

**Minutes  
Homeless Taskforce  
September 20, 2006  
United Way 245 N. Water  
7:00 – 8:30 am**

**Taskforce Members:**

Rev. Cheryl Jefferson Bell  Sue Castile  Gypsy Claar  Connie Dietz  
 Jack Focht  Patrick Hanrahan  Lou Heldman  Bernie Hudspeth  Bishop  
Michael Jackels  Bishop Scott Jones  Steve Martens  Janet L. Miller  Tim  
Norton  Marsha Stanyer  Mary K. Vaughn

Ex officio members:  Winston Brooks  Bill Buchanan  George Kolb

Staff:  Jenni Gluszek  Ron Holt  Beth Oaks  Jeff Porter  Gloria Summers

**Welcome**

Steve Martens called the meeting to order at 7 a.m.

**New Business**

**Wichita Public Libraries**

Cynthia Berner Harris, Director of Wichita Public Libraries, spoke about how the public library system interacts with the community's homeless population.

All users are asked to adhere to a code of conduct when utilizing the community's public libraries. If a person does not to adhere to the code of conduct they are asked to leave the premises or be banned from the library. In the last 36 months the libraries have seen an increase in activities which result in individuals being asked to leave the premises. With the increase in patron conduct issues library staff is spending more time in courses on personal safety and irate customers than on traditional library skills. They have also noticed an increase in usage of branch libraries by the homeless.

A ruling by the US Supreme Court prohibits libraries from denying services based on a lack of a permanent address. The staff at the libraries tends to leave homeless persons alone provided they are not causing problems for other patrons. Wichita Public Libraries offer a number of services and classes which could be of help to those looking to transition out of homelessness. The library attempts to steer receptive individuals toward such programs.

**Catholic Charities**

Janet Valente Pape and Kate Sims of Catholic Charities spoke about services provided to homeless families. Catholic Charities has two main shelter programs for homeless families in the area. Victims of domestic violence are served by the programs at Harbor House, while families homeless by other circumstances are served thorough St. Anthony Shelter.

Catholic Charities undertook a capital campaign to increase the capacity at their two shelter facilities. Harbor House has increased its capacity to 40 people from 22. The

Anthony Shelter increased its capacity from 32 to 50 people. Following the expansion Harbor House has still turned away 248 people in the first six months of the year. St. Anthony shelter had to turn away over 1,000 people in the 2005. Pape stated families are the most rapidly increasing segment of the homeless population.

The goal of Catholic Charities' is to stabilize those families utilizing the shelter and assist a smooth transition to some type of permanent housing. To aid in the transition Catholic Charities offers case management, food, life skills classes, and assistance with rent and food. Post transition services are also provided, but go underutilized by those who have used the shelters. There are three main barriers to this transition: 1) lack of affordable housing, 2) low wage employment, 3) poverty.

### **United Methodist Urban Ministries**

Deanne Smith spoke about the programs and services available through United Methodist Urban Ministries (UMUM).

UMUM operates a day shelter located in downtown Wichita. The capacity of the current building is limited to 57, but UMUM is working to increase capacity of the shelter. With a building of the right size UMUM could like to be serve 100 people a day. If it had the ability UMUM would like its center to operate 24 hours.

UMUM currently operates a transitional housing program, and is working with HUD to add a permanent supportive housing program. Finding housing is a significant problem for a number of populations like those with mental health issues, chemical dependency and those released from correctional institutions. Most programs do not offer enough or any funding to aid these populations.

One of the problems UMUM finds homeless citizens face is a lack of identification documents. The lack of documents like a Social Security Card, birth certificate or driver's license makes many things like signing up for government programs and applying for employment difficult.

### **Retreat**

Martens announced a survey was being passed around to use for planning a retreat for the group.

### **Announcements**

Members were informed that SRS is seeking comment on homeless prevention for those discharged from foster care. Comments are due to SRS by October 1, 2006. Those interested in submitting comment were encouraged to get them to Jeff or Jenni by September 28.

Martens asked the members prepare for a discussion about the scope of the enabling resolution and desired outcomes of the 10 year plan at the next meeting.

### **Adjournment**

Having no other business the meeting was adjourned at 8:24 am.