

Statewide Homeless Council  
Retreat

Meeting Report

Tuesday, January 8, 2019

Auburn Public Library



Good Group Decisions

## Table of Contents

<b><i>Objectives</i></b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b><i>About the Retreat</i></b> .....	<b>1</b>
Attendance.....	1
Agenda .....	2
Ground Rules.....	3
<b><i>Opening Remarks</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b><i>Line-Ups</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b><i>Our Strengths</i></b> .....	<b>5</b>
Presentation.....	5
Discussion .....	7
<b><i>Our Current Framework and Future Opportunities</i></b> .....	<b>7</b>
Current Framework.....	7
Future Opportunities .....	10
<b><i>What Should We Do Going Forward? - Ideas</i></b> .....	<b>13</b>
Discussion .....	14
<b><i>What Should We Do Going Forward? - Continued</i></b> .....	<b>15</b>
Discussion .....	15
<b><i>How to Be Better</i></b> .....	<b>16</b>
How to Be Better .....	16
Discussion .....	18
<b><i>Closing Comments</i></b> .....	<b>23</b>

## Objectives

- Shared understanding of how the Statewide Homeless Council works, the strengths it has, and the opportunities it faces
- General agreement on what the Statewide Homeless Council should focus on going forward
- Identification of ideas and strategies for better collaboration, better meetings, and greater participation

## About the Retreat

So that the meeting was inclusive, efficient, and productive it was professionally facilitated by Craig Freshley of Good Group Decisions. In addition to planning and facilitating the meeting, Craig and his associate Wanda McNeil also prepared a report of the retreat.

This was an in-person Statewide Homeless Council Membership meeting with no call-in option. Maine Housing provided lunch.

## Attendance

### Council Members:

- Scott Tibbitts
- Melody Fitch
- Cullen Ryan
- Donna Kelley
- Kathy Lavallee
- Chet Barnes
- Elise Johansen
- Tracey Hair
- Josh D'Alessio
- Cheryl Harkins
- Donna Yellen

### Facilitation Team:

- Craig Freshley
- Wanda McNeil

## *Agenda*

- 9:20      **Arrive and Settle**
- 9:30      **Opening**  
Facilitator Craig Freshley will explain the Retreat Agenda and a few simple Ground Rules. We will also do some introductions with a bit of a twist to help us get to know each other. No worries. No safety harnesses or helmets required!
- 9:50      **Our Strengths**  
Before making plans for the future, let's take stock of what we have achieved and what strengths we have on board. Craig will ask each person name key achievements of the Statewide Homeless Council. We will organize all the achievements on the wall and discuss them with an emphasis on the strengths that have contributed to our success.
- 10:20     **Our Current Framework and Future Opportunities**
  - Council Chair Cullen Ryan will provide a brief overview of the Statewide Homeless Council including its Charter Legislation and relations with the Regional Homeless Councils and the Maine Continuum of Care.
  - Kathy Lavalley of SAMHS, Chet Barnes of SAMHS, and Alice Preble of OCFS will provide a brief overview of opportunities at DHHS.
  - Lauren Bustard will provide a brief overview of opportunities at Maine Housing.
- 11:00     **What Should We Do Going Forward? - Ideas**  
Using a highly interactive, collaborative, visual technique, everyone will contribute ideas about what the Statewide Homeless Council should focus on in the near future. We will organize all the ideas on the wall and discuss them. We will also talk about which things are most important.
- 12:00     **Lunch**
- 12:40     **What Should We Do Going Forward? – Emerging Conclusions**  
Based on the before-lunch discussion, Craig will propose a list of top priorities for the group to consider and revise.
- 12:55     **How to Be Better**  
Having discussed who we are and what we want to achieve, time now to discuss how function better as a group. Even the highest

functioning groups (especially the highest functioning groups) are always asking how they can do things more efficiently and effectively. We will discuss the following specific issues and try to come to some conclusions:

- How to build statewide collaboration
- How to improve meeting agendas and our meetings in general
- How to get the right participants at the regional level

1:50      **Closing Comments**

This is a chance for each person to make a last comment, perhaps a reflection about the retreat or perhaps a specific hope or concern for the future.

