

Minutes
Homeless Taskforce
MEETING DATE: August 22, 2007
American Red Cross

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.

Inventory of Emergency Beds

Due to conflicting reported numbers of beds in emergency shelters, the TECH subcommittee determined they would like to have an individual researcher go to each of the local emergency shelters to count the number and type of beds. Type of bed could mean cot, bed, mat or other. Patrice Hutton, a senior at Johns Hopkins University who was home for the summer, offered to do the research.

Janet shared that related to this topic she had spent substantial time analyzing the census data provided at the last meeting by the United Way. She found that of the 120 winter nights, 77 nights there were more than regular emergency capacity can accommodate (335). This answers the concern that the overflow shelter simply shifts the population from one shelter to another. There are anywhere from 1-49 additional individuals sheltered nightly via the overflow shelter last winter. Capacity of emergency and overflow shelters combined (410) was never reached. Related to this topic, the United Way provided a handout on the temperatures for each date during the past winter. For a copy of this handout, contact Jenni Gluszek at jgluszek@sedgwick.gov.

Update of subcommittee meeting

The subcommittee met with the Sandy Swank, Director of Homeless Services for InterFaith and Mary K. Vaughn, City of Wichita Housing Director. Mary K. discussed Wichita housing stock with the subcommittee. Swank discussed her involvement with the Kansas Interagency Council on Homelessness. This Council involves many state agencies with members appointed by the Governor. Besides the state Council, Shawnee and Johnson/Wyandotte Counties are working on homeless plans right now too; however TECH is ahead of them in terms of research and planning.

The state Council has been meeting for 3 years with the majority of progress occurring this year. Their plan incorporates entitlement areas (Wichita, Salina, Shawnee and Wyandotte Counties) as well as the balance of the state. The plan is approximately 75 pages long. The state Council will meet Thursday the 30th in Topeka. Anyone interested in attending these meetings and receiving their emails should send an email to Robin Jackson at rjackson@kshousingcorp.org. Please include the following in your email: name, agency Affiliation (TECH), e-mail address, mailing address and contact phone number.

While Sandy met with the subcommittee, they asked her opinion of the continued need for emergency shelters if permanent housing was made available for the homeless. She relayed that she would love to shut down the shelter if the need no longer existed. Sandy went on to state there will always be a need

for some shelter beds because there is a short period of time where individuals must be evaluated, stabilized and placed into permanent housing; the number of beds is what is in question.

Updates to Elected Officials

Two updates are scheduled to brief elected officials on the progress of the taskforce. One update will be given to the City Council on September 18 at 9 a.m. during a City Council meeting. The second update is for the Board of County Commissioners on September 19 at 9 a.m. at the Board of County Commissioners meeting. While all citizens are welcome to attend both meetings, this will not be a time for public comment. Taskforce members are encouraged to attend and support Jack while he presents.

Town Hall Meeting

The taskforce decided to hold a town hall meeting on Sunday, September 23, from 3-5 p.m. The town hall meeting is scheduled to bring stakeholders together to receive input. Public comment will facilitate community consensus about the gaps in services before solutions are developed. Transportation will be provided by downtown churches so that homeless individuals can attend the town hall meeting.

Questions were raised about facilitating the town hall meeting. Some Taskforce members support small groups with facilitators while other members want a large group discussion. It was decided that Wichita State University's Self-Help Network will be consulted to assist the taskforce on how to facilitate the town hall meeting.

Funding

Discussion moved to how to fund a plan to end chronic homelessness. Some felt the combined general fund contributions of the City and County of \$25,000 should increase and other funding sources must be explored. While Sedgwick County provides services that can be utilized by the homeless, resources are needed to aid in housing homeless individuals. It was stated that the faith-based community is taking on much of the responsibility for the homeless, but more stakeholders need to be involved.

Concerns were expressed about uniting the faith-based community to fight homelessness. Currently, many faith-based organizations work independently. Because chronic homelessness is a community issue, taskforce members stressed that it is imperative to unite the faith-based community to make progress on this issue.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 a.m.