**Leadership Council
April 28, 2015**

*In attendance: Father Stan Aksamit, Our Lady of Peace Parish, Jim Ayres, United Way of Hampshire County, Bonnie Caldwell, DHCD, Dave Christopolis, Hilltown CDC, Patricia Crosby, Franklin Hampshire Career Center, Ken Demers, BerkshireWorks, Sylvia deHaas-Phillips, Doreen Fadus, Mercy Medical Center, Health Care for the Homeless, Judge Robert Fields, Housing Court, United Way of Pioneer Valley, Joanne LaCour, DTA, Dave Gadaire, CareerPoint, Heidi Gold, Simtech Solutions, Brad Gordon, Berkshire Regional Housing Authority, Jen Hohn, City of North Adams, Steve Huntley, Valley Opportunity Council, Peg Keller, City of Northampton, Joan Kagan, Square One, Charlie Knight, consumer, Joanne LaCour, DTA, Gerry McCafferty, City of Springfield, Andrea Miller, Waypoints Consulting, Bill Miller, Friends of the Homeless, Dave Modzelewski, REACH, Andrew Morehouse, Food Bank of Western Mass., Jerry Ray, Mental Health Association, Mary Reardon Johnson, YWCA, Megan Rhodes, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, George Ryan, Hampden County Regional Employment Board, Jay Sacchetti, ServiceNet, Pamela Schwartz, Network, Jim Sherbo, People’s Bank, Robin Sherman, Franklin Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Matt Simmonds, Simtech Solutions, Lynne Wallace, HAPHousing, Jennifer Wuest, Behavioral Health Network*

**Motion to approve minutes of January 21, 2015 Leadership Council meeting**Motion:: Charlie Knight
Seconded: Jen Hohn
Vote: Unanimous; Abstention: Joanne

**Western Massachusetts Opening Doors Plan to End Homelessness:**
*Draft plan summary presented by Andrea Miller, Matt Simmonds and Heidi Gold*Please see attached presentation.

Comments:

Numbers on family homelessness are skewed in relation to national numbers due to our state’s right to shelter law – it creates a unique phenomenon

Our very low unsheltered population (as compared nationally) is a great success for our region, although it should also be noted our New England weather is a factor (makes it more difficult to sleep outside many months of the year).

Unaccompanied homeless youth are not showing up on baseline statistics but of course they are out there. HUD’s definition of homeless youth is so narrow that it misses many who should be counted. It’s also very difficult to “find” homeless youth when doing the Point in Time count. We have more to do around figuring out how to find and track population.

Do we track people moving from homeless to chronic homeless in terms of meeting the definition. HUD is changing the definition of “chronic” right now; this will have an impact on our count in due course.

Our solutions will be limited until we meet the shortage of affordable housing units.

This Plan and data tools are intended to maximize the investment made in housing so that the “right” people (those who are most in need) are occupying the available units.

There are other costs not measured strictly by housing need, e.g., dislocation of kids with multiple moves, health issues – the question is how expansive is the cost-benefit analysis, which is especially relevant in rural areas.

In order to provide complete baselines and tracking, we need to have access to DHCD data, which DHCD is not permitting at this point. We will continue to engage DHCD and HUD and seek a more workable solution with DHCD.

Most national trends demonstrate the rate of homelessness going down, but MA is going up. Why is that? With family homelessness, we can’t get the data to understand why we’re there.

This Plan is intended to educate all of us to say we need to understand where problems are to have an impact. At some point, the LC may say to the State it’s outrageous that we have so many hundreds of homeless families and we can’t get any data on them to understand how to get them into housing –

The Leadership Council has a role in trying to get performance measures at a high enough level so people who are not in the “homelessness” world can understand it and can pull out the largest pieces to determine what we can impact.

We know some communities have ended veteran homelessness. How have they done it? Can we do what they do? If not, why not? This Plan will give us a level of detail to push us to the necessary changes; to look at what we’re doing as a collective of agencies and how we can drive closer to our goal of ending homelessness.

We need to have housing subsidies and supportive services to make a lasting difference.

But we can measure how much is just enough assistance?

Homelessness is part of the larger problem of poverty – there are so many variables impacting what it will take to meet the problem of homelessness; it can be more difficult to measure

We will use our Network committees to wrestle with this. We need to hear from the ground what is necessary and can pursue the data needed to meaningful measure the work.

Community education is critical to the work – how do we combat the “not in my back yard” attitude that is pervasive. We are losing the PR battle where so many people think MA is a “chump” for having a right to shelter law. We need to educate and personalize the story of homelessness. Need to work on our messaging and framing.

**State Budget Advocacy Update**

Pamela provided an update on the FY16 budget process. The House is debating its budget right now. On our priorities:

1. Secure Jobs’ amendment for $2 million proposed by Rep. Wagner (Chicopee) and has many W. Mass. supporters.
2. HCEC – requested funding was in House Budget – great victory!
3. Individual shelter funding: amendments pending to increase line-item (including one from Rep. Gonzalez from Springfield)
4. Tenancy Preservation Project – amendment for $1 million funding pending
5. Unaccompanied homeless youth – amendments for requested funding pending
6. Network funding for $125,000 – Rep. Kocot sponsored an amendment with co-sponsors from our region – Rep. Farley-Bouvier, Rep. Mark, Rep. Scibak, Rep. Vega, Rep. Velis – a great cross-section of support across the four counties.

Pamela has met with roughly 10 legislators from across the region – with various Network partners – to advocate for our priorities. Very productive meetings with very receptive and supportive legislators!

**Network by-laws amendment**

Andrew presented on a Steering Committee proposal to amend the current Network by-laws to allow for the past Network chair to remain on the Steering Committee for one year following the end of the term. This will allow for greater continuity and the carrying over of previous Chair’s knowledge and expertise into the new term.

Motion: Charlie Knight
Seconded: Father Stan
Vote: Unanimously in favor
Abstentions: Joanne LaCour, Lynne Wallace
Joanne- abstain, Lynne

**FY15 YTD financial statement**

Sylvia distributed the FY15 budget update. The DHCD Phase 1 contract is signed; Phase 2 is waiting for their return signature, but we should be all set. The budget shows we will likely have a $6k-$7K carryover (non DHCD funds) for next fiscal year.

**FY16 Network budget planning**

Andrew summarized status of our FY16 budget prospects. Pamela is working on 2 separate budgets, one that includes DHCD funding, one that doesn’t. Without DHCD funding, we do not have the same secured funding as in the past. We will need to do some work planning to account for possibility of not having DHCD funding – what are our priorities, how should we focus our work on specific actionable items. This is an opportunity to do reflect. Andrew welcomes feedback from LC members.

Lindsay Errichetto noted that it would be useful to alternate meeting locations for committee meetings. Pamela will follow-up about that.

**National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) Clinic – 6/3-6/4**

This clinic – 6/3 and 6/4 (6/4 for Leadership Council members) is an important opportunity for us to use the resources and expertise of NAEH to augment our process; to learn more how our collective action can reduce homelessness, how our funding and advocacy decisions can make the most difference. We will be gaining a better understanding of system change and the collective impact concept and the difference both can make.

**Next Leadership Council meeting**

We agreed we will attach our Summer Leadership Council meeting to the end of the 6/4 clinic, so we will meet as a Leadership Council on June 4, 12:30-1:30 pm, at the U-Mass Springfield location. This will be a very important meeting as we will be approving our FY16 budget.

**Thursday, June 4
12:30-1:30 pm
UMass-Springfield, Classroom 14
1500 Main Street**

12 noon: Meeting adjourned.