

**City of Lawrence, Kansas
HOMELESS ISSUES ADVISORY COMMITTEE
May 08, 2012 Minutes (Lawrence City Commission Room)**

Members present: Hubbard Collinworth (at-large), Brad Cook (Bert Nash Homeless Outreach Team), Brent Hoffman (Family Promise), Trent McKinley (LPD), Shannon Murphy (Douglas County Sheriff's Office Reentry Program)

Members absent: Wes Dalberg (Salvation Army), Karin Feltman (LMH), Cary Strong (Lawrence Business Community), Elyse Towey (LDCHA)

Staff present: Danelle Dresslar, Margene Swarts

Public present: Caroljean Brune, Pat Benabe, Kent Winters-Hazelton (First Presbyterian Church), Gary Teske (Trinity Lutheran Church), Dana Ortiz (Family Promise), James Chiselom (Kansas Housing Resources Corporation), Hilda Enoch, Saunny Scott, Violet Smith, Laura Pate

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 am by Chair Cook.

ITEM NO. 1 Introductions

The members of the HIAC and guests introduced themselves.

ITEM NO. 2 Approval of the Agenda and the April 10, 2012 Minutes.

Motion by Collinworth **to approve the Agenda and the April 10, 2012 meeting minutes of the HIAC**; seconded by Murphy.

Motion passed unanimously.

ITEM NO. 3 Housing Vision Reports – As Needed

Dana Ortiz, Executive Director of Family Promise, said she did not have a formal report prepared for the meeting but she will provide a report in June. She said currently Family Promise is full, and they are housing four families consisting of five adults and ten children. There have been 30 referrals sent to Family Promise in the last two weeks.

Collinworth asked if there were any additional churches that were looking into providing shelter for families working with the Family Promise program.

Ortiz said at the present time they have 35 churches in the rotation. She indicated some of the larger cities that operate a Family Promise program do have two rotations of churches providing housing that simultaneously run, but the size of Lawrence does not make this realistic. Four families are all that can be comfortably housed in the churches, and the organization is limited to housing no more than 15 people due to the City Code. Ortiz noted the lack of available jobs in the community means that the idea of temporarily housing families is turning into a little longer stretch of time than the agency was prepared for.

ITEM NO. 4 HMIS – James Chiselom

James Chiselom, Kansas Housing Resources Corporation (KHRC) was present to discuss this item. Chiselom is the Emergency Solutions Grant program manager for KHRC, and Kansas Housing Resources Corporation is the lead agency for the Balance of State Continuum of Care in terms of the

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Chiselom said he was asked to attend the meeting and give a brief overview of the current status of HMIS. As the HMIS lead agency, KHRC works with Mid America Assistance Coalition (MAAClink), who is the HMIS vendor. Through this partnership, KHRC and MAAClink have identified there have been some extenuating circumstances with the new software that have been causing agencies problems within the system. He said they feel that all the issues have been worked out with the software side of the system, but they also determined that both agencies need to do a better job of comprehensive training on the system itself. Chiselom said in the past, the training consisted of teaching people how to log on to the system and how to input data. What the training has failed to show thus far is what can be reported from the system. Chiselom said an important training piece is to stress the need and the reason for completion of the proper data fields in order to obtain meaningful reports for the agencies. He said starting this week KHRC and MAAClink will begin to pilot their new training curriculum, and will be presenting it to the Southeast region at their meeting in Chanute this week. The plan for the training is to provide comprehensive training on a yearly basis, and to start visiting each region and work with agencies to be more attentive to the needs of the agencies in terms of the system. Chiselom said previously there was no accurate way to track issues or problems that agencies were having. Agencies would call, and MAAClink would work individually with the agency to try to correct the issue, but there was no way to effectively track the issues. Because of this, they have formulated an email system to respond to issues that agencies are encountering. If an agency is having a problem with the system, they are being asked to email helpdesk@maaclink.org. This email goes directly to Michelle Blaine, who is the MAAClink system manager and is also copied to Chiselom's email account. This gives the vendor and KHRC a way to track issues and the subsequent fixes, and it gives them a database to compare known issues. Chiselom stressed that the issues are not necessarily user error, but typically a training issue.

