**MAINE STATEWIDE HOMELESS COUNCIL**

**April 14, 2020**

**Minutes2**

**9:30-11:30**

**Virtual Location:** <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/352415877> and/or call 1(646)749-3122, Passcode 352-415-877

**Members:** Stephanie Primm (KCHC, SHC Chair), Tracey Hair (HOME, Inc., RIII), Donna Kelley (WCAP, RII), Cullen Ryan (CHOM, RII), Chet Barnes (SAMHS), Cheryl Harkins (HVJ, RI), David McCluskey(Shaw House, RIII), Donna Yellen (Preble Street, RI), Ginny Dill (Shalom, RI), Josh D’Alessio (PCHC, RIII)

**Guests:** Betty LaBua (MaineHousing), Tracy Allen (KBH), Kelsey Brown (HUD), Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing), Rich Hooks Wayman (VOA), Katie Spencer White (MMHS), Alice Preble, (DHHS/OCFS), Bill Higgins (Homeless Advocacy for All), Jenny Stasio (TTD), Heather Zimmerman

(Preble Street), Boyd Kronholm BAHS), Aaron Geyer (COP), Jared Greeley (MVBS), Melanie Buber (HSA), Rob Liscord (MEJP), Teague Morris (Senator King’s Office), Rachael Jackson-Hodgdon (Creative Energy LLC)

**Minutes:** Betty LaBua (MaineHousing) and Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing)

**Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from the council meeting held on March 10, 2020 were approved.

**COVID19 Urgent Issues:**

* **Shelter and Isolation Capacity:** Time was dedicated and frustrated voices were heard concerning the rapidly growing demand for additional isolation space and shelter capacities. Major issues discussed were the difficulties in adhering to the important CDC guidelines in congregate living spaces, shelters at capacity coupled with an escalation of people seeking shelter, increased pressures on shelters to be the responsible face of a public health crisis, inadequate isolation/quarantine space for either healthy or sick guests and concerns with the ability to provide adequate housing for newly released inmates. Stephanie mentioned a new RFP has been released by MSHA for blocks of hotel/motel rooms as one answer in addressing the necessity to quarantine ill, exposed, and well people seeking shelter. Wellness Shelters, similar to the Sullivan Shelter in Portland will be opening in Lewiston and Presque Isle to help support social distancing and slow the spread of COVID-19. FEMA funding is available, effective ways to communicate the varying statewide needs for this funding and best ways to learn how to obtain the funding will continue to be explored.
* **PPE Challenges:** The challenges ensued in securing sufficient amounts of gloves, face masks and hand sanitizer continue to take both an emotional and physical toll on shelter staff. The 2020 COVID-19 Homeless Provider Grant is available to shelters to assist with the costs associated with the pandemic that are beyond the scope of the provider’s operating budget. There is a link to the application on the Maine Homeless Planning website.
* **General Assistance Barriers:** SomeG.A. Offices are having difficulty understanding the breadth of COVID-19 sheltering provisions. The struggles shelters are experiencing with General Assistance will be discussed further at the Shelter Managers meeting being held on April 16, 2020.
* **Basic Toileting and Sanitation:** Lack of accessibility to basic hygiene for people experiencing homeless compounded by the CDC guidelines in combating the spread of COVID-19 is exacerbating the problem of being able to stay healthy. The need for placing port-a-potties and sanitation stations near shelters and encampments should be addressed as a public health concern.

**COVID Updates:**

Denise Lord, representing MSHA, updated the council and fielded questions from attendees.

The RFP issued to secure lodging in identified hot spots was explained. Statewide contracts have

been signed with hotel chains. Denise asked for shelters to aggregate the current and future needs for people seeking shelter. The RFP secures lodging, food and laundry. Other types of services such as transportation are being developed. Small chains in rural areas can be utilized. The D.O.C. is making masks and will distribute them to homeless shelters.

**Progress and Pending Opportunities:**

* **BRAP Income Requirements:** The 51% income burden has made it increasingly difficult for individuals to obtain and maintain stable, affordable housing. Recognizing these challenges, which have come into even greater focus in the face of COVID-19, BRAP will transition to a 40% income contribution requirement beginning May 1, 2020.
* **Increased Supportive Sustainable Housing:** The pandemic is highlighting the housing crisis across the state of Maine. Long term planning to address the disparities causing the lack of affordable housing will be on the agenda for May’s meeting. Supportive Housing is one of the work groups formed as a result of the February retreat. The four Workgroups will be added to May’s agenda.

**Next Meeting:**

**Tuesday, April 12, 2020, 9:30-12:30**

* Maine Statewide Homeless Council | c/o MaineHousing | 353 Water Street | Augusta, ME 04333

*Developing policies and strategies so that everyone is pushing in the same direction to end and prevent homelessness in Maine.*