Disclaimer: These notes are not intended to represent direct quotes, things may not be in chronological order, and ideas may not always be accurately attributed. If you have corrections or comments, please let Scott know and he will edit accordingly.

**Attending via GoToMeeting:** Emily Flinkstrom (Fair Tide), Melanie Bubar (Homeless Services of Aroostook- HAS), Jennifer Weatherbee (Community Health and Counseling Services –CHCS), Brianne Brasslett (CHCS), Sarah DeRosier (CHCS), Meredith Smith (CHCS), Amanda Cost (Partners for Peace), Aaron Geyer (City of Portland), Des Alverio (Youth Action Board), Kelsey Vincent (YAB), Noelle Coyne (Safe Voices), Abby Smith (PCHC), Gerald Botta (HOME, Inc.), Marcie Dean (Next Step), Linda Holmes (City of Biddeford), Vickey Rand (CHOM), Dan Hodgkins (Preble Street -Veterans Services), Bill Higgins (Homeless Advocacy for All), Mike Merrill (Volunteer Of America), Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing), Norm Maze (Shalom House), Ginny Dill (Shalom House), Laurie Murray (MaineHousing), Rota Knott (Tedford Housing), Arwen Agee (VA), Katie Spencer White (MidMaine Homeless Shelter), Janice Daku (Rural Community Action Ministries – RCAM), Kelly Watson (MaineHousing); Chris Bicknell (New Beginnings), Rich Romero (OHI), Melissa McEntee (RGH), Dave McCluskey (Community Care/Shaw House), Janice Lara-Hewey (Catholic Charities), Steph Primm (KCHC/SHC), Kari Bradstreet (HJP), Rita DeFio (Sweetser), Boyd Kronholm (BAHS), Nick St Louis (BAHS), Awa Conteh (City of Bangor), Cullen Ryan (CHOM), Amy Grommes-Pulaski (GP Consulting), Andrew Parllin (WMHO), Rob Liscord (MEJP), Kris Pitts (New Beginnings)

 [Reminder – If you call in, please email stibbitts@mainehousing.org to let us know you were there!]

**Maine**

**Continuum of Care**

**Meeting: Maine CoC**

**Date: March 19, 2020, 1:00 – 3:00 PM**

**Location: GoToMeeting**

1. **Member Introductions**

Awa welcomed everyone, and each attendee introduced themselves. A reminder for all those calling in - please email Scott Tibbitts to be sure you are included in the minutes.

Attendance at this meeting will not count toward overall attendance or funding.

1. **Review & Approval of minutes:**

Minutes were posted on the Maine Homeless Planning website.

***Janice made a motion to approve the Feb 20, 2020 minutes, this was seconded by Gerald. There was no additional discussion. No one opposed. Minutes were accepted as presented.***

1. **Portland Housing Authority - Foster Youth Independence (FYI) Program**

Tabled until April.

1. **HUD Tier 2 Awards Announcement-**

There were several renewal projects that were funded through Tier 2. There was one renewal project that was not funded- that was the MCEDV project. The other projects that did not receive funding were all new projects. While disappointing, new projects are ranked toward the bottom of the application so that we do not need to unhouse persons. We refer any project that has questions to the project monitoring committee.

Communication began with MCEDV. There will be a meeting set up between MaineHousing the MCOC Chairs and MCEDV to brainstorm next steps.

1. **2020 PIT After Action Report-**

Tabled until April.

1. **Big Thinking Topic: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Committee Update**

Josh is not in attendance and cannot share update from this committee.

Scott asked the group how they are addressing the issue.

