

Western MA Task Force For Housing First Meeting Minutes - 4/12/22

In attendance: MJ Adams, City of Greenfield, Tom Bernard, Berkshire United Way, Alexis Breiteneicher, Valley CDC, Rep. Dan Carey, Senator Jo Comerford, Corinne Coryat, Office of Rep. Natalie Blais, Justine Dodds, City of Pittsfield, Sean Donovan, Northampton Dept. of Community Care, Senator Jo Comerford, Rep. Patricia Duffy, Rep. Tricia Farley-Bouvier, Ethan Flaherty, Office of Rep. Pease, Erin Forbush, ServiceNet, Koby Gardner-Levine, Office of Congressman Jim McGovern, Rep. Carlos González, Gina Govoni, Franklin Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Rick Hart, Hampshire County Friends of the Homeless, Clare Higgins, Community Action Pioneer Valley, Jenn Hohn, North Adams Housing Authority, Lamari Jackson, Office of Senator Gomez, Denise Jordan, Springfield Housing Authority, Kathy Keeser, Louison House, Jay Levy, Eliot Services, Gerry McCafferty, City of Springfield/Hampden CoC, Deb McLaughlin, Franklin County Opioid Task Force, Jen Metsch, Office fo Senator Eric Lesser, Matt Mainville, Holyoke Housing Authority, Gilad Meron, Community Action/Resilience Hub, Peter Miller, City of Westfield, Kevin Noonan, Craig's Doors, Katie O'Leary, Office of Rep. Domb, Merridith O'Leary, Northampton Board of Health, Rep. Jake Oliveira, Marissa Otero, Office of Senator John Velis, Rep. Kelly Pease, Keith Rhone, Friends of the Homeless, Kim Rivera, Lionel Romain, CEDAC, Office of Rep. Williams, Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa, Jay Sacchetti, ServiceNet, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Jodi Smith, Way Finders, Cheryl Spinks, Office of Rep. Angelo Puppolo, Joyce Tavon, MHSA, Alan Wolf, City of Northampton, Rose Webster-Smith, Springfield No One Leaves, Janette Vigo, Way Finders, Darryl Williams, Office of Rep. Bud Williams, Susan Worgaftik, Greening Greenfield,

Shelter Updates

Note: DHCD is projecting the funding ability to maintain current shelter capacity through FY23 (assuming the Governor's proposed funding level of \$80 million for individual shelter is the minimum level funded). The immediate issue for our region is the location of shelter in churches that agreed to offer its space only through April 30.

Northampton (ServiceNet): First Churches in Northampton closing on 4/29 - emergency shelter will be moved to the interfaith cot shelter - during pandemic times the capacity was at 10 but the good news is that capacity can be increased to 14 (subject to condo assoc approval); also at Grove Street shelter, capacity can be increased by 4 beds from 14 to 19 beds total. There will be a loss of 7 beds relative to current capacity, which is good news relative to the loss that was feared. Meanwhile, housing placement work continues to prevent people from having to return to unsheltered living.

Greenfield (ServiceNet) is staying steady with 30 beds at Wells Street shelter. Almost always full.

Pittsfield (ServiceNet) continues to use St. Joe's High School with a capacity of 50 beds - frequently full.

Amherst (Craig's Doors): Agreement underway with Knights Inn in Hadley for 21 rooms (42 beds) to be funded through FY23. Unfortunately, the hotel will not be made available until June

1. As of now the two church sites - Immanuel Lutheran Church (23 beds) and the UU (14 beds) are slated to close 4/30 (conversations underway to see if one month extension is possible). This will leave a month long gap for these individuals.

Note on Community Foundation Funds for Hampshire/Franklin Counties: Providers are continuing to coordinate around purchasing of tents and other camping supplies for individuals for whom there is no alternative and/or opt for living outdoors in warmer weather (thanks to Theresa Nicholson of CHD for coordinating).

North Adams (Louison House): continuing to operate 15 motel rooms in Adams and 2 in Williamstown (these 2 will close at the end of April). Will seek confirmation from DHCD that funding will continue through FY23 (note: confirmation obtained).

Holyoke: continuing to operate its 45 beds at the Motel 6.

Springfield: continuing at capacity, always full.

Housing Updates

- Valley CDC: continuing work the Hadley Econo-Lodge with a purchase and sale agreement; (approx. 50 units) continuing work with the Northampton nursing home for development (approx. 60 units); Amherst units under construction (28 units).
- Low-threshold supportive housing continues to be developed. In Greenfield, 8 units fully occupied. More under development in Springfield and Holyoke.
- Safe Havens supported shelter (7 new beds) in Greenfield fully occupied. Will continue advocacy for additional funding for this resource.
- Both the Hampden and Three County CoCs have funding in the pipeline for permanent supportive housing projects in their regions (stay tuned for more detail).

Rental Assistance Update and Advocacy

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) will stop taking applications on April 15. Statewide advocacy is underway to urge legislators to use remaining federal emergency dollars and/or the state surplus to replenish these funds. A press conference in Boston mid-day Tuesday and a [rally in Springfield](#) that evening will draw attention to this issue (note: since our meeting [this action alert](#) was also released).

Applications for rental assistance are staying constant, according to both Way Finders and Franklin County Regional Housing Authority, with Way Finders reporting 100-150 applications every day. Rose Webster-Smith of Springfield No One Leaves also reported that executions on evictions are continuing on a daily basis and petitions for foreclosure are rising significantly.

FY23 Budget Update

The House Ways and Means Committee is about to release its FY23 budget, which will be followed by the filing and co-sponsoring of amendments. Here are the Network's [FY23 budget](#)

[priorities](#) as a point of reference. Rep. Farley-Bouvier noted the importance in our advocacy of listing all amendment numbers and sponsors. The Network will utilize its blog for advocacy updates ([subscribe here!](#)) and will be in touch with legislators as this information becomes clear.

Other Network News:

- Be sure to [register](#) for the [Network's Annual Event](#) - we are at over 300 people registered - please join us!
- Congrats on the Network's award from the Mass Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA) for May 5 - [go here](#) for more details.

Next meeting date: Thursday, May 12, 9 am