

City of Lawrence, Kansas
COMMUNITY COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS
February 10, 2009 Minutes (Lawrence City Commission Room)

Members present: Jeanette Collier, Hubbard Collinsworth, Wes Dahlberg, Katherine Dinsdale, Loring Henderson, Charlotte Knoche, Mike Monroe, Robert Mosely, Shannon Murphy, Sandra Winn Tutwiler

Members absent: Shirley Martin-Smith

Staff present: Danelle Dresslar, Margene Swarts,

Public present: Hilda Enoch, Sara Taliaferro, Janney Burgess

ITEM NO. 1 INTRODUCTIONS

Dinsdale called the meeting to order at 8:30 am. Commission members introduced themselves and welcomed Sandra Winn Tutwiler, newest appointee of the Community Commission on Homelessness.

ITEM NO. 2 Approval of the Agenda and the January 13, 2009 Minutes

Upon introduction of this item, Dinsdale also asked for the Commission's approval to write three letters on behalf of the Community Commission on Homelessness. The first letter will be a letter to the Kansas State Representatives and the Kansas Senate area contingency in support of the letter sent to them by Lawrence Mayor Mike Dever regarding City budget issues. Dinsdale also requested permission to write a letter supporting the funding of the Lawrence Community Shelter renovation/relocation project to U.S. Senator Sam Brownback and U.S. Representative Dennis Moore. The third letter she requested permission to have the CCH write, although not by her, a letter in support of Family Promise and urging the City to work cooperatively with Family Promise.

ACTION TAKEN

Motioned by Mosely; seconded by Collinsworth to approve the February 10, 2009 agenda, and the January 13, 2009 minutes.

Motion carried unanimously 10-0

ACTION TAKEN

Motioned by Dahlberg; seconded by Mosely to approve the CCH to write the three letters proposed by Chair Dinsdale.

Motion carried 9-0-1

ITEM NO. 3a CONTINUE CCC REPORT.

In the absence of Sara Taliaferro, Chair Dinsdale moved on to item 4 on the agenda, stating Taliaferro will be able to give her report when she arrives.

ITEM NO. 4 SALVATION ARMY UPDATE

Dahlberg reported on the Salvation Army's project, "Project Able". The project started in 2004 and is funded by HUD. It gives support services for persons in transitional housing. The Salvation Army has applied for a grant from HUD to expand so that they will be able to provide the transitional housing themselves. Currently they are awaiting HUD's response at this time, but they hope to hear by the end of the month that they have received funding. He indicated that it would provide eight housing units for families of varying sizes and seven individual units. He added that they also have a Plan B in mind, which would be to move ahead and provide transitional housing for four to five units with current funds.

Dinsdale asked about the current status of the Salvation Army Emergency Shelter.

According to Dahlberg, currently there are 45-50 people utilizing the shelter including women and children. This has been surpassed in the extreme cold weather. They are continuing to operate as usual at this time.

Murphy asked about "Project Able" and if it included continuing assistance with those in transitional housing.

Dahlberg said yes, it does include that.

Henderson asked if the Pelathe apartments are still available and if so are these still considered transitional housing.

Dahlberg said that yes, there are still people living there, but they are associated with the State and are not considered transitional.

Collier added that they are available on the open rental market.

Henderson asked if The Salvation Army transitional housing adds to the pool or if it counts Pelathe.

Dahlberg said that Pelathe is a different entity. He added that The Salvation Army is hoping for the funding request to be granted for Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority as well.

Dinsdale asked about long term plans with the shelter.

Dahlberg said that there is no time line right now, and that The Salvation Army Advisory Board is weighing their options right now. At some point it will close, but that point has not been determined as of yet.

Collinsworth asked how much notification will be given when the decision is made to close the shelter.

Dahlberg said that it would probably be in the neighborhood of 60-90 days.

Dinsdale asked about the emergency shelter in the extreme cold for those who do not pass the breathalyzer test.

Dahlberg answered on very cold nights the staff if being asked to use their common sense on that topic, and if the individual(s) do not appear to be causing a problem then the shelter will take them. They have been utilizing mats for the overflow on extreme cold evenings.

Collier asked about the status of the property that they had previously purchased.

Dahlberg said that they still own the property, and that the board feels at this time with the economy that they do not want to move forward with fundraising at this time. They are looking at many options so that the property can be utilized and hopefully they will be able to use it to replace their current facility.

There were no further questions.