Cook asked if KHRC has a plan to continually retrain users.

Chiselom said yes and that the training will be annually conducted. He said over the course of the year individual users may not access the system that much, and that because of that their use can be limited, causing some knowledge of the system to be lost. Chiselom said those using the system on a daily, consistent basis are seeing far less issues than the ones that tend to use the system infrequently.

Cook asked if there were plans to change the reports that are generated from HMIS.

Chiselom said they are working on the option for agencies to build custom reports. HUD previously said with Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing, all agencies who received this grant had to use HMIS. With this requirement, KHRC and MAAClink were able to identify data sets that were available since everyone had to input the same data into the system. Because of this, the reporting capabilities have been increased. The normal user of HMIS works with permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, emergency supportive services and emergency shelter. Each program has different data. Some data sets pull on a more comprehensive level. Because of this, KHRC and MAAClink tried to reach a compromise, where the minimum amount of data entry provides a more comprehensive report. Chiselom said the reports will be a very important part of the comprehensive system training. Without the right training, effective reports cannot be pulled correctly. Chiselom said he is hopeful that training will help this issue.

ITEM NO. 5 Discussion of Douglas County CoC Regional Coordinator.

Swarts said as the HIAC is aware, Douglas County is included as part of the Balance of State (BoS) Continuum of Care (CoC). The BoS is divided into eight regions within the state, including: Northwest, Northeast, North Central, South Central, Southwest, Southeast, East Central, and Douglas.

Douglas County is a stand-alone region because it used to be its own CoC. Early on Swarts said she agreed to be regional coordinator for Douglas County, and she has held that position for around two years. In addition, Swarts sits on the Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition (KSHC) board and has been elected the organization's treasurer. At the same time, there have been other things that she has had to absorb as well with other organizations and with city business. Because of these additional duties, Swarts said she will no longer be able to serve as the Douglas County regional coordinator. Swarts said in the interim, Dresslar has agreed to serve in this position as well as continuing her role as the Chair of the BoS CoC Committee. Dresslar has been working closely with new BoS coordinator Doug Wallace, and he in turn will be working with both the regional coordinators and the KSHC board. The HIAC is considered the Douglas County lead group. If there is someone else besides Dresslar who is interested in assuming the role of regional coordinator staff is happy to provide assistance and training to get the person started in the position. As there were no volunteers at the meeting, Swarts indicated that Dresslar would assume the interim role for the time being, and if someone is interested let staff know and they will work with the person.

Hoffman asked if staff could email a list of responsibilities for the regional coordinator position.

Swarts said staff will provide that.

Collinsworth said he was comfortable with Dresslar in the interim role, and to bring someone new into the process might be tricky.

Dresslar said in addition if any HIAC members wanted to receive BoS notices she can add them to the list serve.

ITEM NO. 6 Continue Discussion of LCS Relocation Impact on Downtown.

Swarts said at the request of the HIAC, staff invited Reverends Kent Winters-Hazelton and Gary Teske to join in the discussion regarding the LCS relocation.

Cook said the HIAC has recently been discussing what the effect of the shelter moving out of the downtown area will be, and who will be left in the downtown area when the shelter is no longer there. The HIAC decided it was a good idea to have input from the Lawrence Ministerial Alliance and see what their perspective on the situation was. Some discussions the HIAC have had has centered around the question of if a drop-in center for the daytime was necessary away from the shelter once the shelter moves, and if there was a need, how would that look? Cook said this was not necessarily meant to indicate that the Ministerial Alliance was to offer a fix to the question it is only to receive input on the topic of discussion.

