

Western MA Task Force for Housing First Meeting Minutes - 6/14/22

In attendance: Bruce Adams, Office of Rep. Puppolo, MJ Adams, City of Greenfield, Juan Anderson-Burgos, Office of Rep. Duffy, Alexis Breitenreicher, Valley CDC, Kate Coulehan, Construct, Justine Dodds, City of Pittsfield, Rep. Mindy Domb, Ethan Flaherty, Office of Rep. Pease, Lisa Fletcher-Udel, Office of Rep. Farley-Bouvier, Erin Forbush, ServiceNet, Jeff Harness, Cooley-Dickinson Hospital Rick Hart, Hampshire County Friends of Homeless, Alyssa Larose, Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Meredith Lewis, Community Foundation of Western MA, Jay Levy, Eliot Services, Matt Mainville, Holyoke Housing Authority, Jeff Markham, Community Foundation of Western MA, Gerry McCafferty, Hampden CoC/City of Springfield, Tim McCarthy, Craig's Doors, Jen Metsch, Office of Senator Lesser, Bill Miller, Friends of the Homeless/CSO, Keleigh Pereira, 3 County CoC/CAPV, Jane Ralph, Construct, Keith Rhones, FOH/CSO, Phil Ringwood, DIAL/SELF, Kim Rivera, Office of Rep. Williams, Lionel Romain, CEDAC, Rep. Lindsay Sadosa, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Cherie Spinks, Office of Rep. Puppolo, Joyce Tavon, MHSA, Eileen Tosado, Way Finders, Susan Worgaftik, Housing Greenfield

Shelter Updates

Pittsfield (ServiceNet): in St Joe's High School, averaging 42 people/night, working towards opening a new shelter in the next few months

Greenfield (ServiceNet): Wells Street continues at capacity with 30 people

Northampton (ServiceNet): 2 sites continue - Grove Street with 19 people; interfaith cot shelter operating with 10-14 people

North Adams (Louison House, via email): will maintain 6 motel rooms through the summer, then 10-12 in fall and up to full 16 by November. Working via a sub-contract from MHSA.

Amherst (Craig's Doors): The organization is in administrative transition - Kevin Noonan, the former executive director, resigned. Tim McCarthy, the new Director of Operations is taking over representing Craig's Doors at this and other meetings. Welcome, Tim! Craig's Doors continues to operate at Knights Inn in Hadley with 32 guests; University Motor Lodge has 38. Good progress being made on finding permanent housing for guests.

Holyoke (Center for Human Development): continuing at the Motel 6, increased capacity to 46 beds. Getting close to opening new low-threshold permanent housing with 40 new units in Holyoke. This will be significant for moving people from the hotel to permanent housing.

Springfield (Friends of the Homeless/Clinical Support Options): status quo on shelter most notable is housing 70 people with low threshold program in Westfield to Greenfield - expressed concern about FY23 state budget and urgency around the Legislature adopting the higher level of funding for individual shelter in the House budget (budget is currently in conference committee).

Youth shelter update for Franklin/Hampshire (DIAL/SELF): DIAL/SELF has regained access to Quality Inn in Northampton; 3 youth in hotel shelter there the last week plus, and have youth in Greenfield hotel as well. Funding is capped right now based on project shelter stay length with current youth through June. Still have capacity for under 18.

Encampment discussion:

The group reviewed encampments in the area, which are predictably numerous at this time of year. Amherst shared positive progress at one encampment, working in partnership with Eliot

Services to build communication and address some immediate needs and support people to move to shelter/housing. Was at 15 people, now down to 11. Northampton, Greenfield, Holyoke and Springfield all have encampments.

An uptick in people sleeping in cars was also noted.

Prevention Update:

Way Finders reported serving 4,343 households in May for a total of \$8.8 million, averaging about 100 applications/day with a processing time of 4 weeks. The volume is high and many households are being found ineligible due to being over-income or other limitations that stem from RAFT (as distinct from the federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) which is no longer available).

Advocacy Update:

Pamela pointed out the relationship between the demand for RAFT dollars reported above and current advocacy around strengthening RAFT (in Conference Committee) and ensuring passage of the more generous provisions between the House and Senate budgets, as well as passage of key bills (e.g., [the COVID-19 Housing Equity bill](#)) - see recent blog post [here](#) for more details on how we can act together to push responses to this unmet need. Be sure to [subscribe](#) to stay connected as these next weeks are crucial for both budget and legislative pushes.

Pamela thanked our Western MA legislators and staff for bringing these concerns to Legislative Leadership.

New Permanent Supportive Housing Funding available:

Joyce Tavon summarized the new \$15 million funding pool available through a joint initiative of Mass. Alliance for Supportive Housing (MASH). Please [GO HERE](#) for the details on the types of funding that is available and how to apply.

FY22 Supplemental Budget includes \$10 million for PSH:

Joyce also summarized the additional \$10 million targeted for Permanent Supportive Housing in the Governor's supplemental budget as part of the state's roll-out of its new "One Door" policy (breaking down silos, filling gaps). See press release [here](#).

Continuum of Care Domestic Violence Initiatives: Both CoCs have received HUD funding to expand the work of its coordinated entry system to better meet the needs of survivors. For the 3 County CoC, this includes funding housing navigators to specifically support this population. For Hampden County: multiple DV providers are working together to improve coordinated access to DV-specific housing. This summer they are increasing transitional and rapid rehousing assistance for DV survivors.

Announcements:

The Community Foundation of Western MA is about to release an RFP for food security grants ranging from \$20,000 to \$200,000 to be used for 6 months from September, 2022 to March,

2023. Stay tuned or please contact Meredith Lewis at mlewis@communityfoundation.org for more information.

Open House for new supportive housing development in Northampton (5 Franklin Street):
Friday, July 8, 5-7 pm. This will be an exciting opportunity to see the building and celebrate the progress (it should be open in the next few weeks and will house 16 chronically homeless individuals with severe challenges).

Next meeting date:

Thursday, July 14, 9 am