**MAINE STATEWIDE HOMELESS COUNCIL**

**April 12, 2022**

**9:30-12:30**

**Minutes**

**Attendance:** A complete list of attendees and the agencies they represent is attached.

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

**Welcome:** Katie opened today’s meeting by welcoming everyone in attendance. Cullen Ryan motioned to approve March’s minutes. Tracey Hair seconded.March’s minutes were unanimously approved. A moment of silence was observed in honor of those who have passed away while experiencing homelessness and for those facing unbearable suffering in Ukraine.

**HUB Update:** Mike started today’s update by mentioning 8 of the 9 Hub Coordinators have been hired. MSHA and Community Solutions created a curriculum for the onboarding of Hub Coordinators and the training is scheduled to begin during the third week in April. The 5 Built for Zero Hubs have been announced and the remaining four will work in tandem with the state team to utilize resources on a parallel track. Staff from MaineHousing as well as representatives from the 5 Hubs will travel to Chicago next month for a training and to strategize their first six month action cycle.

**CES Update:** In order to flush out details needing to be addressed within the four phases of the CES, Erin Kelly reported the committee conducted two marathon (4 hour) sessions during the first week of April. The next step is to create proposals for the remaining key design questions, come to consensus on procedures and then move to a sample implementation before launching CES statewide.

**MCoC Update:** Cullen gave today’s update by mentioning the MCoC is addressing the following topics: The high numbers of people being sheltered in hotels crisis, the low outflow with increased inflow into shelter system and how to utilize the Veteran Match as a best practice for increasing exits to permanent housing.

.**Council Updates:**

* **Regional Updates Region I-** The region spent a portion of their meeting discussing the difficulties of the public health quarantine, the lack of affordable housing and the need to explore shared housing in conjunction with HCVs.Cheryl H. updated the council on work being done by Homeless Voices for Justice by pointing out their recent rally at the state house in favor of 1294. HVJ representative are noticing an increase in the number of encampments in the red bank area of Portland and are advocating for bus passes to be issued for people staying in Shelters.

**Region II**- Top issues facing the region are; the need for low barrier shelters, the numbers of families in hotels and the difficulty accessing mental health for those experiencing homelessness specifically with the new Homeless Response Protocol.

**Region III-** Tracy H. gave today’s update. Issues facing the region representing the five most rural counties in Maine are the high numbers of people living outside, the growing numbers of people being released from hospitals in need of shelter, obstacles connected to hotel placements and concerns over APRA funding.

* **Legislative Updates: Federal-**Before sharing the screen with the State and Federal Legislative update document,Cullen announced the FEMA hotels have been extended to July 1, 2022. Next attention was brought to American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and FY23 Budgets. Currently ARPA funding does not blend well with the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit for the creation of affordable housing. Efforts are underway to correct this, with the hope that bipartisan legislation will be introduced correcting this oversight/error. All in attendance were urged to bring this to the attention of our state’s delegation. On 3/24 President Biden released his FY 23 budget. The proposed budget funds HUD programs at $71.9 billion, $6.2 billion more than the final FY 22 level. Two new bills, Homes for All Act and Flexibility in Addressing Rural Homeless Act were both introduced on March, 24, 2022.

**State-** On 3/18 Governor Mills released her change package for the FY22/23 Supplemental Budget. The changes package includes-

* $22 million in one-time General Fund dollars to create an Emergency Housing Relief Fund at MaineHousing to address homelessness, including providing rental assistance or appropriate housing for those who are staying in hotels or to create additional permanent supportive housing for people with disabilities, mental health challenges, or substance use disorder;
* An additional $19.7 million in state funding to address immediate needs in Maine’s behavioral health system and support ongoing improvements to MaineCare rates for behavioral health providers. The added funding will leverage $17.1 million in Federal matching funds for a total of $36.8 million, which more than doubles the total behavioral health funding proposed ($28 million) in the supplemental budget.

Cullen updated the Council on the status of 2022 Bills being tracked by the policy committee with a special advocacy alert given for LB 2003 and 1968.

* **MSHA:** Lauren started today’s update by clarifying the State asked for additional requirements at the last minute before releasing the 10 million in shelter funding payments. In terms of Diversion, a work group has met, a survey on the program has been created and there is funding to cover costs for the rest of this year not only the 15 providers with contracts but as of June 1rst, there will be additional funding for more providers to participate. MSHA is exploring easier methods for service providers to start new housing development projects, if any agency is interested, Lauren asked for them to contact her for assistance.
* **MSN:** During their March meeting, the network invited Leigh Shields Church and Kara Zichichi two managers from CAN (CT’s version of HUBs) as guests to answer questions on experiences with their Shelter Redesign. The network also discussed how best to handle concerns with the Homeless Response Protocol and the role of the SHC Chair.
* **CDC Update:** The BA.2 variant is contributing to a bump in positive COVID cases throughout the Northeast. Lisa further detailed the situation in Maine by noting there is a significant rise in the waste water testing, it’s hard to get a number on cases with the amount of home tests being conducted and there is an insignificant number in the increase of hospitalizations.Lisa emphasized the importance of masking indoors, getting vaccinated/boosted and social distancing as the best proactive measures in congregant setting amongst high risk populations to prevent severe illness, hospitalizations and death. Lisa will research an answer to the question as to what can be shared when people test positive in shelters, refuse isolation and are in a mental health crisis.

