

Minutes
Homeless Taskforce
MEETING DATE: May 30, 2007
United Way

Taskforce Members

Rev. Cheryl Jefferson Bell Sue Castile Gypsy Claar Connie Dietz
 Jack Focht Patrick Hanrahan Lou Heldman 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

Welcome

Jack Focht called the meeting to order at 7 a.m. Minutes were approved.

New Business

Logistics

Jack Focht stated he would like to set September 1 as the deadline for a draft/outline of the plan. This leaves six more meetings between the present meeting and the deadline. A gap analysis should help the taskforce move forward towards this end. At the next meeting a draft of a gap analysis will be ready for the taskforce to dissect and work from. Funding is another issue that must be addressed. While government is part of the solution, funding will need to be secured from organizations other than government as well.

Overflow Shelter

The next item on the agenda was the overflow shelter. Due to the fact that the taskforce's plan will likely not be implemented by this winter, a plan for the 2007-2008 overflow shelter is necessary. Some debate occurred regarding whether or not the overflow shelter was within the scope and mission of the taskforce. Because an overflow shelter serves the chronically homeless, those most resistant to service, it was determined this facility fell within the taskforce's area of influence.

How to improve the overflow from the year prior was the primary issue discussed. Both the overflow facility as well as the RFP process used to select an operator need improvement. Besides the homeless and many community advocates, last year's operator, the Salvation Army, was not pleased with the 06-07 shelter. The reason cited that the shelter was not as effective as it had been in the past was a lack of planning time. Taskforce members stated the RFP should be made available within a month to allow ample planning time.

Another issue with the overflow shelter is the lack of expectations. Taskforce members stated it was time to raise the expectations: wrap-around services should be part of the RFP for the shelter. Research has led taskforce members to believe supportive services are necessary to end homelessness.

Discussion moved to how the United Methodist Open Door Shelter may work as a funnel or central intake center for the shelter system, specifically during the winter when the overflow shelter operates. While the Open Door may serve well as an intake center, questions arose to where the homeless should be sent during the winter, when the permanent shelters are at capacity. While a central intake/assessment center seems a logical need, the division in the community occurs with regard to whether or not there should be beds at that location (24/7 shelter). Another option, or a supplemental solution, would be having each homeless system

point-of-entry able to direct and refer individuals to the correct location(s) for the services they are needing, including emergency shelter beds.

One recommendation was to release a RFP similar to the one released last year in order to give adequate time to the operating agency to prepare for this huge task. Then, in a few months a second RFP for wrap around services for the winter overflow shelter could be released. The same agency that receives the contract to facilitate the overflow shelter may apply for the service RFP as well, if they wish. Debbie Donaldson, Mary K. Vaughn and Beth Oaks are the three individuals who write the winter overflow shelter RFP. All were in attendance and Vaughn voiced the opinion that the three women could put the RFP together based on that morning's conversation. One question the women will have to consider is how to fund two RFPs with the limited United Way, County and City dollars.

Another question that occurred was whether or not a set of metrics exists that states what went well and where areas to improve exist from last year's operator (Salvation Army). Although the RFP asks for a report in March following the overflow season, this is simply a report of the number of individuals who used the overflow. The report does not provide the detail necessary to improve the next RFP. This is another suggestion that should be added to the RFP for 07-08.

Another suggestion was to have the RFP award last 3-5 years. This would create some consistency and stability in the process. The operator would know for a significant amount of time that they would be operating this facility. Further, lessons learned from the prior winter could be implemented the following year.

Taskforce members asked to see the RFP from last year. Beth Oaks sent this electronically to the taskforce later that afternoon.

Conversation moved lastly to the criminal justice system and what the Municipal and District Courts are doing to prevent homeless individuals from going to jail. The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council for the County has worked on multiple jail alternative programs which may or may not impact the homeless. These include work release, Sedgwick County Offender Assessment Program and drug and mental health courts. The City already has a drug court.

The meeting closed with Jack Focht, Janet Miller and Cheryl Bell agreeing to work on a gap analysis of homeless services in Wichita. This topic will be discussed at the next meeting on Wednesday, June 13 at 7 a.m.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 a.m.