

**City of Lawrence, Kansas
COMMUNITY COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS
March 9, 2010 Minutes (Lawrence City Commission Room)**

Members present: Jeanette Collier, Hubbard Collinsworth, Wes Dalberg, Katherine Dinsdale, Loring Henderson, Shirley Martin-Smith, Mike Monroe, Shannon Murphy

Members absent: Charlotte Knoche, Robert Mosely

Staff present: Danelle Dresslar, Margene Swarts

Public present: Steve Cowan, Saunny Scott, Brad Cook, David Tucker, Heather Hoy, James Dunn

Chair Dinsdale called the meeting to order at 8:35 am.

ITEM NO. 1 Introductions

The members of the CCH introduced themselves.

ITEM NO. 2 Approval of the Agenda and the February 9, 2010 Minutes

ACTION TAKEN

Motion by Martin-Smith, seconded by Collinsworth to approve the Agenda and to approve the February 9, 2010 minutes.

Motion passed unanimously.

ITEM NO. 3 LCS Relocation Update – Loring Henderson

Henderson said that LCS is in a waiting phase right now as the SUP is scheduled to go in front of the Planning Commission on March 22 and the City Commission on April 13. The timeline that LCS is on is set by City Ordinance. Henderson said that he spoke to the members of the Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods (LAN) on March 4, and he provided the members present with a timeline, a site plan, and answered questions. He said that shelter staff and the shelter board have been meeting with Prairie Park neighbors as well as business neighbors and developers that are stakeholders near the proposed site. The shelter has made both individual contacts in the area as well as group contacts. Henderson said that LCS held their neighborhood meeting on February 25, and they extended the notification circle to 2000 feet and sent letters about the meeting to 900 homes. Out of the 900 notifications, there were approximately 50 people in attendance for the meeting, and half were LCS staff, City Staff, and other community stakeholders. There was not a large turnout for the neighbors. The residents that attended already had their mind made up one way or another. There were a couple of neighbors that expressed acknowledgement that it would be a well run, great facility, however they did not want it located at the Franklin Circle site. Henderson said that all in all, it was not an unfriendly or confrontational meeting at all. He said that as of now, there are no other community meetings planned. He has continued to meet with individuals and small groups of neighbors, but those are primarily ones with specific concerns.

Murphy said that she was in attendance at the meeting, and that there was a small group that was opposed to the shelter relocation in that area. She said that there were some speaking against the shelter "for the neighbors", but some neighbors that were there that did not opposed the shelter were quick to correct the people to say that they did not speak for the neighborhood.

Dinsdale asked Henderson what the next step was for the SUP.

Henderson said that the Planning Commission meeting was the next step in the process and that would be on March 22.

Dinsdale asked if Henderson has signed a purchasing contract for the property yet.

Henderson said that they have not done that yet, but they are working with the seller. He said that the CCH will be hearing more about the upcoming Capital Campaign after the April 13 date. Henderson mentioned that LCS had also approached the City with a request to extend the SUP at 944 Kentucky for an additional two years. The City Commission opted to renew the SUP for one year. Henderson mentioned that the shelter had always gotten strong support from the Oread Neighborhood, but with the new officers on the Neighborhood Association board he was unsure if there will be continued neighborhood support in the future.

Martin-Smith asked Henderson if there is any new information on the transportation issue with the proposed location.

Henderson said that he spoke with Mr. Nugent of the Lawrence Transit Authority, and he left with a very positive feeling about the addition of a route serving the proposed site. There had previously been a strong request from the Douglas County Jail to add a route to that area, and in conjunction with the development occurring and the shelter relocation, it appears as if that need will be met. The transportation issue came up in the neighborhood meeting as well. Henderson said the plan with the new shelter office space is that there will be less coming and going and more on-site services to offer the guests. This aspect coupled with the bus stop and the transportation van that the shelter currently has is a multi-faceted transportation response that should keep the walking traffic to a minimum.

Henderson said that there are also plans for houses to be built along the south side of the proposed location. The homes will be built with their backs to the shelter building, and west from the jail there is also a new road. The north side will be commercial.

Martin-Smith commented that as she was watching meetings regarding the proposed relocation of the shelter that some people are missing the point that the new location will have opportunities for stationary agencies that will now be able to work on-site at the shelter. This is very important for those who object to the relocation efforts because of the fact there are not many agencies currently working out of the shelter location at 944 Kentucky. They should be aware that one of the purposes of the relocation project is to allow for those services to operate out of the shelter location. The transportation piece will be critical to the final approval.