2:00      **Adjourn**

### Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Statewide Homeless Council will be on **February 12, 2019 at Maine Housing from 9:30-2:00pm.**

(SHC meets regularly the second Tuesday of each month 9:30am-2:00pm)

### Ground Rules

Craig explained the following ground rules; things to keep in mind for an effective meeting:

- **Forward focus** – regardless of what happened in the past, focus on what we should do going forward. It's the most important topic of the day.
- **All views encouraged** – everyone who wants to speak will have a chance to be heard.
- **Let Craig call on people** – jump right in, but if more than one person wants to speak at a time, let Craig call on you.
- **Show what you think** – you don't have to wait to speak. If you can give non-verbal cues like nodding your head, a thumbs up or down, or facial expressions, it is very helpful to see instant feedback or reactions to what we are discussing. Body language can help us be more efficient.
- **Strive for consensus** – we will make sure we hear from everyone and try to incorporate all points of views into conclusions.

- **Neutral facilitation** – we are here to serve your group as a whole, and Craig was not given any special instructions prior to the meeting.
- **Notes now and later** – notes will be taken on the screen and wall, and we will follow-up with a complete report later.

## Opening Remarks

The Retreat started approximately 30 minutes late, due to snow.

Council Chair Cullen Ryan asked for a motion to accept the minutes from the last meeting. There was a motion, it was seconded. All were in favor, and the motion carried. He then turned the meeting over to Facilitator Craig Freshley.

Facilitator Craig Freshley welcomed the group, and expressed appreciation for everyone making the trip safely in bad weather.

Craig explained the following:

- At Good Group Decisions we have facilitated all kinds of meetings, including working with youth homelessness, veteran homelessness, nonprofit organizations, government groups, and a variety of other entities
- As Craig is not an expert in homelessness, we are in a partnership today and will rely on each other to share knowledge and expertise
- The agenda is divided into the following three main parts:
  - Who we are –what role does the Statewide Homeless Council play in relation to other organizations?
  - What we want to do going forward – we will write ideas on pieces of paper and organize them on the wall
  - How we can be better – over lunch Craig will write out the emerging conclusions and the group will then refine them
- There will be an opportunity for closing comments

## Line-Ups

As part of introductions the group did some quick line-ups in which everyone stood up and placed themselves along an imagined spectrum according to the instructions.

Line up according to how long you've been involved with this group

- Some observations:
  - The longest tenure was approximately 14 years (since the group began - in 2005) and the shortest was about 2 months.
  - There were also some guests in attendance who were not officially members of the group.
  - Several organizations were represented including Safe Voices, Homeless Voices for Justice, SAMHS, Preble Street, Waldo Community Action Partners, Maine Housing, and more.

## Our Strengths

Before making plans for the future, the group took stock of what the Statewide Homeless Council has achieved and what strengths we have on board.

### *Presentation*

- Craig showed a slide with the following question and asked each person to write up to five things on separate pieces of paper in response:
  - What are the key achievements of the Statewide Homeless Council in the past five years?
- Based on the responses, Craig summarized the Key Achievements of the Statewide Homeless Council into three main areas:
  1. Leading voice in advocacy for homeless
  2. Network connecting people working in this field
  3. Impacting change by taking specific actions
- Craig organized the Key Achievements responses into the following categories on the wall:
  - Statewide Leadership
    - Continuing to meet/exist
    - Created a presence as leader in state homelessness work
  - Housing
    - Securing permanent housing for individuals

- Public Awareness
  - Op Eds – educating public
    - Decision makers
  - Created informative Op Eds
  - Positive/supportive information and press
  
- Advocacy
  - Provided impactful recommendations for legislation
  - Legislative support/advocacy
  - Statewide Homeless Council public policy leadership
  - Relationship work with Maine’s delegation for funding HUD, etc.
  - Voice! Advocacy presence in Maine and in D.C.
  - Introduced legislation to update statewide information/assistance systems
  
- Network
  - Provides vital information and linkages across Maine
  - Bringing regional reps together to support legislative and policy efforts
  - Making connections throughout the state to assist individuals with their needs
  - Improve collaboration with DHHS and other homeless groups to meet ex: LTS initiative
  - Coordinating agencies to get a more accurate idea of housing and homeless requirements
  - Pulled the state together
  
- Funding
  - Secured State of Maine funding
  
- Data Collection
  - Obtaining accurate counts of people who need the most assistance
    - The most vulnerable
  