**Covid-19 Response from Agencies**

* Abby -PCHC - Everyone is working together to address this issue. Proud of the team response.
* Boyd- Bangor Area Shelter- Closed down the warming shelter two weeks early. Staff is working to reduce the density at the shelter. The soup kitchen is closed but they are providing bag meals at the curb.
* Janice- RCAM – Made the decision to close the office and work remotely. Staff is working with families and sharing best practices to stay safe. Staff has recommended that these families also self-isolate, and are offering to bring them items, so they don’t have to go out in public.
* Gerry- Home Inc. The focus is on current residents. Shut down soup kitchen and food pantry. People can call and they will coordinate to get them food. They are trying to reduce the number of people who are at the shelters. They have re-arranged the space and set space aside for people to be if they do get the virus.
* Katie - Mid-Maine Shelter in Waterville- Working to get people organized- 54 bed shelter under one roof. Working with City partners to address the most vulnerable guests- families, pregnant mothers, elderly. The goal is to do this to help reduce numbers to improve social distancing. They have taken over conference room to use as a health center. They are down 50% of staff due to health, school closure, age etc. Some staff are nervous, especially as caretakers if folks get sick. They are hoping to move sick individuals to a hotel/motel, as has been done out west. Guests have been amazing, really stepping up their own personal hygiene. They are trying to figure out how to fund staff who are not in the building. How do we begin forward planning, for those who are becoming homeless?
* Awa Conteh- City of Bangor moved from Face to Face interviews to phone interviews. To ensure homeless customers are moved into permanent housing and help shelters achieve social distancing, on 3/16/20, Awa had a conference call with Hope House and Bangor Area Homeless Shelter and put some plans into place: Shelter staff coordinate with City of Bangor to conduct application interviews, and also coordinate with shelter guests to do apartment viewings. Awa stated that landlords are being very generous by providing apartments to City of Bangor S+C participants. She also noted that landlords have been encouraged to download WhatsApp, which enables the inspectors conduct inspections remotely. GA is certifying for 2 months (instead of 1 month) to reduce having the families come in again to get certified each month. Feel free to reach out with questions about GA etc.
* Ginny Dill - Shalom- Shelter Plus care has been mailing out annual paperwork and verifying via phone calls. For safety of housed tenants, (DHHS approved) suspending annual housing inspections.
* Norm Maze – Shalom- When inspectors do a move-in inspection, they ask landlords to stay away from the apartment and inspectors wear protective gear.
* Family Violence Project – Are reducing the number of clients and staff. They are returning to normal operations on April 6.
* Noelle - Safe Voices -They have shut down offices. Residents are in shelters. Advocates are still active, by skype or phone. They have limited staff who are going into the office to restock food, supplies etc.
* Hope and Justice project- Are still sheltering residents. They are limiting/ eliminating face to face contact, except under emergency.
* Chris- New Beginnings- Youth have been connecting through virtual meetings. This has been well received. That social connection has been very valuable.
* Dez- YAB- Transitional Living Project at New Beginnings allows no outside visitors.
* Laurie – MaineHousing is gathering information and compiling data. There are daily conversations with DHHS. How do shelters reach out to municipalities? This is unchartered territory. We have about ¾ staff telecommuting. There are no public or partner meetings at MaineHousing. We are figuring out video conferencing and are learning as we go. These conversations are helpful to all of us.

**Resources Offered.**

* Rob Liscord- **Maine Equal Justice**-
	+ **Impact on Shelters** – Maine Equal Justice is paying attention to the issues that are arising around emergency shelter and unsheltered around the state, including PATH. They are working to aggregate and share the results with the Governor’s office and our federal delegation. We want to be sure we hear from everyone. Be sure to reach out to Rob Liscord.
	+ **Changes in legislation** - Go to the Maine Equal Justice website for updates.
* Awa shared an email from **Pine Tree Legal**. Eviction court is suspended unless it is an emergency. If anyone has any trouble with a landlord in Bangor, contact Awa. She has a good relationship with Erica at the Pine Tree Bangor Office.
* **General Assistance** has been very strict in the past but understand the current circumstances.
	+ If you are eligible for SNAP, you are likely eligible with GA. (Awa)
	+ If you have reduced hours or have lost your job, you may qualify for GA. (Awa)
	+ GA statue was expanded to include homelessness and risk of homelessness as an emergency. This expands the cap and security deposits can be paid for from GA. (Rob)
	+ GA can assist with funding for shelter beds (Awa)
* Please go to the local office and inquire.
* **Disaster SNAP** is available. Apply for SNAP now, for reduction in hours or lost jobs because when the funding becomes available they will receive it.
* If there is a way **MaineHousing** can help to relax our standards to better serve persons, please contact Laurie Murray or others.
* Reach out **to foundations** that you have relationships with for unrestricted funds. Reach out to **JTG** and **Sewell** about how to help out.

