

Individual Services Committee Meeting Minutes - 1/30/24

In attendance: Tanja Alessi, CSO, Keleigh BenEzra, CSO, Krystal Bouthillette, FHCHI, Amy Cahillane, City of Greenfield, Michele Carr, Eliot Services, Steve Connor, Veterans Services, Deb Cubi, AISS, Leigh Davis, Great Barrington SelectBoard, Kim Fontaine, Eliot Services, Becki Gimsley, Eliot Services, Monique Gondek-Ashe, BHN, Laura Hudson, Positive Place, Mark Jachym, Springfield CTC, Andy Klatka, Eliot Services, Heather Larson, DMH, Caitlin Marriott, CAPV, Gerry McCafferty, City of Springfield/Hampden CoC, Gilad Meron, Resilience Hub, Anna Oltman, Greenfield, Lizzy Ortiz, Health Services for the Homeless, Liz Plouffe, Easthampton, Kimberly Ryan, CSO/FOH, Nadia Schuessler, CSO Medical Respite, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Nan Sibley, Resilience Hub, Maureen St. Cyr, Mass. Fair Housing, Janna Tetreault, Three County CoC, Rosa Tobin, Mass Fair Housing, Edgar Vaskanyan, CSO, Kathy West, Eliot Services

Shelter Updates

- **Springfield** - CSO - 175 beds, no capacity; housing several people out of shelter into their low-threshold housing
- **Holyoke** - CHD shelter full - 47 beds; Samaratin Inn is running a pop-up shelter on extreme weather nights with 30 beds
- **Northampton** - CSO - 38 beds, full
- **Greenfield** - CSO - 45 beds; full; city of Greenfield is paying for additional beds during the winter months (using overflow on nights colder than 25 degrees); also running a warming site with Franklin County Sheriff's office when weather calls for it
- **Amherst** – Craig's Doors - Econolodge - 38 beds; Amherst congregational site - 28 beds; at capacity; when colder than 25 degrees, can increase congregate by 7 beds; extending to hotel sites in terrible weather; low-threshold program is full with 16 scattered site units
- **Pittsfield** – ServiceNet (via previous meeting) - 40 beds – moved into brand new shelter (congratulations!); working on overflow space (since smaller capacity than the prior temporary shelter at St. Joe's High School)
- **North Berkshire County** (via previous meeting) - Louison House - 42 individuals sheltering, and 13 families, including transitional housing site and use of motels; averaging 2 on overflow cots in Adams transitional shelter. Local church providing warming center. North Adams city funding supporting some extra motel rooms during very cold weather.
- South Berkshires - Construct's service area- previously received 3-4 calls a month for shelter and now received 3-4 calls each week; seeing more individuals sleeping outside.

NEW Medical respite beds - 10 bed program for people who are stepping down from hospital care, based in Northampton, run by CSO. Another medical respite program is in Hampden County - 8 beds - run by Mental Health Association. Good news to have this new capacity!

Outreach updates:

In general, seeing significant increase in numbers seeking shelter; seeing older people sleeping in cars; difficult to move people from living rough into housing (no housing available)

West Springfield: noted that there is an encampment of roughly 8 tents. That community is lacking sufficient outreach; Eliot Services is available weekly in the community (at a set site) but staff is stretched too thin to do more.

Point in Time Count: HAPPENING THIS WEEK across the region (via Hampden and Three County CoCs)- Jan. 31 and then follow-up outreach for the week following

CoC Awards

Hampden CoC announced renewed funding plus two new projects: supportive services for 36 units of permanent supportive housing at Worthington Street (CSO); and a DV rapid rehousing grant to add another 10 slots of rapid rehousing for survivors of domestic violence

Also: Springfield will be releasing its RFP for its Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) - deadline is 3/2. For prevention, outreach, emergency shelter and rapid rehousing. For Springfield community only.

Three County CoC: there was a problem with submitting their HUD application so they anticipated that they would not receive funding this year and the announcement of awards confirmed that outcome. Currently working with funded partners to close the funding gap for programs (roughly \$830,000). Top priority is to keep people housed.

Network updates - see blog posts on:

The Affordable Homes Act hearing:

<https://www.westernmasshousingfirst.org/advocacy/2024/western-massachusetts-was-in-the-state-house/>

Governor's FY25 proposal:

<https://www.westernmasshousingfirst.org/news/2024/governor-healeys-fy25-budget-housing-and-homeless-news/>

Special Presentation: Rosa Tobin and Maureen St. Cyr, Mass Fair Housing Center: Rosa and Maureen described a program offered jointly by the Fair Housing Alliance of MA - MA Fair Housing Center, Community Legal Aid, Housing Discrimination Testing Project and South Coast Fair Housing Center - to address housing discrimination, particularly with regard to discrimination based on voucher use (e.g., where a LL requires income 3x rent and fails to account for a voucher, that is considered discrimination). If you suspect discrimination (they will do the investigation to assess the case, just call if you suspect!), either call the central number: 508-444-9332 or email Maureen or Rosa at mstcyr@massfairhousing.org or rtobin@massfairhousing.org. Learn more here: <https://www.mafham.org/>

Next meeting date: Feb. 27, 1 pm