouchers or other housing lined up. Brunswick has 4 individuals and 1 family. Portland has started list number 8 – some on it began at less than 180 days. They anticipate the LTS numbers will be up this year due the 12 month freeze of BRAP and the general lack of affordable housing options in the area; people with vouchers cannot find units.

**Affordable Housing:** Do we have any data to show how much people on fixed incomes struggle to find/maintain housing? Can this be part of a larger affordable housing effort, working with advocates for elderly and others? Christi suggested this be addressed in the state’s QAP. There are about 10,000 LIHTC units in Maine, and although they accept vouchers, they tend not to welcome homeless populations. The QAP only offers 2 points for including a homelessness preference, but projects often set other criteria and restrictions in their tenant selection plans that create huge barriers. Connecticut offers 5 points. Still not a lot on a 100 point scale, but this is a very competitive process, and ‘winners’ typically score in the 50s, so 5 points can make a huge difference. Building relationships with landlords and owners is important so they know that shelter navigators are a resource for them, not just for the tenants. Bangor shelters are talking with Code Enforcement about things like required number of parking spaces, restrictions on in-law units and other rules that make it more difficult to develop housing in town. **MOTION**: SHC will propose that Maine seek TA on using Medicaid for Housing Supports and Tenancy Services. **PASSED**. Josh, Rich, Donna Y., Lauren and Cullen will look into this and report out by end of month. The Office of MaineCare Services will need to complete the paperwork involved. Cullen will be meeting with Commissioner Lambrew on Friday and will bring this idea to her. Chet just came from the MaineHousing QAP meeting. There was a lot of discussion around the size and locations of new units – single vs family, urban vs rural. In years past, the cost per unit was a big factor, they did not look at cost per square foot – this really skewed things in favor of developing lots of 1BR units, rather than larger 2 & 3 BR units.

**MaineHousing Updates:** Looking at the new state budget, the State HOME fund appears to be down but overall shelter funding is secure. The new Homeless Initiatives Director will be announced soon.

**DHHS** -**OCFS:** Lots of changes happening.Ellissa Winn will be the acting director of OCFS until the position is filled. Contracts for Community Partnerships for Protecting Children have been extended until June. A proposal for the state to opt in to the Family First Prevention Service Act would need to be incorporated into the state plan by April. OCFS contracted with a research firm to look at child welfare and children’s behavioral health services in Maine – the report is now out.

**DHHS –SAMHS:** The Governor has signed an executive order to expand the state’s response to the opioid crisis. It includes $35K to purchase and distribute Narcan to direct staff – EMS, Police, PATH, Shelter staff – and to hire and train 250 Recovery Coaches who will reach out to anyone who has received Narcan and try to get them into treatment ASAP. There will also be MAT – Medically Assisted Treatment – provided at jails, and $5M over 2020/2021 targeting reimbursement for treatment programs. Josh has worked with Penobscot County Jail for a couple years with those seeking treatment and says the recovery coach model is very successful.

**-PATH**- Three providers have been selected, one for each Region: The Opportunity Alliance, Kennebec Behavioral Health, and Community Health and Counseling Services. They hope to have the contracts in place soon, which will be good for 4 years. Chat hopes to incorporate cross-training with Navigators.

**-BRAP-** Serving eligible Re-entry clients from DOC is now a BRAP priority, though they still need to work out how exactly to best facilitate helping tenants find and select units prior to their release.

-**PNMI**-Another 20 beds will on line soon and 60 more are in the works in the coming months.

Chet met with a person from the CDC in Region 1, and they attended the R1HC meeting. Now the Region 3 CDC is interested in connecting to R3HC.

**Population discussions:**

**Single Adults:** Maine Prison Re-Entry will be proposing a bill for housing reentry populations.

**Families:** The Portland Family Shelter is still full. They are serving a very specific demographic, mostly asylum seekers, often with language barriers, who do not qualify for any forms of federal assistance. Not only is the shelter itself full, the City is using the Gym at the Salvation Army as an overnight warming center, averaging another 40+ people each night, up to 99 at one point. The City helps with GA when possible, but there is gap – they can only cover units in the city, and there are fewer and fewer available.

