

**Minutes**  
**Homeless Taskforce**  
**October 26, 2006**  
**United Way 245 N. Water**  
**11:00 am – 5 pm**

**Taskforce Members:**

Rev. Cheryl Jefferson Bell  Sue Castille  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  Ron Holt

Staff:  Jenni Gluszek  Beth Oaks  Jeff Porter  Gloria Summers

**Welcome**

Jack Focht called the retreat to order at 11:13 a.m. and went over the day's agenda. He then introduced Janeen Benbenek with YWCA.

**New Business**

**YWCA**

The purpose of the YWCA shelter is to take care of women and children who are fleeing domestic violence. Individuals must be in eminent danger by a "partner:" someone they have a child with, someone the woman cohabitates with, a current or ex-husband, or someone the woman is dating. The goal of YWCA is to make a woman feel as safe as possible.

The YWCA is funded by the Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA), the Attorney General's Office and through private funds. The YWCA staff help women process if they have other options. Additionally, staff assist women with protection orders, divorce or custody papers, etc. Because the shelter's capacity is only 20-25 (including children), YWCA often refers women out to other shelters such as the Salvation Army or United Methodist. The biggest challenge facing the YWCA is sheltering families with older children. Specifically males over the age of 12 cannot be housed at the YWCA which means the family has to be split up or referred to another shelter.

Last year 300 women were served; 450 the year prior. The reason for the decline in women served is because the length of stay increased, not because demand has decreased. On average, women stay at the shelter for 30 days.

**Salvation Army**

Major Smith presented on the services provided by the Salvation Army shelter. (See PowerPoint handout of presentation.) Some of the main programs Major Smith covered were the transitional housing project which houses individuals and families for up to two years. Residents are expected to do some property maintenance while they live on the grounds.

The primary reason cited for homelessness is a lack of affordable housing. Other reasons cited include mental health issues, substance abuse, domestic violence, family disruption (divorce, death, etc), minimum wage jobs without benefits, medical issues and a lack of childcare.

The Salvation Army does not believe a low barrier 24/7 shelter will adequately address the issue of homelessness, but instead a solution which offers a variety of services is necessary. More space is needed in day centers. Further, Major Smith believes that chronic homelessness will always exist to some point but efforts should focus on “Preventing, Reducing and assisting those who are in the situation.”

### **Wichita Children’s Home**

Sarah Robinson, of the Wichita Children’s Home spoke about how homelessness affects populations her organization serves. Children primarily end up at the Wichita Children’s home if their parents are unable to care for them. In cases where a family enters a homeless shelter and the shelter cannot accommodate the child a private admission is possible. The child can leave when the family transitions back to permanent housing.

### **Housing Trust Funds**

Mary Brooks of the Center for Community Change spoke about how housing trusts can be used to address affordable housing concerns. Brooks spoke about programs in Ohio, Florida, Arizona and Illinois use different methods and funding streams to assure affordable housing.

To ensure success a housing trust must have the following attributes:

- An on-going government commitment of public funds.
- A community-based process to create and sustain the fund.
- A component of housing policy that drives innovation and cooperation.
- A flexible model that can adapt to changing market conditions.

Possible funding sources for housing trusts highlighted were:

- Unclaimed property fund
- Real estate transfer tax
- Document recording fees

Document recording fees are the leading revenue source for the housing trusts profiled by Brooks. The main obstacle in increasing such fees is the area home builders and real estate firms. It was noted that in many instances the opposition from groups is short lived because increased home ownership is good for such groups.

### **Ten Year Plans**

Kari Bedell of the National Alliance to End Homelessness spoke about best practices related to composing 10-year plans. Bedell stated homeless services are becoming an institution due to a number of factors, including closing of inpatient facilities, losses of federal funding for public housing and other mainstream programs.

Bedell highlighted the need to involve stakeholder groups who may have differing levels of involvement, noting it is important to include them in the process. It is also important to

have an organization to coordinate the process. In most instances the implementation body acts as coordinator.

Bedell reviewed the following 10 essential components of plans to address homelessness:

- Data
- Emergency prevention
- Systems Prevention
- Outreach
- Shorten Homelessness
- Rapid Re-housing
- Services
- Permanent housing
- Income

Bedell distributed copies of 10 year plans for Albany, NY Anchorage AK, and Chattanooga, TN. all of the communities are of a size similar to Wichita/Sedgwick County. Each of the plans represents a different way to create and implement a plan.

**Adjournment**

Having no other business the retreat was adjourned at 4:34 p.m.