Kent Winters-Hazelton, First Presbyterian Church, said their facility was no longer located downtown, but they are still a part of discussions regarding this very question. When the shelter first began their relocation process, Loring Henderson called many of the clergy together to talk to them about what was happening. The conversation naturally came around to the drop-in center. The clergy at that time committed to being a part of the conversations, however until now they have not offered any discussion on options for this issue. The clergy are aware of the daytime programs and the need for an ongoing type of program such as this.

There are currently five or six churches that are part of the downtown clergy group. The group has been a part of these discussions since the Mayor first created the Community Commission on Homelessness in 2007. Winters-Hazelton said the Downtown Clergy began meeting in 2007, and as a result of these meetings established the Lawrence Ministerial Emergency Fund. This fund assists families that have been evicted and are seeking stable housing options. The group works closely with

the Bert Nash homeless outreach team and other agencies. (brochure attached) Winters-Hazelton said the allocation from the fund can be \$200 per request, and the fund assists about 60 requests per year. The fund is supported by churches and individual donors. The requester works with the outreach team to administer the fund requests.

Gary Teske, Trinity Lutheran Church, said he serves on the LCS board. He said he had been involved with many meetings regarding homelessness along the way. There is a concern on the impact of the shelter moving on downtown, but there is a lot of uncertainty as to what that impact will be. There are many things that are still being worked out, including the bus route that has been established to serve the shelter. The bus will go directly to the shelter, but because of an inability to turn left back onto 23rd Street there will be a longer route coming back from the shelter than going to it. There is talk of the shelter purchasing their own van for carrying people to appointments and to other commitments when the bus is not a feasible option. When the shelter ultimately moves, there will be quite a bit more room for services, so shelter guests may not need to leave as much in order to access particular services.

The scenario the HIAC is looking at refers to those who are not in a program at the shelter. If someone is staying at the shelter they will be required to enroll in programs. There are some homeless that do not want to be involved in programming for one reason or another. The shelter will still offer a place for housing overnight, but they will not be staying in the facility all day because they are not in programs. There is an idea that if the shelter obtains a van, that they will be able to make a trip to designated spots to pick people up to bring them to shelter for the night.

Teske said downtown will continue to be an attraction for this group of people, but again, no one is sure what to expect at this point. The downtown may be less attractive when the shelter moves because of panhandling ordinances. At this point, all indications are that Lawrence Interdenominational Nutrition Kitchen (LINK) will continue to operate their meal program however the shelter will be serving three meals a day for their guests. Teske said he would not be surprised to find that a drop-in center type place will be needed in extreme hot or extreme cold, but there are questions about loitering as well as where will this facility be? There has not been a discussion among the clergy group about a location for this type of service. He said a building on the Trinity Lutheran Church property has been housing shelter overflow, but they had to stop because of a change in City Fire Code regulations. He said he was unsure if the same code regulations would apply to daytime activities as well. Teske added that he did not know if the building they were using for overflow would even be large enough to accommodate a drop-in center. He said once there is a better understanding of the need the conversation can start taking the form of the most desirable location.

Winters-Hazelton said when this topic was brought up to the clergy group last year, no congregation volunteered to house such a program. The group worked on the premise that there would be a place to go, but not that it would be operated by a congregation. Most churches already have day programming in existence, and it would be a challenge to host a drop-in day shelter. Winters-Hazelton noted that there is no longer a Lawrence Ministerial Alliance as it has become the Downtown Clergy.

Teske said as the community can get a line on what the needs are and what the number of people in the downtown area will look like, discussion will continue. There is a great deal of will on the part of the congregations to help in any way they can. They have all made a commitment to their community and their neighbors, which do include the homeless population. The clergy will always be an active and committed part of the discussions, but they need to see what they are dealing with prior to making decisions. Teske said the group appreciated the invitation to the HIAC meeting and they will be active and do all they can.

Murphy said she agreed that the community is yet to determine how this will look once the shelter moves. There is uncertainty as to who will be participating in the programs and who will not. Those day programs may still have a need.

Cook said he is unsure if this should be a case of preparing beforehand or waiting to see what happens after the fact. It is a good idea to get an idea of the need before the need arises.

