

Western MA Task Force Minutes - 7/31/26

In attendance: roughly 54 people, including providers, legislators, legislative aides and municipal staff

Shelter/Housing Updates

- Clinical & Support Options (CSO) - congratulations on their two openings of new permanent supportive housing developments, 36 units each in Greenfield and Springfield (and a renovated shelter in Greenfield). The Greenfield opening happened yesterday - great turn-out, great event. Springfield opening happens tomorrow (Friday, 1:30 pm at 755 Worthington Street). Very exciting!
- All individual shelters - CSO, Craig's Doors, ServiceNet, Louison House - reported full to capacity, some with wait lists.
- Family shelter: with the new procurement, HLC reduced the number of beds to align with the reduction in numbers due to more restrictive eligibility (time limits and end of presumptive eligibility being the leading causes). Center for Human Development (CHD) did not get their contract renewed as a result. They have over 300 families receiving housing stabilization services which will need to be addressed before the end of October, when current contracts expire.

Three County CoC

- Summer Point in Time Count ongoing now until 8/2 - please contact the 3 county CoC for any follow-up; also great collaboration among partners for their collection drive - an abundance of goods collected that will be distributed
- HUD NOFO applications closed on Monday - 6 new proposed projects applied; new partner applied through DV expansion

Hampden CoC Update

- HUD lawsuit challenging the the latest NOFO - there may be a decision as early as 8/10 or 8/11 - which may bear on the current response to the RFPs
- 13 new applicants for new projects
- working on coordinated entry and street outreach (several applications to enhance those systems and close gaps)
- Also applying for HUD YHDP (Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project) funding, in particular applying for supportive services to support the Foster Youth Independence (FYI) vouchers and peer navigation

RAFT updates

Hampden/Hampshire: just about 900 RAFT applications this week alone, 150 are homeowners (typically see 80); 3,700 applications are being processed.

FY27 budget update (thanks to Caitlin Golden of MHSA for her contribution to this report)

- For FY27 budget, the Dept. of Administration & Finance (A&F) is withholding earmarks and any increases passed in the Legislature's budget to ensure funds are available - this happened last year as well - these funds will likely be released in Nov/Dec. But this means that for now HLC must draft contracts with the lower amounts (e.g., increased dollars in line-items in permanent supportive housing and Home and Healthy for Good are being withheld for now). We will stay tuned.
- Funding for emergency winter shelter was not included. This means that HLC will do what it has done previously: request funds from A&F. Emergency shelter will likely still be funded but without the planning time that would have been afforded had it been included as a line-item.
- Access to Counsel received a \$500,000 increase from \$2.5 million to \$3 million.
- MRVP (Mass Rental Voucher Program) received a \$25m increase but these funds will go to paying higher rents and already allocated vouchers for projects - so no additional vouchers in the pipeline.
- See more on the [FY27 budget here](#).

Legislative Updates

- Economic Development bill: it is now in Conference Committee after the House and Senate each passed their versions - for the Network's priorities, the good news is that the House version included TOPA (Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act) and the Senate version included a pilot program version of TOPA. We will be pushing for inclusion of TOPA in the final bill. The House version also included YIGBY - Yes in God's Backyard, allowing religious institutions to develop their land for housing as a matter of right. Please stay tuned for continuing advocacy on these provisions.
- The formal Legislative Session technically ends July 31 but new rules allow for Committees to send bills to Conference Committee and "keep them alive" for the remainder of the session until 12/31. The Network has its eyes on the rent control bill (the local option for communities), collaborating with our regional and statewide partners in pushing for action.

Other news:

Thanks to Susan Worgaftik for drawing our attention to the anticipation of the federal administration's changes to the Community Reinvestment Act that could have a significant impact on the issuance of Low Income Housing Tax Credits, threatening affordable housing development. We will stay tuned on new rule proposals and the opportunity to oppose them.

Next meeting date: Tuesday, September 29, 9 am (we will return to alternating between Tuesdays and Thursdays based on feedback from some of our partners who are unable to meet on Thursdays at 9 am).