ITEM NO. 5 E-HOUSING CONNECTOR UPDATE

Hoy passed out a summary of the landlord interview results. It can be found [here](#). She indicated that she interviewed 15 landlords and worked also with the CCC to determine ways to collaborate, especially for providing information and outreach to landlords and neighborhoods.

Hoy said that upon interviewing the landlords, it was apparent that there needed to be resources available for helping families with factors such as security deposits, utility deposits, and first month's rent. Without front end resources it is hard to get the families and individuals housed, as well as getting the landlords on board with helping. The Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority is requesting their Board of Commissioners to approve an amendment to the utilization of their current HOME funds that are currently marked for Tenant Based Rental Assistance. Upon approval from their Board, they will dedicate \$10,000 to this project.

Hoy went over the summary with the CCH and pointed out that they have been able to house their first family. LDCHA was contacted by the employer of the family and the information was recorded. The next day, a landlord contacted Dinsdale regarding a vacant property that they had and Dinsdale put them in touch with the LDCHA. LDCHA made a site visit and determined that the family would be able to utilize the unit. The Resident Services Office (RSO) agreed to provide services as a one time test case to see how the Connection would work and met with the family. The RSO met with the family and had the family sign a confidentiality waiver for communication with the landlord, and the RSO staff contacted the landlord regarding the family. The family signed a service agreement with the RSO and they went together to the property to meet the landlord and survey the property. The landlord agreed to the first month rent free, to a

significantly reduced rent, a month-to-month lease agreement, and the utilities would remain in the landlord's name. An amendment to the lease signed by all three parties requires that the family must maintain their service agreement as part of their lease agreement. The landlord made it clear that the family will be working toward a goal of paying market rent for the property. RSO staff reported that the family moved into the property two days later. The family is now on the Transitional Housing waiting list. The RSO will provide on-going case management for this family until they receive permanent housing.

At the next meeting in March LDCHA hopes to report that they have funds available for security deposit grants and they will report in broad terms on the family that is currently housed.

Collinsworth asked for clarification that the \$10,000 in funds they are asking for are for funds they already have.

Knoche explained that the \$10,000 are funds that they already have and that they are currently utilized as Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA). Security deposits are an allowed activity in the TBRA program. The Board does still have to approve the amendment, though.

Dinsdale added that it was very exciting and wonderful that everything is moving forward. She asked about plan with the varying landlords and properties and how they can be reached.

Hoy said that the LDCHA is sending out a mass mailer to all of their landlords as well as utilizing a list serve.

Knoche added that Bert Nash said that their Outreach workers will stay with the transitionally housed family through the duration, not 90 days as the agreement has been in the past.

Hoy said that lease agreements will all have an addendum that will outline the terms of the service provider agreements, and that they will not change the leases as they are currently written.

Dinsdale said that with this we are asking more of the Outreach case workers and with the possible budget cuts it may be a case load that will be difficult to handle.

Hoy said that it depended on what agency that they are with. Bert Nash, for example, might not necessarily be the agency working with certain families so the case load will not be subjected to one agency. Also mentioned was the fact that a common thread that the landlords had was that they did not want to personally be responsible for case management of their tenants.

Henderson asked if there was a potential that the family currently utilizing the Connector could be permanently housed where they are at now.

Hoy said that yes, that there is that potential. The landlord in this particular case was very helpful and replaced the flooring, the washer, the dryer and the refrigerator before the tenant moved in.

Dinsdale clarified that the message will continue to get out to landlords via mailings, meetings, and the list serve; as well as the fact that the HOME funds may be approved for security deposits. Was there anything else that they needed?

Hoy said in talking to some families other services such as bus passes, furniture, daycare, etc. are needed. This all comes back to the case management element of the Connector. LDCHA can get them housed; it is just finding the funding to keep them there.

Dinsdale asked about plans for publicity for the program.

Hoy said that LDCHA would like to get through the first test case a little bit before there is a large amount of attention and publicity brought into the matter. The success of Family Promise in communities is really a huge help as well.

Dinsdale said that this was something that the CCH really can celebrate, and that she hopes that this will eventually become a highly publicized success.

Murphy added that you hear a lot about partnerships and collaboration in making successful projects, and this is a perfect example of that.

From public comment, Enoch agreed with Murphy and added that the security deposit has been the sticking point for so long and it is good to see that element working towards implementation in this project.

ITEM NO. 3b CONTINUED ANNUAL CCC REPORT – SARA TALIAFERRO

Taliaferro arrived at the meeting and began her item discussion.

Taliaferro said that the CCC had some ongoing projects that are in process in 2009. One is providing facilitation and support for the E-Housing Connector. The CCC plans to start out as an observer and may not convene in a formal facilitation process in the beginning, but there are a lot of ways that they can assist.