Hoffman asked if the overflow facility at Trinity Lutheran was an option if the discussions led there and it was determined that a need for a drop-in day center was identified. He asked if the Downtown Clergy were going to continue to have this discussion as well.

Teske said the Downtown Clergy will continue to have this item on their agenda. He said there were previous concerns expressed about their overflow facility while there were discussions regarding relocating LCS. The overflow facility is facing a residential area, and there were concerns that came from the neighborhood. That being said, if it was determined to be an ideal spot they could explore that, but since there were already issues with opposition that might not be positive for that location.

Winters-Hazelton said that the Downtown Clergy was invited to the conversation originally by Henderson. The group has not heard from the City on the issue.

Hoffman said that it is important that there is communication between all the groups involved. He said he asked about the overflow house because it is important to at least begin a list of possibilities for when the shelter leaves downtown. The consequences need to be tracked and a working list of options needs to be put in place.

Ortiz said she is a member of one of the downtown congregations, and it is imperative that a list is compiled before the shelter moves and not just sit back and wait to see what happens. The planning needs to begin ahead of time. Data needs to be gathered and options need to be listed. LINK will continue and the population they will see will be more families and not so much the current shelter population. This issue directly impacts the families in and the graduates of Family Promise. The people that are not going to participate in the shelter will hang out somewhere. The Lawrence downtown is a beautiful place and this issue needs to really be thought through. They will be somewhere and this is an urgent issue.

Caroljean Brune said the data she has from Henderson indicates that they are expecting around 50-100 people left downtown after the shelter moves. She said her concern with a facility such as the overflow unit is that the shelter is only four months away from moving, and the process for approvals for special uses takes many months to go through the City process.

Hoffman said the City will not be willing to issue a special use permit for the downtown area.

Enoch said the best bet the community has is to reestablish a place for camping. In the winter the campers will come to the shelter, but for the other months this is the best option. Under the circumstances of the shelter moving it is time for the city to reconsider camping. People want to be left alone and have a place of their own. This might be a solution to allow them to have something. The City will not approve this type of day shelter downtown.

Cook said that he sees that there will be reservations to the idea of camping based on the attitude concerning the parking violations of recent months. The rationale will be that in looking at the Housing

Vision, camping does not indicate a move toward permanent housing. That has been the answer and will continue to be the answer unless the Housing Vision changes.

Enoch said the City will not do public housing, and while a tent and camping might not be permanent housing it is still shelter.

Teske said the fear is that when the shelter moves it will be a widespread misconception that everyone will move with it. This is a far more complex issue than this, and people will start to see the issue that they thought was being solved by moving the shelter is not really solved after all. This is a much more complex and diverse problem than people think.

Hoffman said it might be a good idea for the HIAC to contact a reporter from the Lawrence Journal World to do a story on the fact that there will still be people left downtown. This will help educate the public as there are a lot of people that do not understand that there will still be 50-100 people remaining downtown when the shelter moves its services. People should understand that there will be homeless that will not move with the shelter for one reason or another. He said he is unsure if there will be a sense of empathy for these people since they do have the option of the shelter and they are choosing not to participate.

Murphy said there is also concern that those 50-100 people left downtown will end up incarcerated if there is nowhere else for them to go. There are a myriad of offenses such as trespassing that can occur when someone does not have a safe place to go.

Cook asked if it made sense for the HIAC to reach out to the City Commission regarding this issue so that they understand the importance of the problem that might develop.

Swarts said that the HIAC can request a study session with the City Commission, but there should be at least the framework of a plan in place so when the Commissioners ask about the unknowns the HIAC is prepared to answer. The truth is nobody knows at this point what will happen. There are estimates and ideas, and there is knowledge that there will be people who will not take advantage of the new shelter, but there is a legitimate question of how many that will be. If LINK and the Salvation Army feeding programs are still in operation and if that is all there is downtown to access besides panhandling there may be a question of if that is enough to keep people downtown. There may be too many unknowns to meet with the Commissioners at this point.