**Meeting Format and Leadership Structure:**

A sub-committee of 16 volunteers met for the second time on March 21rst to finalize the process of selecting co-chairs and the role of the chair. The process for co-chairs is as follows:

1. Nominations will be accepted between now and the next Council meeting on May 10th
   1. Nominations should be sent to Betty LaBua by 12:00 pm Monday May 2nd with the nominee cc’d into the email to confirm they are willing to stand as a candidate.
   2. All nominees, regardless of the outcome of the vote, will be forwarded to the office of the Governor in a manner to be determined, and will be available for official appointment by the Governor. Notwithstanding this, the Governor may decide to appoint someone not on this list.
2. The vote will be held on May 10th at the next Council meeting:
   1. Voting members will be allowed to vote, one vote per agency, one vote per Regional Council Member, for a total of 14 votes.
   2. The (Interim) Chair will have the casting vote in the event of a tie.
   3. The two highest vote earners will be the new (interim) co-chairs (see Position Description)
   4. If a single person earns all 14 votes, a second round of voting will be held.
   5. State agencies with more than one regular attendee will be asked to confirm their voting member in advance of the vote.
3. Co-Chairs will take over for the June meeting and will continue in an “acting” position pending official appointment by the Governor.

The Role of the Chair is as follows: The Chair is responsible for-Ensuring the integrity and effectiveness of the Council’s governance role and processes, Presiding at meetings of the Council, Representing the Council within the state and Maintaining effective relationships with Council members, the Office of the Governor, the Legislature, Maine State Housing Authority (MaineHousing), the CoC, and other stakeholders. The Responsibilities include-The Council Chair ensures the Council meets its obligations and fulfills its responsibilities and The Chair oversees the quality of the Council’s governance processes including: Ensuring that the Council performs a governance role that respects and understands the unique role of MaineHousing and Ensuring that the Council’s governance structures and processes are reviewed, evaluated, and revised from time to time. As the presiding officer, the Chair is responsible for-

* Setting agendas and ensuring matters are dealt with to appropriately reflect the Council’s role and annual work plan. The Council Chair consults with MaineHousing and where possible develops the agenda at least 5 days prior to a meeting.
* Ensuring that meetings are conducted according to applicable legislation, where possible, and according to generally accepted principles of good governance.
* Facilitating the business of the Council, including preserving order at meetings.
* Encouraging input and ensuring that both sides of a debate or discussion are heard.
* Encouraging all members to participate and controlling dominant members.
* Facilitating decision-making.
* Ensuring relevant information is made available in a timely manner and that external advisors are available to assist as required.
* Ruling on procedural matters during meetings.
* Acting as the official spokesperson for the Council.
* Representing the Council within the state, attending and participating in events and meetings as required.
* Representing the Council in dealings with government and regulatory authorities
* Facilitating relationships with, and communication among, Council members and between Council members and MaineHousing, the Office of the Governor, the Legislature, and Executive Branch departments.
* Performing such other duties as the Council determines from time to time.

**Closing of FEMA Shelters & Impact on Shelter System:**

A robust conversation on the closing of the FEMA Shelters and its impact on the Shelter System lead these subsequent statements:

* The closings need to be recognized as a crisis, projected as a crisis and all hand are needed on deck
* There needs to be an awareness of non-visible homeless areas, a way to educate people about the homeless population, the level of lack of affordable housing and what it means for the future of communities.
* Need to look at and address what is driving the crisis?
* Need to lower barriers at the same time provide shelter for families with children
* Plan for the loss of seasonal housing.
* There is an increase of meth. usage.
* There is an influx of people moving from out of state that can work remotely and pay premium prices for housing.
* The needs to be a centralized way to identify open units with a broad search.
* Circumstantially homeless need help finding units and with security deposits and do not require all of the services needed by the chronically homeless
* Preventative measures are needed
* Real time data is necessary to look at specifics needs region to region
* Playbook needs to be drafted in order to educate communities and address NIMBY. This needs to have a unified message and local stories.
* Assist circumstantially homeless with RRH, navigation services, first month’s rent, security deposits and work closely with PHAs.
* Look at the gaps in the system.
* Municipal support is critical.
* Master leasing and shared housing should be explored.
* Provide ways for people to learn about the Fair Housing Laws, ways to enforce complaints and how to overcome hurdles with discrimination.

Due to the amount of points to discuss regarding this topic, a strategy meeting will be scheduled before May’s SHC meeting.

**Other Items:** The question as to whether or not to record council meetings was raised. General agreement was reached to table further discussion of this issue until the co-chairs are voted in

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 10, 2022.