Dinsdale asked about publicity and outreach for the Connector and how the CCC can help.

Taliaferro said that they are poised to jump in where helpful.

Hoy added that it will be helpful when an issue comes up between any of the parties the CCC can mediate. They function as a neutral observer who can work with landlords, tenants, and case managers.

Taliaferro said that on Saturday they had their last role simulation exercise and they used the Connector scenario as their focus of one exercise. They got some really good ideas at the simulation and she will meet with Hoy to discuss those ideas further.

Taliaferro added that she and Dinsdale met with Jane Pennington of Downtown Lawrence, Inc. to discuss several issues including panhandling. They determined a creative process where it can start slowly with informational interviews with those panhandling as well as discussions with individual business owners to come up with a creative solution. They will talk to the Coalition for Homeless Concerns as well as the Outreach workers and will have roving discussions with those that are on the streets and are experts. Somewhere down the road there may be a formal setting for the mediation.

Taliaferro said that the CCC would also like to participate in a visioning project with Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods. It would take them through the visioning process of what a shelter would look like in their neighborhoods. The idea is to shift the conversations from the negative side of the issue to beyond that and how they can become a part of it and support it.

Taliaferro added that the CCC is also working on a homeless service information base, and this is being done through ongoing interviews. The information will be utilized to show how the services in Lawrence connect and work. The CCC will provide public outreach and education and the goal is to paint a good picture of the services available. There are many services out there that people do not know about. Additionally, there will be explanation of how funds are used in the Community and an effort to make that information more transparent.

Taliaferro offered to report on these projects monthly and noted they will continue to be ongoing.

Dinsdale said that she and Taliaferro were excited about the meeting with Downtown Lawrence, Inc. and the probable education outreach and facilitation dialogue. It is important that both the CCC and the CCH work to both be part of the solution, and this includes outreach meetings to hear the homeless individuals and their perspective on the issues.

ITEM NO. 6 2009 KANSAS POINT IN TIME COUNT – MARGENE SWARTS

Swarts reported that Lawrence and Douglas County had a good volunteer turnout locally including the Bert Nash case managers. She said that she was stationed at Home Base for the duration of the day. It was a nice day out so the volunteers had a good environment to work in. There is no indication of the numbers or the responses yet; these are expected in April.

Swarts added that the State Emergency Shelter Grant application is due on March 20, and we hope to have some numbers by then to supply to the State. She said that we are hopeful it is a good count, and based on the volunteer effort it was enough to get

done what we needed to. It was interesting for some who did the count in that they encountered people who had the appearance of homelessness but were not homeless.

Murphy asked if there was a sense of where the numbers might fall since it was a County-wide count.

Swarts said that there have been no preliminary numbers released.

Collinsworth said that he heard from several sources that the way some of the people conducting the survey sometimes changed the questions.

Swarts said that all volunteers had the same form and all when through a training to work through the survey interview process.

Dresslar added that sometimes the answer of one question will send the interviewer down a different path of questions based on the outcome. This may have accounted for why there seemed to be different versions of the survey. In actuality, the survey path was determined by specific answers, but it was the exact same survey format for all interviewers.

Collinsworth asked if the United Way developed the questionnaire. He heard that some neighboring counties did not use the same questionnaire.

Swarts said that it may have been due to the option for participating counties to include county-specific questions to the original version of the survey. Douglas County decided not to include additional questions in their survey. The surrounding counties may have decided to utilize the additional questions in their survey.

ITEM NO. 7 PUBLIC COMMENT

Janney Burgess, a community member, reported that she had been on the LINK board for 10 years. A few weeks ago she was in South Park and she encountered a group of people there. She went up to them and they indicated that they were having a memorial service for the man who died of the overdose. A woman came up to her and thanked her for coming, and it was the man's mother.

Burgess said that her daughter is a social worker for Franklin County and told her about a man that was brought into jail by a member of the Douglas County Sheriff's department for loitering in front of Weavers. He placed himself intentionally to be arrested so he would have somewhere warm to sleep.

Burgess added that last Sunday there was a program about homelessness sponsored by the Social Action Committee of the Unitarian Church. It was brought up in this meeting that the tent city by the river was bulldozed and around 50 people were staying there. When she heard this information at the time she was appalled. She came to the CCH meeting last month and the vote for recommendation of upholding the ordinance was upsetting. She asked the CCH to reconsider what was done last month in the meeting

with the vote. She has talked at length to David Tucker about this issue, and the citizens of the tent city kept it clean and took care of it. It will get worse. She suggested that the ordinance change so it will allow this population a place to be. They can take care of it and it would give them a sense of community and a place to go at night, meaning they would frequent downtown less. She asked that the CCH reconsider and change their thinking from last month's meeting and recommend that the ordinance be amended to include legal camping.