Cook asked if it would be appropriate to write a letter to the City Commission outlining the concerns that the HIAC has been discussing.

Swarts said that was something they could vote on and move forward with, but she is not sure what action the City Commission will take with the letter. They may only receive it at this point unless action is requested.

Hoffman said it may be a good idea to give them information on the front end of the shelter moving so they know what type of discussions have taken place and who has been involved. It is important the Commissioners understand what the HIAC has talked about and learned regarding the relocation impact on downtown.

Cook said it is a good idea as well to communicate the advanced warning that there may be an issue when the relocation happens. Even if it is just a letter that the Commissioners receive it is still a good tool to provide them with information. It might not be as important to talk at this juncture, but a letter

that shows the discussions have been happening will be an indication that the HIAC is ready to talk when they are ready to talk.

Swarts said staff can look at this item and work with Cook on putting together a letter to the Commission. Staff will bring the letter to the body in June. The advisory body can draft a letter and approve it and then send it on to the Commission. The Commissioners may only receive it with the option to talk about it at a later date, but they may also decide they want to have a study session on the issue and discuss it further.

Motion by Cook **to allow staff to compose a letter, with the direction of the HIAC, to the City Commissioners to communicate potential concerns regarding the impact of the Lawrence Community Shelter relocation on the downtown area;** seconded by Hoffman.

Motion passed unanimously.

Ortiz said awareness is a very important piece of this. She said as she has been in the community talking to people she is finding that many do not understand family homelessness. Most of the homeless families are those who do not want to go to the shelter. The new shelter facility will be far better for families, but some will still be unwilling to go to the shelter. There needs to be education for the public to tell the story of family homelessness. These are not scary people, but they are children and parents that did not necessarily choose to be homeless.

Enoch said she did not know how broad the circle of discussion was, but to her it feels like the people who provide housing at Bert Nash, Tenants to Homeowners, and the Salvation Army need to be part of this discussion. She said it feels like if the HIAC brought in a lot of the developers and those building housing and gave them a seat at the table the collective group can start to do something about this problem. It may be that a dynamic group can solve the issue by looking at long range housing type activities. The City and the citizens of the community would be happy.

Cook said the issue is that there are not enough vouchers to house people. Landlords want to rent to people with Section 8 vouchers and there are those that are willing to rent to this population of clientele. There are less vouchers to work with during the next year.

Swarts said the decrease in funding was due to cuts in the Federal budget. The funds that were previously utilized for the vouchers were not diverted to alternate activities.

Laura Pate asked if the current residents of the shelter have been asked what they plan to do when the shelter relocates. She said she was curious as to if they were fully aware of the differences from what it is now to what it will be after moving, and if they are fully aware of the changes that will be taking place in terms of being in programs. This may be representative of who will follow the shelter and who will not.

Cook said that this came up in the Coalition for Homeless Concerns meeting last month, and Henderson has been having meetings with the guests asking this very question. Henderson indicated that most guests are willing to make the move with the shelter, but it is possible there is still not a firm understanding of what the expectations will be. Henderson and shelter staff is making sure that people understand how the new operations will differ from the current operations.

Brune said she volunteers at the shelter, and she has been asking the guests that she knows as well as those who are using it as a drop-in location the same questions. She said that a lot of the guests

are unsure what they will do when the shelter moves, and some just have not decided. She indicated there is also a group that does not want to commit to the programs at the new shelter, but at the same time they cannot imagine being without a place to be. The drop-in clientele thinks at this point that they will be able to find somewhere else to stay, but there is a lot of uncertainty with this group. Regardless, special zoning will be an issue.

Swarts said that the issue is not necessarily special zoning but the issuance of a Special Use Permit (SUP).

Teske said the communication has to be all the way around the issue. He recalled seeing an article in the Lawrence Journal World that spoke to the fact that there will be a group of people that remain downtown. There are two constructive areas talking about the needs of the homeless, and not one group can do it all by themselves. There will still be people and they will always be in the community. No one thing or decision will make that go away. People do need to start preparing for this so that they are not outraged. It is more than providing a roof over their heads but it is providing a center for community life. Everyone needs a sense of community and to have a place to belong with those sharing a common situation. That is important and it is not just getting them out of the elements.