- Strategies
  - LTS
  - Ideal subsidy plan
  - Prioritization needs review and update
  - Keeping issue of homelessness front and center during administration which didn’t give acknowledgment or support
  - Provided recommendations for services and supports to meet needs
  - Update/revision of Maine’s plan to end and prevent homelessness
  - Resource prioritization chart

- Blueprint for DHHS
- White paper for Medicaid waiver for LTS
- LTS initiative
- Rental subsidy outlines for LTS and SUD populations

## *Discussion*

Members of the Statewide Homeless Council discussed the key achievements that had been brought to the forefront and organized on the wall. Responses were as follows:

- Agree that Leadership, Networking, and Impacting Change were the three main categories
- Didn't realize how impressive it is, until everything went up on the wall
- We have a responsibility to build upon the network to include legislature and lawmakers and people who can actually influence what we do
  - We often look for different groups represented within the Statewide Homeless Council, but it might be more important to get those groups included
  - Craig said that we should consider this again when we talk about "What Should We Do Going Forward"
- Important that the whole state has been pulled together
  - Last five years we have moved toward a main approach for everything
  - We are going more and more in that direction

## **Our Current Framework and Future Opportunities**

### *Current Framework*

#### **Presentation**

Council Chair Cullen Ryan provided the following overview of the Statewide Homeless Council including its Charter Legislation and relations with the Regional Homeless Councils and the Maine Continuum of Care:

- The Statewide Homeless Council started in 2005 as a result of legislation
  - Folks were elected by peers in three regional councils
- We originally had folks the governor appointed
  - Although the previous governor deleted those positions, we have continued to exist

- Biggest accomplishment is the plan that was created
- Three pieces of legislation were created
- Added language challenging DHHS to put out a 1-800 number that people could access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- We use a plan where everyone is pushing in the same direction
- We represent the regional councils, establishing a plan which is implemented by the other organizations
- Essentially based on the plan we created, decisions are made how to best use resources
- All this is to end and prevent homelessness
- We create the vision and the state uses it to provide resources where they need to go
- Everything in the chart provided needs to be finetuned
  - Our role is to write the plan, and keep updating the information so resources go where they need to
- Craig explained the handout provided by Maine Housing had a long list of accomplishments starting on page 2 that Council Chair Cullen Ryan had put together.
  - This handout might be a helpful reference
  - Collectively this council wants to have a good understanding of how this works in relation to others

## **Discussion**

Craig asked the group for comments regarding the information Council Chair Cullen Ryan presented. Responses were as follows:

- This is phenomenal, but there are people in other organizations that are doing homeless work – faith based, food banks, food pantries – who are not receiving Federal funds.
  - Curious where they fit into this plan
  - We also get private donations
- One thing we've seen change over the last twenty-two years are homeless shelters
  - They were operating on their own, but we've pulled the whole state together, developed collaborative partnerships, and think of things as one plan
  - What we've not yet accomplished is pulling the less obvious organizations together
  - We've got more work to do and it's on us to bring people on a local level into the Statewide Homeless Council plan
- We could go to other meetings and represent the Statewide Homeless Council
  - More invitations to local meetings would be helpful
- Speaking from experience, as someone who was outside for a long time due to a domestic abuse situation, there was a time where assistance was not provided

- I called for help but was not given any
  - There was nothing available back then
  - We've come a long way
- Agree with what others have said, but having served homelessness in one capacity or another - it's a symptom - and a lot of what we do is try to ameliorate the symptoms
  - There are homeless providers and then there are "others"
  - Would like to see us not just advocate for homeless services – but advocate for policies and structures, family support, that will build upon strengths, make a systemic impact
  - We need to focus on addressing the cause and move beyond it
  - It's a bigger thought process
  - We need to challenge ourselves, our communities, and our state to address it in a bigger picture way
- Craig posed the following question: How would what you propose change things?
  - This group would be impacting a larger system
  - Quote: "We're standing on the banks, pulling people out of the river, but no one is fixing the bridge".
  - We don't have resources through the COC for prevention
    - You have to solve homelessness before you can prevent it, and we're not there
    - We could seek out other resources that could be directed toward prevention
  - We're all on the same page, doing everything we can to prevent it
    - At the same time, we are providing support and service to people who are experiencing it
  - Advocate for what you need to do to prevent, and at the same time support those who are in a specific situation
  - We all go to a ton of meetings, and report back about the work we are doing
    - The information is trickling through and informing decision making in many areas
  - Even in our individual organizations, we provide emergency shelter, but we spend the bulk of our time helping people avoid ending up in a shelter
    - Our provider communities need to be empowered through funding, to be able to offer a great menu of options
- Craig asked the group to take stock of the opportunities with the new administration. Responses were as follows:
  - I agree 100% with what has been said so far, but would like to be able to integrate homelessness with healthcare and behavioral health
    - Advocate with other domains
      - Poverty
      - Healthcare