Dinsdale reminded the public that the CCH has passed that vote so the next step for the recommendation is the agenda item at the City Commission meeting later tonight.

Hilda Enoch, community member, told the CCH that it feels to her that it is possible to reverse this decision. Since they are the Community Commission on Homelessness, they cannot leave a fraction of the homeless community out. David Tucker has said that this population does have special problems and if the CCH just says they are focused on housing then this leaves this group of people out. She urged the CCH to reverse their decision on the recommendation and join the others that will be in attendance at the City Commission meeting to plead their case for a legalized campground. These people need to be brought back to this community. The outreach workers were making a difference and that the CCH cannot turn their back on those who truly need their support.

Dinsdale indicated that she was speaking at the City Commission meeting as well, and that this is a very difficult issue. The CCH has discussed it at three different meetings and there has not been adequate support to recommend changing the ordinance. There are different ways of moving ahead. The CCH voted that changing the ordinance is not the way to deal with this issue. Moving them into a campsite is moving backwards when the goal is to move them towards housing.

Dinsdale asked if there was support from the CCH for reopening the issue.

Henderson and Collinsworth agreed that there was support from them to reopen the issue.

Henderson said that the decision has not rested well with him at all since the meeting in January. He feels that having a campsite on a provisional basis is an adequate solution, and he was disappointed in the result because the CCH is the body that the City Commission turns to for guidance on this issue. He agrees with the Housing Vision, but the vision overlooks those who camp. He is speaking at the City Commission meeting in favor of not making camping illegal, and that he still suggests it can be a temporary solution since there are not enough beds in Lawrence to shelter everyone. Henderson added that David Tucker has agreed to be personally responsible for overseeing the campsite, and that it could truly work on a temporary basis. He would rather not go there tonight and give the City Commission the impression that the CCH is fussing within itself over the issue. He is committed to the Housing Vision as well, but there is still a camping sector that is not accounted for in the vision. It is not resolved and the entire CCH is restless about the issue. He brought up the fact that if funding is cut to the

outreach workers this would be a huge blow, and although David Tucker is not funded by the grant a cut in staffing would affect his caseload.

Henderson moved to approve camping in certain places provisionally for one year's time; seconded by Collier.

Murphy said that there is an importance on the continuum of services to provide individuals for their success in housing. The vision statements that have been developed are from the Task Force in 2005. This is an area that the CCH needs to look at updating on paper. This needs to be addressed as a board. Now the vision is focusing on the emergency temporary housing. This is where the discussion should be.

Collier added that we will run into a large problem with case management and making camping illegal does not seem like a humane response to the issue. This population is very disconnected at this point.

Burgess said that having it in one area would be more readily available and accessible to outreach workers. Housing to accommodate this population is probably still two years down the road.

Collinsworth said that he is the Chair of the Coalition for Homeless Concerns. He has tried and tried to go to these people who said that the campsite was destroyed and he encouraged them to come forward and attend all the meetings that they could or to contact a CCH member one on one. He has gotten no response from anyone involved, and he even got some negative responses as well. He began in favor of the campsite, and then found that no one wanted to come forward to speak in support of it. He has been asking for this support even before the deaths occurred, as well as trying to get new blood into the Coalition for Homeless Concerns. He added that there needs to be a consensus as to if these people really want help or if they do not want help. He has spent too much of his time trying to carry a dialogue with those impacted.

Dinsdale said that she is concerned with granting a certain population the ability to camp when it is not available to everyone else in the same manner. She strongly agrees that the community needs to do a better job of bringing people to services. When the Parks and Recreation Department speaks of what it would take for the community to allow camping on public land, it is a lot. Dinsdale added that Murphy was right in that the CCH needs to better facilitate the work of the outreach workers and loudly lobby for them to maintain funding, but she does not see that allowing camping is a step forward, she sees it still as a step backwards from the Housing Vision.

Dinsdale asked for additional public comment.

Hillary Bowker, community member and social services employee, commented that she understands where Collinsworth is coming from with the lack of those who have approached him and come forward, but that it is not necessarily that they do not need help. The ordinance should be reversed because the need for temporary help is too great.

Tutwiler asked if there could be a friendly amendment to the motion to revisit the issue.

