

Hampden County Individual Services Committee Meeting Minutes - November 29, 2022

In attendance: *Tanja Alessi, CSO, Lynn Conway, Eliot Services, Kim Fontaine, Eliot Services, Dave Havens, MHA, Janice Humason, CSO/FOH, Mark Jachym, Springfield CTC, Debbie Kubi, AISS, Jay Levy, Eliot Services, Gerry McCafferty, City of Springfield/Hampden CoC, Lizzy Ortiz, C3Aco, Liz Plouffe, City of Easthampton, Sonya Ramos, AISS, Kimberly Ryan, CSO/FOH, Jess Salvas, Eliot Services, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Kathy West, Eliot Services, Chris Zabik, DMH*

Shelter/housing updates

Friends of the Homeless: CSO is full with roughly 192 beds (including regular plus overflow beds). FOH has hired a rapid rehousing specialist and a second housing navigator.

Catholic Charities: Obtained additional funding from DHCD to provide limited hotel rooms through March. They are already full. The new PSH is key to creating more room at shelters (see below for info on the delays).

CHD: Waiting for Holyoke low-threshold housing to open (final contracting details to be finished). Frustrating delays. With 40+ units, their opening will make a huge impact on housing people out of the Holyoke shelter and create more space in the shelter itself (which is currently full).

Northampton PSH (5 Franklin St): Also delayed due to the lack of a strobe light for the fire alarm system. More frustration! Hopefully to be resolved within the coming days.

Hampden County CoC Updates: Holyoke pop up shelters will be utilized this year for extremely cold weather, operated by the Providence Ministries. For providers/ offices seeking information and access to pop up shelters, contact Alicia Zoeller of the City of Holyoke at zoellera@holyoke.org.

The first Homeless Services Resource Fair took place on Nov. 10 at the Holyoke Public Library. Supported by the Mayor and City staff; breakfast provided. Great turn-out, for both providers and individuals seeking assistance. Information was distributed and people were added to the by-name list for follow-up contact info was taken by CHD for those seeking shelter or the low-threshold housing.

A second resource fair will take place on **December 8, 2022** at the library.

Encampments: Gerry noted that the number of people sleeping rough are on the rise. This is not unique to Springfield; cities and towns will be convening later this week (via the Network) to discuss the issue as a region.

- CSX reached out to Springfield's Office of Housing about an encampment of roughly 10-15 people on the rail road line behind BHN. They have informed people they must move. Outreach workers are conducting outreach to assist with any referrals and invite them to get on the by-name list and to be in contact for follow-up.
- Mark has been working closely with the Springfield PD around the Union Street and East Columbus area. Approx. 12-13 individuals are living under the bridge. The residents pushed to have them out of there and the police evicted. It has been difficult to track their next destinations.

Elder homelessness: A noted rise in the numbers of elders experiencing homelessness. Lack of housing options is pervasive here, too. Pamela noted this is an issue across the Commonwealth and the MA Coalition for the Homeless has set up a statewide task force to brainstorm statewide policy and budget solutions.

Community Foundation emergency winter shelter funds: CHD will be applying for \$50,000 in emergency overflow funds (with some portion allocated to staffing of the project). Pamela will report back as soon as there is additional information.

State Legislature and Policy Updates

Pamela reported:

The Legislature passed the economic development bill in early November which included \$20 million more for low threshold housing for individuals with substance use disorder, 20 million for immigrant & refugee housing, \$100 million for affordable housing trust fund and other funding for first time home buyers. See the [Network blog post](#) for more.

The RFR for new Safe Havens has been released. We will get 7 more beds in Hampden County. Go [here](#) for more details.

We have a new Governor-Elect Maura Healey. She appointed Keith Fairey, President and CEO of Way Finders, to co-chair the housing transition team (go Western MA). We have new legislators in our region: Rep-Elect Aaron Saunders (replacing Rep. Oliveira), Rep.-Elect Shirley Arriega (replacing Rep. Wagner); Senator-Elector Jake Oliveira (replacing Senator Lesser); Senator-Elect Paul Mark (replacing Senator Hinds). The Network will reach out to connect with our new members and will schedule countywide meetings to discuss our legislative and budget priorities in early February.

Next meeting date: Tuesday, January 10, 1-2 pm (will focus on Point in Time Count planning)