Collinsworth asked if there have been ongoing talks with service providers regarding locating at the new shelter site, as well as if there have been any service letters of agreement outlined to staff these offices.

Henderson said that they are having conversations regarding the staffing of agencies in those offices, but there has not been a document created to sign yet.

Martin-Smith said that when you are working with state or federal services, it can be a long period of time to get the approval to locate in a satellite site. She suggested that Henderson reach out to those types of agencies sooner rather than later in case there is a lengthy process for approval of location. These letters and agreements could really help the presentation with the Planning Commission and City Commission to let them know that there are a lot of agencies that have bought in to what the LCS is trying to do and there is a large amount of acceptance among service providers in the community.

Henderson said one thing they have to be cautious about is the amount of office space available and the number of agencies that would like to provide services from the proposed shelter. While there is much more office space, there will have to be a schedule completed.

Martin-Smith agreed and suggested Henderson and the service providers interested in having an office location at the shelter get together and set up a calendar for the agencies.

ITEM NO. 4 Housing Vision Update – Shirley Martin-Smith

Martin-Smith introduced the item and said that the intention of the update was not to change the Housing Vision, but to update the wording to make it a simpler document for the public to understand. The update should tell the average citizen what the Housing Vision is about. The document that is being used is the document that was adopted by the City Commission, and while the CCH understands the document, it is a little challenging to try to explain it out in the public. The intent of this item was to explore ways to make the document simpler to understand.

Martin-Smith started the discussion by suggesting that the document heading be revised to read "Community Housing Vision to Serve the Homeless", as it will make the document itself easier to explain to the public. Martin-Smith explained that the CCH's goal in looking at the Housing Vision was to see if they wanted to refine the document so it could be potentially an easier tool to explain to address the media, clubs and the community in general. The purpose of the item was not to change the document that had been adopted by the CCH in 2007. The document should tell the average citizen what the purpose is for the Vision and what the goal is for the Vision.

There was CCH discussion regarding the language of the document and whether or not any changes should be made.

There was discussion regarding the individual pieces of the housing vision, and if there would be a preference for adding arrows or a sense of movement to the document to show the pathway from homelessness to housing.

There was discussion about the emergency shelter component and the temporary emergency housing component in that it might need alternative descriptions to make it easier to explain to the public, and that the two components were meant to be parallel as there were some instances where one needed shelter, but the emergency shelter might not be the right fit for them. There was also discussion about the time frame listed on the Housing Vision document for the 90-120 days that the emergency shelter was seeing guests.

ACTION TAKEN

Motion by Dalberg, seconded by Martin-Smith to change the title of the Housing Vision to the "Community Housing Vision to Serve the Homeless", and to leave the remainder of the Housing Vision as it currently reads.

Public comment on the Housing Vision update:

David Tucker, Bert Nash, agreed with Martin-Smith when she said that you really cannot put a lot of exceptions and caveats in the document. The number of 90-120 days in the emergency shelter section should be seen as flexible and estimated, as some will be in services and will need more time and some will need less time as their situation is more temporary in nature.

James Dunn, Oread Landlord, said that he was concerned with the language in the emergency shelter section of the document stating that the idea was movement towards better housing. The presumption is that a home is a better housing option. He said that he has spoken with many people who think something like a tent city would be a better housing option. This section needs to be clarified to mean what it is intended to mean.

Heather Hoy, LDCHA, said it might also be helpful in terms of talking points for the CCH and the Housing Vision that if they added an arrow to show movement through the steps, it would be easier to show a citizen the progression of the steps. This document is a good living document for everyone in the community, and hopefully out of this, the community can get a centralized intake path and needs can be explained better. She said if it made sense to the members of the CCH, then there might not be any reason to change it.

Swarts said that in response to Tucker's comment regarding the 90-120 day time frame for the emergency shelter, the number came from the group that created the Housing Vision and their view of what a short term facility would look like. It was not meant to be a block of time that the guest can stay, but it was more for the time frame in question so everyone had the same idea of what "short term" meant.

Martin-Smith said that with the attachments on the document the original commission members were very specific in saying that it was not their intention to micromanage the housing options. The idea of the Housing Vision was to let the community know that they could have no less than these numbers for the components. The document has stood the test of time, and these components are moving forward. The 90-120 day time frame for staying at the emergency shelter was not set in stone, it was only a guide. Martin-Smith said that the tent city option was not viewed as a better housing option, as the issue of camping was addressed by the CCH as part of the Housing Vision and it was declined. The housing options were clearly defined and adopted by the City Commission.