**Veterans:** Thereare currently 112 veterans on the By-Name-List, 11 of them CH, and the average time from identification to housing is 135 days. In the last 90 days there have been 60 vets housed, and 60 added to the list. HVAC recently held their second Annual meeting – it was well attended. Preble Street is sending out invitations for a 3-day training focused on a combination of diversion and rapid resolutions for veteran’s homelessness to be held the week of Memorial Day

**Youth:**  Big thanks to Alice for regularly attending SHC now – the state needs to focus on youth homelessness to prevent them from ending up in the adult homeless system. There are reports of more than 20 youth ‘couch surfing’ in the Ellsworth area, and as many as 80 to 90 in the Biddeford area. MaineHousing’s Gaps and Needs Analysis will be looking at youth, especially in rural areas. We need to get School Liaisons to SHC and RHC meetings. FISBY funding does not want to cover youth who are involved with DHHS – assuming those youth have access to DHHS resources. In Maine, many youth with DHHS involvement still end up at shelters, or unsheltered. A DHHS RFP for Youth Experiencing Homelessness is moving forward.

**DV:** No update.

**The Retreat:** Detailed Notes and a short Summary of the Retreat were posted yesterday. Cullen had three big ‘take-aways’: 1) Need more and better two-way communications between the SHC and RHCs. 2) the Blueprint for DHHS had some positive results – now it’s time to do the same for other agencies – starting with DOC. It’s not unusual for the Portland LTS group to be just about ready to house someone, only to find out they are now incarcerated, and everything stops and has to start all over again when they are released. 3) We need an “SHC Elevator Speech” – something short and to the point to get our message out there.

Other thoughts from those who attended: Overall, the mood was very optimistic – people feel the new Governor/administration will work with us and do good things. Good to be able to conceptualize a more multi-pronged approach, especially regarding prevention, advocacy, and the system as a whole. We need to reestablish the connection between SHC and the Governor’s office and Legislature. Cullen has found that there are hundreds of groups out there that the previous administration ignored and neglected to the point where many simply stopped functioning. Need to develop ‘Blueprints’ for Health Care systems, OADS, Adult Protective, Juvenile Justice, Foster Care, DOE and Liaisons. We need a ‘One Pager’ – Facts and data, broken out by Region, that we can hand to new legislators and others to help them quickly get up to speed on things. Rich suggested we should pick the top 5 bills that are likely to have the biggest impact on homelessness and focus on those – prioritize our efforts – not try to do tackle everything all at once. Individual agencies can still promote and support their own agenda, their own population, but SHC needs to focus on the areas we all agree on. Cullen will bring a list of Bills next month for the group to review and pick the top 5 to focus on. One Act of Legislation saying facilities cannot discharge to homelessness would have a huge impact. The most important idea to focus discussions right now is cost savings – not how much something will cost but how much it will save – including a time frame for ‘return on investment’. The CDC just did a study on the impact of homelessness on health – let’s tie into that. We can also begin to develop partnerships with DOC, DOE and Health care agencies first, and then work on others. Christi said there are lots of examples we can look at – systems mapping, charrettes, other approaches she has worked with specifically around healthcare and homelessness. For example, looking at the top 10% of healthcare users and compare that to HMIS data to identify crossover. We need info graphics on best practices from all over the country. Nationally there is a lot being done to connect healthcare and housing right now – some hospitals are even investing in their own housing programs or invest capitol in housing development. We need to identify the ‘Hot Spots’, the Tipping Points.

**Press Release:** What about the “Fact Sheet”?

**Other Business:** Thoughts on improving SHC meetings? More verbs – who is doing what – discussion is important but action gets things done. We need to create a structure that will maximize our impact, bring new partners to the table, take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves. We need to make it less about getting ‘them’ to listen to us and work on how we can better listen to ‘them’ – the legislature, new partners, etc. – find out what they need and figure out how we can help them get it.

**Next meeting will be March 12, 2019**