- Transportation
    - Focus on what we do best by delivering best practices for homelessness throughout the state
- Homelessness for 6,000 people per year is more manageable compared to other states
  - Poverty is infinite
  - We can't be responsible for poverty, mental health, and other domains
- Focus on homelessness, and work with the new administration so they can do things to serve people who have other issues
  - Provide safety net services, and keep people from falling further
  - We can do that with an administration that is willing to play ball
  - Our goal should be homeless prevention
  - Use resources to help the homeless
- We need to push beyond the symptom of homelessness with more impactful strategies
  - Impact individuals in other sectors
  - We should broaden and make steps in that direction
  - Don't confine ourselves within our own arena
  - We are not as good as we can be

## *Future Opportunities*

### **Presentation**

Chet Barnes and Kathy Lavallee of SAMHS provided the following overview of opportunities at DHHS:

- To sit here and tell you what the future will be is very difficult in January. A full assessment of what's available programs, monies, etc. is being done right now.
- Taking stock of what we have right now, there are a lot of groups who get the Governor's and Commissioner's ear. But, experience tells me things can change when they actually sit down and review things.
  - Line up leadership
  - Provide a full idea of where we are and what we've been doing with the resources we have
  - Homeless population is created by the individuals who are homeless
    - One person may fit into all the silos we can
- We have Shelter Plus Care through the COC – focusing on homeless, mentally ill people
  - Mental health is a top priority
  - In the future Shelter Plus Care will get pulled into Section 8 or HUD
    - No longer focusing on mental health, rather on other disabilities
  - Mental Health used to be the primary argument for homeless people

- We know now that substance abuse is also a target population
  - Also, how do we expand to veterans' programs?
- Focusing on individuals in mental health hospital programs
  - Developed a program to get them out while they waited for Section 8 vouchers
  - That program was very successful and has been expanded – including the homeless population
  - The program has grown from \$3 million to \$6 million, and it's still growing
  - Hope the idea of subsidy gets real traction
  - We are in preliminary discussions about what should happen to BRAP
  - We have had success and have more room for expansion
  - Creating another specialized group seems practical and is being looked at right now
  - What are our options and what do we need to do to get there?
    - It's going to take time
- Treatment in jails has been expanded over the last six months
  - BRAP mental illness in jails - treat so they don't end up back on the street
  - Every county jail is turning into a mental health and drug facility
  - If we can focus on those types of people and get them into a program
    - Training resources
    - Case management
    - When people leave jails, they will have a resource
    - How do we follow them when they leave jail, so they get the help they need to be connected?
    - A lot of pieces that need to come together to make this work, so people can be housed out of jail
    - If nothing is done, they will be back on the street and back in jail
- We try to go length-of-time homeless
  - We should be awarding three different providers to Regions 1, 2 & 3
    - One provider for each area
    - It will give us a chance to focus on each area – more direct line
- DHHS listens to the Statewide Homeless Council, but when it comes down to legislation – two things matter:
  - Data supporting what you're claiming
  - Cost per person per resource
  - Those representatives have to go back and explain those elements
- Currently we have a wait list of 140 individuals, coming out of mental health beds and jails, then we have to look at others who are at risk of dying because they are on the streets.
  - We have permission for a 10% increase in beds opening up across the state
  - Housing people with mental illnesses is the largest budget in State Government
- If you're going to warehouse – get out of the business

- We are getting specialists on board and will give these individuals the treatment they need
- Also, people who are aging in place
  - They are stuck where they are and will never leave
  - Looking for 1<sup>st</sup> floor buildings for these individuals
  - Help and assistance – handicapped accessible housing for these people

## Discussion

Craig asked the group for comments regarding the information Chet Barnes and Kathy Lavallee presented. Responses were as follows:

- Thank DHHS for its commitment toward homeless populations, and to open the door to those who get stuck and die
  - Thank you for the work you are doing in that area
  - Looking for another facility to open
- Often, we have buildings donated but don't have the resources to do anything with them
- Craig gave the following summary of the discussion so far, followed by more comments. It seems there are two types of things the group wants to do:
  - Serve people who are experiencing homelessness
    - Best practices
    - Treatment in facilities
  - Prevent homelessness
    - Integrate with medical and psychiatric care
    - Bring wider circle of agencies to the table
- It's easy for people to think we're using resources to help people in many other areas, but we can't spread ourselves so thin
  - We don't fix all those issues, but can work on the underlying issues
- It's outlined in Cullen's "board game" regarding preventing homelessness
  - It's up to the Statewide Homeless Council to make sure others are moving in the same direction
  - The Statewide Homeless Council serves in an advisory capacity
    - We are serving people who are experiencing homelessness – not "homeless people"
- Maine Housing is putting together continuing care
  - Identifying resources across the state
  - Identifying where more resources are needed

## What Should We Do Going Forward? - Ideas

Using a highly interactive, collaborative, visual technique, everyone contributed ideas about what the Statewide Homeless Council should focus on in the near future. We organized all the ideas on the wall and discussed them. We also talked about which things are most important.

- Craig showed a slide with the following question and asked each person to write ideas on separate pieces of paper in response:
  - What should the Statewide Homeless Council focus on in the near future?"
- Craig organized the Going Forward responses into the following categories on the wall:
  - Serve people who are homeless
    - We need to communicate frequently with the unhoused so we know the “up to the minute” challenges we might need to address
    - HVJ does a lot of networking with questionnaires to get the current thoughts of what needs to be addressed
  
    - Inform – think on our feet and be responsive in advocacy
    - Advocacy: ensure shelter systems provide best practices for guest stay
    - Advocate for development of housing units
      - Homeless dedicated
      - Non-homeless dedicated
      - All populations
    - Best practices
    - Implement its strategies
    - Treatment in facilities
    - Supports in housing
  - Increase systemic capacity
    - Invite and expect attendance and participation in this work from:
      - Hospital leadership
      - Substance use prevention
    - DOC
    - ME Pre-trial
    - Elected officials from each region
    - Advocate to expand access to services in all counties MLH & SUD, opioid TX all counties
    - Be truly advisory to the governor and DHHS, DOC, and Maine Housing
    - Silos are okay but communication must exist
    - Speak with one voice so we can effect positive change

- Give advice with the receiver in mind – how it benefits them
  - Institutionally strengthen the council
  - Secure appointments to the council through proper process –
    - Articulate the platform
  - Who is at the table? Who is missing?
  - Approaching the new administration and asking them to recommit to the original by prioritizing strengths and importance
  - Bring wider circle of agencies to the table
  - Integrate with medical and psychiatric care
  - Coordinate agency efforts related to homelessness
- Prevent homelessness
    - Call attention to need for housing
      - Specific types in specific places
      - Affordable
    - Continue to breakdown silos
    - Discharge planning
      - Jails/hospitals/foster care
    - Identify risk factors to help other agencies prioritize assistance
      - Not just first come first served

## Discussion

Members of the group discussed what the Statewide Homeless Council should focus on going forward per the ideas submitted and organized on the wall. Responses were as follows:

- Speaking as a contract manager, we need to think in terms of a cost analysis
  - Where do we get the money to put this in place?
  - Thinking in terms of reality when we go to the legislature, we open ourselves up to “Without the gas to get there we’re not going to the movie.”
  - It’s the second piece of the conversation, and will never get it off the ground if we can’t sympathize with their position as governor and legislature
  - Who’s going to lose out for me to give you things?
  - We need to try to consider where they are coming from
  - If you take this much from “here” and up it “here” - show them the tradeoff
  - Think of our advice in terms of the receiver
- Be able to offer up “this is how it might look” - when we make a proposal
- Example: “If we put up solar panels it will save money, but we first need the money to put them up.”
- “Silos aren’t bad as long as they aren’t solid walls.”