Motion passed 5-3.

ITEM NO. 5 HPRP/E-Housing Connection Update – Heather Hoy

Hoy provided this update sheet. ([attachment](#))

Hoy said that the response to Housing and Credit Counseling’s classes for the HPRP clients has been wonderful. She also noted that Cowan works with the clients and if they are not approved for HPRP funding then he seeks to find them alternative agencies that they can work with in their situation.

Hoy said that they have been able to send a few families to the shelter that have been determined ineligible. She also said that they do not lease up families or individuals who will not be able to pay the rent after the \$2000 is gone that they have to assist each family. The transitional housing list is not moving as fast as it was previously. Last year people in the E-Housing program in January were able to be housed by transitional housing by May. There are several big families that have come through the program and those families take a lot of resources to house. Hoy said overall the program is doing well and LDCHA is working very hard to make sure that there is very little opportunity for the clients to commit fraud under the program.

Murphy asked what some of the reasons were that were making families ineligible.

Hoy said if they committed fraud before, if they were dropped from the program previously, or if they did not score high enough in HMIS under the categories such as education.

Dinsdale asked what happens to those families or individuals.

Hoy said that they will refer them to other resources such as the Community Shelter.

Martin-Smith asked what education background had to do with housing stabilization.

Hoy said that question was one that LDCHA had as well. Hoy said that on HMIS it is very difficult to get a score of 12 because the lower the education level the lower the score total. If someone is already housed, it seems to everyone involved in the program that they should not be declared ineligible because of a low education score. If someone is already housed, then there are no barriers to getting them housed. They should be able to stay housed. Hoy said that LDCHA and city staff spoke to KHRC about this question on HMIS and KHRC is looking at changing the questions, but it is a large process because of the fact that the questions were developed by the Balance of State and they can only be changed by the Balance of State.

ITEM NO. 6 Re-Entry Program Update – Shannon Murphy

Murphy reported that the program administrators are writing grants for case management. They are working on a partnership in conjunction with DCCCA for case management for those with a dual diagnosis. They are also working with DCCCA on case management for those using or

abusing substance. The case management is designed to work 90 days pre-release and then the case management follows the inmate for another six months. They are also working on the Second Chance grant, which will have two case managers for generalized case management for the program. These case managers will be able to work with inmates at any point pre-release. They will also be able to offer case management for up to six months post release. Another grant that they have applied for is the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Grant. This would provide licensed clinicians for those released inmates that are mentally ill and require transitional care coordination. The clinicians will capture a generalized mental health issue for these inmates, and help to assess them and connect them to the correct services. The Second Chance Mentoring Grant is a grant that will allow the jail to work with the Ballard Center, and it will consist of mentors building relationships with the inmates pre-release, and then continuing to mentor them post release. This service would be for those who require a support system, but not necessarily full case management.

Murphy said that in 2009, 42% of the inmates that were released from jail returned. The nationwide average is around 66%. There were 69% of those that returned to the jail in Douglas County that were brought in for technical violations such as failure to appear or child support issues. The majority that returned to the jail were not there because of new crimes they had committed. Murphy said that if the jail receives these grants, the case management component and the mentoring system can help released inmates remember their appearances or other technical aspects of their release. The supportive services can help reduce that return rate. The overall jail population has dropped since 2007, although Murphy said that they do usually see an increase in the winter months.

Dinsdale noted that these were encouraging numbers.

Collinsworth asked about the numbers of the homeless population at the jail.

Murphy said that the Point-in-Time count said that there were 14.5% of the jail inmates were homeless. Murphy said that number may be a little low, because there are inmates that come into jail as homeless, and then there are those who become homeless while they are incarcerated.

ITEM NO. 7 Miscellaneous/Calendar

Brad Cook, Bert Nash, presented the CCH with a draft of the new Outreach Case Management quarterly report document. Cook mentioned that in the past, CCH members have commented on how confusing the report was and this document is the attempt by Bert Nash to simplify the information for them and put it in a form that is easier to understand. He asked if the CCH could provide feedback to Bert Nash as they would like to begin using this format with the first quarter report for 2010.

Dinsdale suggested it could be an April agenda item.

Cook said that the meeting in April will be after the report is submitted.