This was not accepted.

Dinsdale reminded the CCH that there has been consistent division on this topic within the committee, and that was clearly stated in the letter that was drafted for submittal to the City Commission.

Enoch asked where the CCH thought they would lose their credibility in regards to that particular population. This population needs a campsite. That is the goal of the CHC and David Tucker has made the first step towards that resolution by offering to oversee the site.

ACTION TAKEN

Motion failed 3-5-2

Knoche asked the CCH to develop a way to address and expand emergency non-housing services for homeless persons that do not fit into the housing vision. It could be a list of methods and policies to engage the population of homeless that do not fit into the Housing Vision. She asked if there has been any movement for outreach workers and case managers to work in conjunction with Lawrence Parks and Recreation and the Lawrence Police Department to make an official connection where the camping laws can be forced, but still keep a line of communication open for all parties.

Swarts said that her understanding of the local agencies that the case managers and outreach workers do meet occasionally, but that there is no regularity to them.

Collier said that it has gotten more consistent as of late, but law enforcement and Parks and Recreation have not been included.

Monroe said it was possible that they could all be on the same page and that law enforcement could work to notify the outreach workers or case managers when a site was pending posting for eviction.

Henderson agreed and said that is one way to help the case managers and outreach workers to keep track of their clients. He liked the direction that Knoche was taking and suggested that the CCH do some thinking and before the next meeting have some ideas to come back to the CCH with wording to determine how to deal with that population of the homeless. He likes the idea of a liaison with Lawrence Parks and Recreation and the Lawrence Police Department and having those two entities involved could be helpful.

Monroe added that the Lawrence Police have not cited anyone that he can recall at a campground after posting it, so the notices are working and people are not getting arrested for camping at the posted sites. The outreach workers would probably be able to make contact with these people. He said that citing a person is not their priority, but that the property is.

ACTION TAKEN

Motion by Henderson, seconded by Murphy to allow Dinsdale and Knoche to organize a subcommittee of the CCH members to explore new wording to deal with the population of homeless that the Housing Vision does not address.

Motion passed unanimously.

Knoche added that this was a much more complex and deep issue than it seems on the surface.

ACTION TAKEN

Motion by Dinsdale, seconded by Knoche to extend the meeting to 10:20 am.

Motion passed unanimously.

Henderson said that the issue that is being brought up is not the camping component.

Knoche agreed and said that it was a different area of the issue.

Murphy asked to be included in the sub committee with Dinsdale and Knoche.

Collinsworth volunteered as well for the sub committee.

Collier commented that a former homeless outreach worker from Lawrence was nationally recognized for her work with a tent city in Reno. Reno adapted the tent city because they did not have enough shelter space. Their tent city closed when two brand new shelters were opened.

Murphy said that this particular homeless population of campers is not included in the Housing Vision. The Housing Vision concentrates on roofs only.

Knoche said that the CCH needs to move toward more housing. This has been and still is the main task.

Collier agreed, but added that there are those who lose housing and those people need to be supported as well.

Murphy said that it just needed to be on paper and that was an important element.

Enoch commented that she acknowledges that the CCH is working to broaden their vision in terms of this homeless population. The vision does not encompass all those people, and reminded the CCH that they should plead on behalf of the homeless outreach workers. It would be tragic if funding for these positions was cut by the City. She added that if David Tucker was asked to assist in the destruction of a campground in terms of working with Parks and Recreation and law enforcement to aid in advanced warning of postings, he would never do that.

ITEM NO. 7 PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no further public comment.

ITEM NO. 8 MISCELLANEOUS/CALENDAR

Dinsdale reminded the CCH that their next meeting was scheduled for March 10, 2009. She asked for the homeless outreach workers to be on the agenda for March with an update on their work activities.

Collinsworth asked that an agenda item be added to address where we stand on HMIS. He wondered if the information from HMIS could be used to help Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority with their Connector. He explained that we are now approaching a more serious critical mass of homeless and that there needed to be some serious dialogue regarding that fact, as well as with Shannon on what was going on at the jail.

Collier asked to invite the Lawrence Public Schools homeless coordinator to have a discussion with them regarding the seemingly different methods and means for counting homeless between the schools and the regular population. She wants to make sure that all funding possibilities have been explored and to make sure that the children have access to services.

Knoche said that the transitional housing providers have quarterly meetings and she could report on that next time as well.

ITEM NO.9 ADJOURN

ACTION TAKEN

Motion by Collinsworth, seconded by Collier to adjourn the meeting at 10:20am.

Motion passed unanimously.