**Statewide Homeless Council**

October 27, 2015

Augusta, ME

**Council Members Present:** Wes Phinney, Cullen Ryan, Elizabeth Szatkowski, Donna Kelley, Done Harden, Josh D’Alessio, Dave McCluskey

**Council Members Not Present**: John Gallagher, Sheldon Wheeler, Jon Bradley

**Guests:** Carol Kulesza, William Higgins, Rob Parritt, Leah Bruns, Mary Francis Bartlett, Mike Merrill, Ginny Dill, Kristen Jiorle

**Minutes:** Scott Tibbitts

**Review of Minutes:** September Minutes approved as submitted

**Announcements:** Carol Kulesza announced that she is moving to Bedford Mass, where she will continue to work with the VA. Also, there is a Homeless Veteran’s Summit at Togus this Friday.

**Next Meeting:** Due to this month’s SHC meeting having been pushed back, rather than meet again in just a couple weeks, it was proposed that we **cancel the November SHC meeting**. A MOTION was made and PASSED.

**The Augusta Warming Center has lost it’s its space.** They still have the funding and the staff to function, but they need a new location. Any suggestions – please contact Mary Francis Bartlett.

**SHC Membership**: Still Awaiting word, and approval, on the last few nominees.

**Policy Committee**: At the State level, there is nothing new to report. At the Federal level there is a budget deal on the table that would move toward ending some, but not all, of the sequestration cuts, but it is not final. There is also more discussion of raising the debt ceiling.

**Continuum of Care Updates**: The NOFA Applications are due next month. Both Portland and Maine CoC’s have been very busy. They have approved the formation and membership of a Joint Board and have approved and posted Coordinated Entry System (CES) Written Standards and by-laws.

* Carol has asked for an exemption on the 65% Chronically Homeless Veteran Status preference for VASH – there are just not enough documented CH Vets here to meet that.
* There are currently 196 VASH Vouchers in Maine. There is also a new 16 unit PBV Housing Project planned for the Togus campus.
* Both MaineHousing and Portland Housing have agreed that if VASH recipients no longer need the Case Management services of VASH, the HA will convert them to a ‘regular’ HCV, freeing up that VASH voucher for re-use.
* It was asked if CoC’s would consider establishing sub-committees for Veteran’s issues.

**Shelter Director’s Committee:** Meeting again on December 3. Info will be sent out soon.

* Dennis was not able to attend today but did send a couple of questions: What is the total funding amount available? Several figures have been discussed, but it was not clear which one was the final amount. Also, what qualifies as a ‘Homeless Service Provider’? If it is not just Emergency Shelters, what, and how many, other organizations will be able to access these funds?
* From what was discussed at the Shelter Funding Meeting, $3.85 Million is the total that will be distributed according to the 40/40/20 formula under the new homeless rule. The Amount that may be available through the HOME Fund is still not known, but could bring the total up to $4.1 to $5.5 Million.
* The amount each program gets will depend upon their performance, so it some programs do poorly, the ones who do well will actually have more money to distribute. The amount each will get will be a moving target from one distribution to the next.

**SHC Blueprint for DHHS:** The Latest Draft was reviewed and discussed.

* It was suggested the tone of the document needs to be carefully considered – we want buy in and collaboration on this effort. We should not shy away from including statements or information that DHHS may not like, but we do need to be respectful and fair. We want this to open up a dialogue, not be the end of the discussion.
* Some items are very broad, conceptual, value type ideas, others are very specific, more action oriented, nuts and bolts. Maybe we should clarify and group like items together.
* The intro and conclusion could be re-worked a bit, and a few items moved higher up the list to emphasize them as priorities.
* Maybe this should be in more of a ‘White Paper’ format with bullets and narratives, shorter, more effective, impactful, and cohesive.
* Maybe use language like “Members have observed…” and give some examples. For example: If a parent loses custody of their child, they can be dropped from TANF and MaineCare because they are now considered a single adult, BUT they are required to get specific services in order to regain custody, which they now cannot get without MaineCare.
* Many people temporarily lose benefits for a number of reasons – then reapply or provide more info and get them back. There is a lot of time and effort wasted on this back and forth.
* Everything depends on MaineCare, and other services, that it allows recipients to access, such as transportation – MaineCare does not provide transportation, but if you are MaineCre eligible you are also eligible for some types of transportation assistance.
* There are three levels of integration that need to happen: Integration between departments within DHHS, integration of DHHS with other state agencies, and integration of DHHS with other community partners.
* Data is mentioned several times throughout the document, but it needs to be more clearly fleshed out exactly what the data is and what it will be used for – and all those sections should be pulled together.
* Need to integrate MaineHousing into this as well.
* We need to get DHHS to focus on this – and do something with it – not just read it, or not, and go back to business as usual.
* DHHS must, #1, make ending and preventing homelessness a priority, and #2, Make sure people are successful in and integrated with their communities.
* Does SHC need a DHHS Liaison? How do we know if they are following up on this? How would we monitor progress? Even if we could , how would be enforce anything?
* Cullen will, once again, take all the suggestions and feedback from the group and incorporate them into the document. Josh offered to assist.

**Shelter Funding Information**: Rob Parritt and Leah Bruns joined us.

* In regard to Dennis’ first question about the exact amount of funding available – that is still to be determined. They also provided some clarification on his second question about who would be eligible. Any entity who meets the criteria outlined in the program guide would be eligible – and the criteria include that they ‘have provided shelter services for a year or more’. Obviously all of our regular shelters would meet that but there may be other entities who have provided safe homes, or hotel/motel vouchers on an emergency basis that would also qualify.
* Donna pointed out that KBH had a shelter, and would like to again, but it has been closed for over a year, due to lack of funding, so they would not qualify under this criteria.
* In developing the new guide and funding structure, MaineHousing conducted 5 focus group

discussions for various populations: Adults, Families, Teens, DV, and Low Barrier Shelters. They received lots of great feedback and did make some changes based on that information.

* For example, they are customizing some of the performance measures based on existing data, factoring for different populations. We do not want all the goals to be automatic, but they do need to be attainable.
* Also recognizing that Transitional Housing should be an allowable option where appropriate, such as with youth or DV populations.
* MaineHousing planning to finalize and publish the Program Guide and Application with in the next couple of days. This will also be posted on the website. There will be two days of REQUIRED training in Augusta on December 3 and 4, for ALL agencies receiving funding.
* The ideas and practices in this new initiative and on the CAARES Map are cutting edge. MaineHousing was invited to present this at HUD conference in Miami recently and it was extremely well received.
* MaineHousing is also conducting ESG Inspections of all Shelters – hope to have them all done by the end of the year.
* CoC’s need to work on ESG Monitoring – other than what MaineHousing looks at, what should the CoC’s be looking at? Some of the new performance measure will line up with this effort. Which programs are discharging clients to permanent housing is important, but which ones are not doing is also important and that is where the CoC may want to step in and offer resources and technical assistance.

**Meeting Adjourned 12:30**

**Next Meeting: December 8, 2015**