## What Should We Do Going Forward? - Continued

### Discussion

Craig invited further comments regarding what the Statewide Homeless Council should focus on going forward. Responses were as follows:

- More beds vs. manage beds – different regions
- Apples/oranges – unify approach how the beds are managed
- We need to have this conversation
  - Some providers see a need for increased beds
  - Others see a need to find a way to not need more beds
  - The Statewide Homeless Council could play a vital role in this conversation
- It's messy
  - Either find a way to get more beds in a particular area
  - Or find a way for people to get housed in other areas
- Regional council needs should be brought to a statewide table
  - All three regions should be represented
  - The local voice from each region comes to the Statewide Homeless Council table so we can decide how to come together
  - Bigger picture
- Even within regions, cities are very different from rural areas etc.
- All people have needs that must be met, and we have to make sure they are all represented
  - Look at it from a collective approach, systemically
- We have worked very hard over the years, and want to add something to that effect
  - It's our opportunity to grow as a council, and tie all the other systems together
  - We can truly be an advisory to the governor
  - Most exciting opportunity over the next eight years
- We need to find a way to speak with one voice, while understanding not everyone agrees
  - All sides need to be heard
  - It begins in regional and but also statewide
  - It's bipartisan - joint understanding
- We are a diverse group of people with diverse thoughts and ideas, but a common passion
  - Our biggest opportunity is finding common ground rather than get mired in disagreement
  - If we can communicate our common ground to others, we can really effect change
  - Big fan of working toward commonalities
- We have a common framework, but we will be stronger if we have a common voice

- All diverse, all support the whole overarching development

## How to Be Better

Based on the before-lunch discussion, Craig proposed the following list of top priorities for the group to consider. After the group made some revisions, there was general consensus that this should be the focus for how the Statewide Homeless Council could be better.

### *How to Be Better*

#### **1. How to build statewide collaboration?**

- Establish a common framework
- Establish and speak with one voice
  - Try to accommodate all perspectives and all concerns
    - Make more general or more specific to get full agreement
  - When one or members disagree on an issue; the Council stays silent on that issue
- Build strong regional councils
  - Each regional council should be co-chaired by state agencies and key people need to participate
    - Their presence draws others to the meetings
  - All regional representatives need to participate in all statewide meetings
  - Better participation in regional meetings
    - Strategize who and how to get participation from your communities
  - Agendas or regional councils and statewide councils need to be coordinated
  - Regional councils need to feel “legitimate”
    - Develop a strategy to make the case to legislators
    - Money becomes available
    - New key people get engaged
  - Regional Council meetings need to be distinguished from Statewide Council
    - Not the same information
  - Information flows up to Statewide Council and down from the Statewide Council
  - Ask each Regional Council:
    - “What do we need from the state?”
    - “How to make Maine a leader in addressing homelessness?”
  - Perhaps the Regional Councils could meet less than monthly

- However, they serve to share information among providers and share best practices
- Monthly meetings also help to get advocacy endorsements in a timely manner
- Be open to compromise and model compromise for other groups
- Increase our legitimacy with the Governor and administration
  - Key people need to participate
  - Why
    - It's an easy way for THEM to meet with a lot of key people
    - It's one place to learn about all homeless issues
    - We have a way to help YOU help the opioid addicted person
  - Our message
    - What
      - These are some ideas
        - You want to serve people well in a cost-effective manner
        - Dealing with people who are homeless is very costly in many ways
        - We know what works and how to address homelessness
        - We have connections to people who are opioid addicted
    - How
      - Someone drafts 5-10 talking points and circulates to all Council members
      - The message is refined and stories are added
      - Need to keep hitting policy leaders over and over again
      - Need to reach DHHS AND other agencies such as Corrections, Economic Development, CDC, etc.
  - Approach
    - Maine Housing Director write a letter to the Governor requesting appointments of people who will be engaged
    - Cullen continue with his approaches already in motion

## **2. How to improve meeting agendas and our meetings in general?**

- Have meetings shorter than a full day
- Have specific agendas with specific times and allow people to come and go just for the segments in which they are most interested
- Reduce redundancy with other meetings
- Make regional meetings in person or video

- Have nice meeting space
- Provide a sense that people will be heard
- Make the meetings more focused and provide chances for interactive discussion

## *Discussion*

Craig invited further comments regarding how the Statewide Homeless Council could be better. Responses were as follows:

- How to build statewide collaboration?
- Craig posed the following question: What do you do if you have members who disagree?
  - Disagreement can be powerful
    - If some are on opposing sides of a piece of legislation, it's okay
    - Legislation can impact different groups of people differently
    - There is value in disagreement, doesn't have to be divisive
  - Disagreements should be worked out in private, but the public face needs to be united
  - Our policies and procedures are not clear enough to withstand disagreement
  - Disagreement can be a healthy conversation
  - Agree to disagree, but what's the outcome?
- Voting has to be unanimous
  - Boil it down to something everyone can agree on
  - Or at least abstain
- Craig posed the following question: As a practical matter, you can't expect someone who opposes something to pretend they agree when in public. So, what do you do if you can't come to an agreement?
  - We do the work and either a motion fails and the coalition says nothing about it – the council is silent on it and you focus on things you can agree on.
  - Or it's recrafted to meet everyone's support
- Build strong regional councils
  - Regional input strengthens that "one voice"
  - Make it more neutral so each region builds the state up

- We did it better before, and we need to revisit the regional councils being co-chaired, because it gave it more legitimacy
  - It would increase attendance and bring more people to the table
- That could be on us
  - We had regions where none of the statewide reps showed up
  - We need to make sure all the regions are represented
- No longer as much an exchange of information between levels
- Negotiation and compromise are needed when there is a difference of opinion
- Need to have a win-win situation, and not an “I win, you lose” situation
- Many meetings can feel the same, which could be improved by having more people attend meetings
  - If regional meetings had more attendance and more input, then the regional reps could bring it back to the council and more people would have a voice as a result
  - There is value in that
- Agendas of the region need to be more closely coordinated, so everyone feels more connected
- Regional councils need to inform the statewide council, and not the other way around
- If this council had more power, people would feel there were more opportunities for change
- All of this is a symptom of lack of legitimacy
  - Inform
  - Energize
  - Create one voice
  - This was a useful strategy, and we need to get back to that
- Craig asked how this actually happens?
  - Strategize who and how, to get participation from your communities
  - Frequency of meetings, a monthly meeting is difficult to do
  - If you’re going to build a regional council you have to have the time, otherwise they are going to hear the same information they heard at the statewide council meetings
- Regional councils need to gather the information and bring to the state
  - We need an articulated strategy for this
  - We need to educate the legislature and get out ahead of this to become legitimate again
  - To implement and support investing in these plans
- Craig posed the following question: How does legitimacy help when the same people go to different meetings and talk about the same things?
  - When people came together, they had enacted legislature
  - They had money to support it

- Players invested their time
- Then the funding disappeared
- Then the co-facilitators left
- Then the governor stopped supporting us
  
- Statewide Collaboration
- Empower both regional and statewide councils to pool our collective knowledge to create change
- When we created the plan, every step of the way we gathered input from other organizations and wrote the plan
- Now, we have an opportunity to do what we did with the plan
  - Build excitement within the regional councils, and find out what we can do to tie the state together
  - Jazz up the regional councils by going there, listening, making them part of the process
    - Make the regional councils important
  - How can we make Maine into a leader in preventing homelessness?
  - Heard from regional homeless councils that the STEP program had a flaw in it – it was useless and too short
    - It took a lot of interactive dialogue to find out what could be done to improve it
- What is the purpose of the regional council meeting monthly?
  - Regional councils exist to talk about local level – emerging issues and best practices
    - Training opportunities for a lot of people
    - Conversations with each other and building trust
  - Monthly advantage – when we have things moving through the legislature, it helps if we can speak with one voice, among all three regions
  - Meeting monthly lets us air these issues on a regular basis
  - Most regions meet seven or eight times a year
    - With enough regularity so that everyone trusts each other
  - Historically, the regional councils are older than the statewide council
  - It used to have a co-chair, a regional director, and those people helped organize and added legitimacy
  - Suggest that statewide council meetings should be fewer than monthly, but not regional meetings
    - If regional meetings are less often it takes away from the idea of needing to strengthen the regionals to have a more effective statewide council
- Housing
  - Larger systemic needs were identified, and the Statewide Homeless Council was created as a result
- How to improve meeting agendas and our meetings in general?

