

Western MA Task Force for Housing First Minutes - 6/17/25

In attendance: roughly 65 Network partners, including state legislators, legislative aides, city/town staff, housing and shelter providers and dozens of community partners

Individual and Family Shelter Updates

- Craig's Doors: Noting continuing demand for shelter, no reduction despite warmer weather; staff update: executive director is on leave; Rachel Weiss is director of operations - please reach out with any questions- directorsr@craigdoors.org.
- CSO Friends of the Homeless: All shelter day centers - Springfield Northampton and Greenfield - continue to be open. Additional beds are available via their medical respite program (must be discharged from the hospital with no alternative housing). The new Safe Haven program in Pittsfield will be opening later in July.
- Louison House (North Berkshires): winter beds are staying open due to demand, always full. Opening new permanent supportive housing for young adults - 8 units - in July. Units will be allocated via coordinated entry. Congratulations, Louison House!
- Franklin County Opioid Task Force: working in partnership with the Franklin County's Office to identify and clean up abandoned encampments; distributing outdoor gear to individuals in need; For the most recent guide to Franklin County/North Quabbin resources (including cooling centers) please [go here](#).
- Center for Human Development: Per HLC's mandate, both family shelter hotels in Northampton and West Springfield have been closed and all families have been housed (using HomeBASE subsidies). Amazing work by staff! Concern is around the "cliff" facing these families when the subsidy runs out - all the apartments are at market rate. Also noted concern/need for more investment in supportive services to help families stabilize.

Federal Budget Update: Big thanks to Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance and CEO Joyce Tavon for presenting this [excellent summary](#) of the pending federal budget bills and their potential impact on housing and homelessness programs. Please check it out!

One overall take-away: the federal Administration's proposals are a dramatic (traumatic, draconian) threat to housing stability across our region and country. And they have not happened yet. So we will continue to join with our excellent congressional delegation (and our MA delegation too) to push back on them. Please consider signing on your organization to this [national sign-on letter](#) from the National Low Income Housing Coalition to push back against these proposed cuts.

State Conference Committee Budget Update: Right now, the Conference Committee is meeting to resolve differences between the House and Senate FY26 budgets. Six legislators serve on this committee - 3 Representatives, 3 Senators - and we are very fortunate to have our own western MA Senator Jo Comerford (Hampshire, Franklin, Worcester district) represent in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee.

[Go here](#) to weigh in on the Committee's deliberations to push for the highest possible funding for housing and homelessness programs. Now is the time to be heard!

Good housing news!

Amid the tough news out there, we shared the continuing promise (and current reality!) of more affordable and supportive housing opportunities in the region. Thanks to our partners for these hopeful reports:

Way Finders:

- Ludlow - 43 affordable units - opening later this summer
- In closing process for Essex Village in downtown Holyoke - 41 affordable units
- South Hadley project with 60 mixed income units

Valley Community Development Corporation:

- Laurel St. just opened in Northampton 20 affordable units with 1, 2 and 3 bedrooms
- now taking applications for Prospect Place - 60 affordable apartments - studios to 3 bedrooms, mixed income - go here to apply
- awaiting state funding to convert the Econolodge in Hadley to permanent supportive housing (PSH)
- just awarded the bid to redevelop the Northampton registry of deeds building with Community Builders - 90 new units, all affordable

Hearthway (Berkshire County)

- West Housatonic, Pittsfield - 28 PSH units, opened in December, leasing up through the coordinated entry system (via the Three County CoC)
- First Street Apartments, Pittsfield - 9 PSH units, will be occupied by 9/1
- Eagle Mill Apartments, Pittsfield - 56 apartments, mixed income, will be ready by end of year
- White Terrace, Pittsfield - 16 units of PSH
- Forge, Lenox - 65 units -60-120% of AMI

Recent state awards for supportive housing:

- The Winslow House was awarded \$6m in state funds to preserve and rehabilitate 55 units of PSH. to support preservation work.
- Domus Inc in Westfield was awarded \$5 million for a veteran housing project. The state press release on recent state funding awards is [here](#).

Network gathering revisited: If you missed the Network Annual Gathering, you can [read all about it and watch the video here](#). Let the positive energy and mutual support continue!

Next meeting date: Thursday, July 17, 9 am