**Questions/ Concerns**

* **Temporary Living Situations** - There are people who are being kicked out of temporary living situations- couch surfers etc out of fear of the virus. Some are exploring using a hotel. We are in triage now, but we should plan for and anticipate a growth in need for shelter.
* **Increased Referrals and No New Admittance.** - Melissa- Rumford Group Homes- They are experiencing a large number of referrals and are hearing that many shelters are not admitting new people. Are others finding this?
* **Shelter Business Models -** How do our business models shift for social distancing, while still addressing the need and possibly expanding need? How do we cut through red tape- are we making financial decisions, or decisions based on public health and safety?
* **Nightly Rosters -** Scott- Some shelters are reconfiguring their layouts to allow more space. A requirement of MaineHousing is that we do nightly rosters. As you update your spaces, please be sure update your nightly rosters. This will be helpful if someone does become ill in tracking who slept in the same room with who.
* **Public Safety position in small towns -** Katie -at Mid Maine Homeless Shelter in Waterville our public safety person is our fire chief. It’s not a public health person, and this is not their focus or area of expertise. What are other shelters doing?
	+ Awa reached out to Bangor’s Public Health person to see who their counterpart is in Waterville. They may not have one. Only Portland and Bangor have public health department.
	+ Small towns are having a difficult time managing the crisis. City Halls are not responding, or not addressing the issue as needed.
	+ Maine Equal Justice has gotten responses from 9 or 10 shelters. Bangor is one of the only places where shelters and local government are working together. Shelters and Cities need to work together for creating a better response to the virus in the community. Please reach out to Rob to share your experiences.
* **Information Sharing –** How do we get the right information about public response to shelters around the state, even if they do not have a local effort.
	+ How do we address this issue?
	+ MaineHousing will collect the information, and between the COC and SHC come up with some quick policy recommendations for the Governor and legislature.
* **Addressing COVID-19 in a Shelter Setting** Janice- Lewiston/ Auburn- there are some people who have tested positive. There is no appropriate response. Many of our shelters do not receive funding. What is the response for areas where homeless providers do not come to these meetings? What do we do for these folks? Rob offered to connect with Janice.
* **Is there additional ESG funding?**
	+ For 2020 grant year, MaineHousing is providing more State HOME funds. There will be an increase to all the shelters (based on the formula).
	+ The ESG grant from HUD has increased its allocation as well
* **Letter of awareness/ Impact on our homeless response system** -Dave McCluskey- concerned what the response will be once someone tests positive, and about the impact of Nonprofits. Cashflow will likely become a problem. The demand vs the amount of funds available, with increased expense will not allow these organizations to remain solvent. There are increased expenses, decreased donations – both in terms of food and dollars.
	+ Cullen offers to write a letter of awareness. Suggestion – Josh and Rob will help, need to be coordinated in our outreach to avoid diluting our message.
	+ ***Task*** 🡪 ***Rob, Josh and Cullen to work together to write a letter of awareness of the challenges shelters are facing.***

**Federal Updates:**

Cullen provided Federal and State updates.

There may be a third stimulus package coming. There is a suggestion for increased funding for homeless providers and assisting with housing stability. This would include resources to help keep people from becoming homeless.

Cullen has begun to draft a letter of support, as people who are homeless are more susceptible to COVID-19. He will address this to Senator Collins.

SNAP proposed rule to impose time limits has been postponed amid this crisis.

There is a Medicaid proposal which would change this to a block grant, which is bad for Maine. A block grant would cap funding, which would not benefit our state.

COC and Housing first. Senator Collins was pivotal to rewording the NOFA to include the original Housing First language. The 2020 NOFA will look more like the 2018 NOFA in this regard. Cullen suggested sending her a thank you letter.

Older Americans Act was a big win for Senator Collins. It is suggested that we thank her for this. This is to focus on the well-being of seniors and protection for home health services. It has support in the house and senate.

***Norm made a motion to send a letter to Senator Collins thanking her for making the changes to re-establish Housing First language in the 2020 NOFA. Seconded by Awa. Awa thanks Cullen. This passed.***

**State Updates:**

There are several bills and legislation that have not been able to get passed because the legislature is not meeting and they are waiting for a special session. This includes 1909, FUSE

FUSE was passed but is waiting for approval.

Both of these items are waiting for a special session.

**For Federal and State Details-** Please see highlighted items in the Policy Committee Update posted on [www.mainehomelessplanning.org](http://www.mainehomelessplanning.org)

**Document Review Committee**

The only significant changes since the last review were in regard to Committees and the Conflict of Interest policy.

Committees were split into two general categories: “Standing Committees”, for those created by MCOC and tasked with specific functions directly related to the work of MCOC, and “Advisory Boards and Committees” for those groups that are more autonomous and serve a purpose that, while connected to the work of MCOC, is not driven or directed by MCOC. For example, the NOFA Committee, HMIS & Data Committee, and Project Monitoring Committee, exist because of their relationship to the MCOC, whereas groups like the Statewide Homeless Council, Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence, and the Homeless Veterans Action Committee, exits independently of MCOC.

-It was pointed out that HVAC specifically requested to be considered a “subcommittee” of the Continuum, because there is some guidance on their end that required it. The YAB is similarly required to be a committee of the Continuum. On the other hand, groups such as SHC or MCEDV might not want to be considered “committees” of MCOC. Being a committee of the MCOC implies that the Continuum, or the MCOC Board, has some level of control or oversight of them, which may not the intent, even for those required to be called committees.

-We will need to consult with each of the groups that were placed in the ‘Advisory’ category and review any relevant guidance they have about the nature of their relationship to the Continuum before finalizing this section. It may be just a matter of clarifying the roles and definitions of different types of committees.

The Conflict of Interest section, and related sign-off statement, are not very clear in regard to who is expected to sign the policy statements. All agreed that the intent was to have only the Board Members be required to sign, since they are ultimately responsible for funding related decisions. MCOC members are still expected to disclose any conflicts of interest they are aware of, but are not expected to sign the policy statements. This section will be re-written to clarify that distinction.

**Next Meeting:** **April 16, 2020, 1PM to 3PM**