- How to make meetings more attractive?
- Day-long meetings scare people off
- Set up agenda so people know when they could show up for the particular portion of the meeting that applies to them
  - Split it into segments
  - Different topics
  - Open it up for more general discussions later in the day
- Reduce redundancy
- If I have to travel, I want an all-day meeting
- Maybe use video conferencing? (not phone)
- Need quality space – not crowded or small
- Right people attend for the right reason
- Take the show on the road, go to different locations
- Unless people are interested in solving these specific problems, people won't come to the meetings
- Homelessness isn't easy to dress up and turn into a sexy topic
- Specific agendas for specific meetings at specific times
- Need to make meetings legitimate
- If you get the right people there, other people will come
- If you can clearly articulate that people's voices will be heard, and they will have input – then they will come
- Sometimes a lot goes on, but not much substance.
  - Need to be more focused on something specific
  - More structure needed
  - Zero in on the most important things
- Build strong Regional Councils
- Each regional council should be co-chaired by state agencies by the governor's office
  - If that happened, people would come
  - If key people could participate at both state and regional levels, people would come
- Craig posed the following question: How will you get "those" people to come?
  - Opportunity to approach new governor and breathe life into this
- Craig followed up by asking: What's in it for the governor? Why should someone come to your meeting?
  - Need to educate them about the council
  - Any one of us should be prepared with key points to articulate the needs of the homeless council, so when an opportunity presents itself, we are ready
  - "Timing is everything to do with the outcome of the rain dance"
- How many of our homeless people had an opioid problem?
  - It's a hot topic, and it's our way "in"

- We could approach it as, “We want to work with you on ending homelessness and the opioid crisis.”
- That’s the 5-minute elevator speech.
  - This is the population I work with, this is the council I’m on, you need us to help you
- Prepare statement
- Educate on the statement
- Present the statement
- We should have a delegation
  
- Craig asked the following question: Who is going to write the statement and call the governor’s office to present the message?
  - Any of us
  - We should be prepared with a unified statement
  - Our message should be easy – they want to serve people well and do it in a cost-effective manner
  - It will affect Corrections, DHHS, Medicare...all these systems the governor touches are affected by how well they listen to us, because we know this population so well
  - Since we have the support of the Maine State Housing Authority, how about a letter from the Maine State Housing Authority saying we want to go back to the legislation and would the governor please send someone from her office?
    - Then maybe it would be a domino effect and the other groups will follow suit
  
- Chet clarified he does not represent DHHS on the Council
  
- Possible next steps:
  - Ask the Maine Housing Director to write a letter to the governor requesting a meeting with a delegation
- Need five talking points we can all agree upon
- Draft five talking points (including the opioid issue)
  - Send to council members
  - Then add as needed
    - Storytelling
    - Examples is what will get the governor’s attention
- There are wheels already in motion
- It all helps
- We not only need a five-minute elevator speech, we need to keep hitting them with a same message that’s cohesive, so when they get to it they will see we have put a lot of time and energy into it
  - We have a plan that will end homelessness, and the resources that make the most sense

- It's about outreach engagement
  - Connect the dots with the governor's office
- Don't limit ourselves to just DHHS.
  - So many departments have pull and resources
  - We should could expand our vision to the economic community development
- We need to go big or go home
  - Get all these groups to the table so we can make big things happen
  - Stronger groups are going in already
  - We need to be concise and clear

## Closing Comments

Each person had a chance to make a last comment, such as a reflection about the retreat or a specific hope or concern for the future.

- Keeping this council existing through the last administration was remarkable, so thanks to Cullen's tenacity we now have an opportunity to address homelessness with a new administration
- Appreciate being part of this "forest" ...always been a "tree"
- Enthused and excited
- Excited to have been able to attend a couple of these meetings, and interested in how to motivate others in the future
- Significant tragedies in the last couple of weeks - looking for ways to create actionable change. Excited about new administration and grateful to be here
- Echo what everyone has said, and thankful for the opportunity to get caught up
- Hopeful for the new administration. It's obvious we need a lot of changes, and we all need to continue throwing out ideas and brainstorming to solve these problems. I know Janet Mills. I know she's excited about coming in and that we do great work. She wants to be kept abreast.
- Thankful to live and work with all these great people. Never giving up and doing our best. Hopeful for the next eight years.
- It's the right conversation, at the right time, for the right reason, with the right opportunity
- We'll see what happens
- Been in my silo for a while and inviting me to these meetings has opened my eyes and helped me grow
- David's wife had surgery so he was unable to attend, and Lauren was ill and couldn't be here

- Started prepping for this meeting back in August, and very pleased the group came up with the same goals I did. Excited about the opportunity...clarity emerging...good productive work ahead.

The retreat adjourned at 2:00 pm.