Cook said he remembered the article that Teske is referring to, and he remembered Mayor Schumm making a comment that there would still be people downtown.

Scott said one group of homeless that have not been talked about are the ones that are not from this area, but end up in this area and need a temporary place to stay. They do not know the town, and they will not go to the shelter when it moves because it is out of the area that they do know. They all need someplace to center.

Cook said that there are a lot of younger people that are in town because they are just passing through accessing different events and festivals around the country. They tend to keep to themselves and they are not currently using the drop-in center.

Scott said they would certainly not be able to find shelter when the facility moves.

Cook said he would support a letter to the City Commission expressing the concerns about the downtown area when the shelter moves. There will be issues in the realm of businesses, restrooms, panhandling, camping, arrests, libraries, and the community center.

Swarts said the estimate of 50-100 people is helpful to start such a letter, but it would also be helpful to speak to the number of families that are among those 50-100.

Ortiz said she can look at her data and compile how many families have inquired about their program at Family Promise, but have also indicated they will not go to the shelter.

Swarts said that would be a good idea because then that will give a good idea of the impact of the move on this population.

Murphy asked Ortiz how many of the 30 families that have called within the last few weeks are staying at the shelter currently.

Ortiz said none. They are resisting the shelter by doubling up.

Murphy said that is a strong point to make that currently 30 families in the community, if not more, are not housed appropriately.

Hoffman asked the reasons as to why they are not accessing the shelter.

Ortiz said she will summarize the reasons given to her and provide that to staff.

Swarts said everyone acknowledges the current shelter is inadequate. Currently the shelter is revisiting their plans for the new facility and how the family component will look. They are sensitive to the newer identified needs for families. If the design is such that they have acknowledged that there is an issue with the family space will more utilize it when it moves?

Ortiz said it is not necessarily the sleeping areas, but the families have expressed concern about things such as the language, alcohol use, and discussions that frequently happen in the common areas being things they do not want their children to hear. These types of issues will not change in the new shelter.

Murphy said regardless, there will not be room for 30 families at the new shelter. The new shelter will be equipped for five to ten families, and it is truly intended for an extremely temporary measure for families.

Swarts said staff will work on a draft letter and will present it in June.

ITEM NO. 7 Public Comment.

Enoch asked that each member of the advisory committee and the public be identified in the minutes. This is something the City Commission is interested in. The City should know who the public is that are attending these meetings.

Collinsworth asked Ortiz if Family Promise has run into any problems with the new sprinkler code requirements.

Ortiz said she intends to look into that issue. There have not been any code problems that she is aware of, and they do not sleep anyone in the building in question.

ITEM NO. 8 Miscellaneous/Calendar.

There were no additional items.

ITEM NO. 9 Adjourn.

Motion by Murphy **to adjourn the May 8, 2012 meeting of the HIAC**; seconded by McKinley.

Motion passed unanimously.

Attendance Record

Members	01/ 12	02/ 12	03/ 12	04/ 12	05/ 12	06/ 12	07/ 12	08/ 12	09/ 12	10/ 12	11/ 12	12/ 12
Hubbard Collinsworth	+	+	+	+	+							
Brad Cook	+	+	+	+	+							
Wes Dalberg	U	+	+	+	U							
Karin Feltman	+	+	+	+	E							
Brent Hoffman	+*	+	+	+	+							
Trent McKinley				+*	+							
Mike Monroe	+	U	U^									
Shannon Murphy	+	+	+	+	+							
Cary Strong	+	+	+	+	E							
Elyse Towey	+*	U	U	+	U							

X - Meeting Cancelled Due to Inclement Weather

E - Excused Absence

U - Unexcused Absence

() - Last meeting in term.

* - First meeting in term.

^ - Last Meeting