

Hampden County Individual Services Committee Meeting Minutes - October 25, 2022

In attendance: Tanja Alessi, CSO, Michele Carr, Eliot Services, Kevin Cavanaugh, Samaritan Inn, Lynn Conway, Eliot Services, Tanisha Daniels, FOH/CSO, Kim Fontaine, Eliot Services, Dave Havens, MHA, Janice Humason, CSO/FOH, Mark Jachym, Springfield CTC, Jay Levy, Eliot Services, Sara Lopez, CSO/FOH, Gerry McCafferty, City of Springfield/Hampden CoC, Jeff McLeod, Eliot Services, Bill Miller, CSO, Liz Plouffe, City of Easthampton, Theresa Nicholson, CHD, Lizzy Ortiz, C3, Omyara Quinones, Salasin Project, Jess Salvas, Eliot Services, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Edgar Vaskayan, CSO/FOH, Kathy West, Eliot Services, Chris Zabik, DMH

Shelter updates - this winter season; the procurement for next year and beyond:

Procurement Updates:

Friends of the Homeless: DHCD renewed the FOH contract in Springfield. Have typically handled about 175 individuals in the past especially during the busiest times. FOH was funded for 175 beds instead of the historic 133. It put CSO in a better fiscal year to take care of their front-line staff. CSO is picking up Northampton and Greenfield next spring. There is a substantial project going on in Greenfield that includes shelter and housing. Considering their options to do something substantial in Northampton.

CHD: Renewed funding for motel 6 for 48 beds. Funded for outreach and triage in all 4 counties and CHD has innovative ideas on how to get individuals into shelter. CHD will have one number where providers or clients will call to be triaged and to assess what their needs are. They have about \$500,00.00 and will get a triage worker. There is money for rides, transportation, and additional motel funds to stay for the night while their needs are being assessed the following morning.

Catholic Charities: Coming to an end of the hotel program funded by ESG-CV. We have been waiting to see if they obtain any additional money because there was worry about them completely shutting down the hotel program. DHCD has given them a little more ESG-CV. They had been holding off on taking new people, but they just took someone today. These DHCD funds will last until April 2023; funding is uncertain after that.

Samaritan Inn: Had a little bit of covid outbreak and bouncing back from that. They stay at full capacity every day and trying to get people into other houses but running into the same problems as everyone else. Currently no DHCD funding to continue Samaritan Inn as of April 2023, but the executive director is optimistic they will acquire funding from other sources (possibly the city of Westfield) to stay open.

Service Net: Will continue this winter to manage Northampton (down 5 beds relative to last year due to shift from First Churches) and Greenfield and Pittsfield. Under the new procurement next year in Pittsfield, the shelter location will move from St. Joe's to Barton's Crossing and be 40 beds instead of the max 50 at the high school. ServiceNet also received funding for small shelter capacity in Southern Berkshires.

Louison house, North Adams – capacity will continue the same this year and under the new procurement (roughly 20 beds).

Craig's Doors, Amherst: Shifting from 40 beds in Knights Inn to congregate shelter at Immanuel Lutheran Church (23 beds), so a loss of 17 beds. Next Spring: Funded to maintain the 23 beds at the church; University motor lodge -40 beds via ESG funding that is committed through 2024

Elliot Services: Jay formally announced Michele Carr working with Elliot as part of the Commonwealth Care Alliance (CCA). Michele was hired as the housing first coordinator and Edwin Suarez as a recovery coach, and they are working jointly at the recovery center that will serve CCA members dealing with homelessness. Michele will be part of these meetings, coordinated entry meetings and placing people on the by name list, and providing housing options.

Easthampton: Fortunate to be granted \$7000 from DHCD for emergency needs for homeless folks and partnering with Craig's Doors as the pass through agency. It's a great start to have some sheltering out of Easthampton. Thanks to Liz and Mayor LaChapelle for leadership on this.

Shelter capacity updates:

FOH: Shelter is close to maximum capacity (for overflow, already at contract capacity). Raised issue regarding stalled EA applications for pregnant women for whom FOH shelter is not an appropriate placement. Pamela reported DHCD's acknowledgment of the extraordinary demand right now with an influx of Haitian refugee families. Pamela will follow-up with FOH and DHCD to try to further address this issue.

Theresa reiterated that the family system is overwhelmed between Boston and Hampden County. About 80 families in hotels waiting to be placed in EA. CHD has 52 as of today and half of them are Haitian refugees. Had to work closely with resettlement programs. Shout-out to Jewish Family Services who has stepped up to provide critical support.

CHD: Its low-threshold housing with 40 beds will be opening by 12/1 (hopefully). There are applications for anyone who wants to refer folks; will send to Pamela to post on blog. Criteria: There are already individuals that are slotted that have been in the motel 6 for a long time. The mayor has requested that some individuals living outdoors be housed. We will stay tuned on further clarity re: criteria as the opening gets closer.

Good news: Mark Jachym reported a great success in placing an extremely vulnerable individual in motel shelter just today. Amazing collaboration by partners (special shout-out to Catholic Charities and Gerry). Great work!

NEW Temporary Housing RFR just released: This is \$10 million DPH/BSAS money; renewable in 2-year periods. Intended to complement DPH's low-threshold permanent supportive housing program that is currently getting off the ground (in W. MA via CSO and CHD). The expectation is roughly 3-5 projects, total of roughly 200 beds, presuming a timeline of roughly 6 months of temporary housing before being permanently housed. Applications are due November 28 to get funding out by January. See more here:
<https://www.westernmasshousingfirst.org/resources/2022/new-opportunity-temporary-low-threshold-housing-rfr-released-due-nov-28/>

Note: The City of Springfield has put HOME-ARP funds aside for non-congregate shelter which could provide a match for the new DPH funds. It must be used within the City of Springfield.

CoC updates: Unsheltered homelessness application for over \$4.5m is in to HUD! Will find out late winter, early spring. If funded, the CoC will get \$1.5m for 3 years and it becomes renewable after that. It will fund 8 outreach and housing navigation positions and 30 vouchers. This is on top of the 87 units of PSH that are in the pipeline – FOH has 36 units, and MHA, 21 units and Home City Housing with MHA for another 20 units. These units will hopefully be operational by 2024.

Homeless Service Fair: The CoC has been conducting extensive outreach in Holyoke and as a result, a service fair is taking place on 11/10, 9-10:30 am at the Holyoke Public Library. This is intended to provide greater support in getting connected to services. Working with all the key partners with the Mayor's support (he will be in attendance).

Coordinated entry discussion, revisiting assessment tool: The CoC is ready to revisit its assessment tool – the VISPDAT – to help determine a better tool. The Harvard Kennedy School is offering a [TA program](#) for support and the consensus of the group is to pursue this assistance. The Hampden CoC will also reach out to the Three County CoC to collect from their experience in devising their own assessment tool.

Network updates: See this [RAFT action alert](#) – please participate!

Next meeting date: Tuesday, November 29, 1-2pm