Swarts suggested that Bert Nash use the new report for the first quarter and in the meantime staff will send the report out to the CCH members so they can look it over and provide comments at the April meeting.

ITEM NO. 8 Public Comment

James Dunn, Oread Landlord, said that he was at this meeting because of a conversation he had with Martin-Smith regarding housing in the community. He said that he was concerned about the barriers that people were experiencing in terms of getting housed and remaining housed. He said that several of his tenants have come to him and said they cannot pay rent due to cuts in their assistance. He said that he is seeing the opposite in the community, as there are people moving from permanent housing to the shelter. There are many barriers that are present that are keeping these people from remaining housed. Dunn indicated that he is the landlord of the present location of LCS, and he is seeing people in the shelter that he used to rent to, as well as those who have turned down assistance from other agencies. He said that LDCHA requires everyone to pay rent, and there are folks who do not want to work so they are unable to provide any rent.

Collier said that the challenge with general assistance is that they can only receive it if they have a disability. Many of these people have received general assistance because of illness. It is very difficult to receive Social Security because of the time and documentation issues with it. Collier said that her fear is that the community is going to start seeing a lot of people going backwards because of the funding cuts. A lot of the people suffering from mental health issues cannot get their medications with the loss of general assistance. They could possibly end up in jail. There is no medication program in the State of Kansas. There is a fear that Medicaid will be cut even more. Many of these people cannot get jobs, either, because of a poor work history.

Martin-Smith said it is extremely hard to get a job if the employment history is questionable. A poor employment history will make it difficult to find office or manufacturing jobs no matter what the state of the economy. She said that the tendency to go backwards out of housing for people is important to note. This speaks to the importance of the new shelter and the subsequent services that will be able to be offered on site. This points out something that is not covered by the Housing Vision.

Dunn said that a good shelter should not be a substitute for work or employment for these people.

Martin-Smith said that her expectation as a citizen is that if folks are at the shelter and they are on a plan that is being evaluated and assessed then we should be able to help them as a community. If someone does not have education we need to get them somewhere to get this education. The purpose is to find the barriers and work to correct them.

Henderson suggested to Dunn to let the shelter know if there is a resident about ready to be evicted. The case managers at the shelter can investigate what is going on with the individual, as the shelter more than likely will already have a relationship with that person if they are falling in and out of housing. Henderson said that they can assess if it is a case of something like medication or if they really just want to return to the shelter. The advanced information from landlords will allow for a wrap around effort for the individual to see that they do not make this

move by choice. Henderson said that the shelter wants to have a good working relationship with landlords.

Dunn said that they could check the eviction notices for information like that. Not all landlords will be connected with this process. A lot of this discussion is trying to uncover barriers to housing. Dunn suggested one barrier to remaining housed may be LINK. If a person does not have to work to get food, some may choose not to. If a person can still go to the emergency room or Health Care Access and not have to pay why would they? He said that he is not sure that these people are all mentally ill, but there seems to be some that are working the system. Dunn said that LDCHA has put people out of their properties for as little as \$1 in back rent. If the goal of the community is permanent housing, then the community needs to determine why these people are choosing other options.

Collier said that she is basing her comments on what she sees. She commented that Dunn is a landlord who tries to work very closely with service providers.

Collinsworth said that he received his letter regarding food stamps and they are now giving a 30 day notice. He had to supply additional information to them, but if there is no approval by the end of this month, he will not have assistance next month. The time frame for this type of assistance is really being crunched. Collinsworth said he was unsure how this will impact the community.

Collier said that in Douglas County you will lose your food stamps if you work three months out of the year. The fallout has been tremendous.

Tucker agreed and said that the general assistance cuts have been hitting the mentally ill especially hard. Some medications that these people need can cost around \$600 every two weeks. It is impossible for them, or any agency, to supply them with their needed medication. This causes them to lose coherency and make bad decisions. The Homeless Outreach Team is seeing a lot of this type of thing happening in the community.

Dinsdale agreed and said that they are seeing the same types of general assistance problems at the Five Loaves House also.

ITEM NO. 9 Adjourn.

ACTION TAKEN

Motion by Martin-Smith, seconded by Collinsworth to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 a.m.

Motion passed unanimously.

Attendance Record

Members	01/ 10	02/ 10	03/ 10	04/ 10	05/ 10	06/ 10	07/ 10	08/ 10	09/ 10	10/ 10	11/ 10	12/ 10
Jeanette Collier	+	+	+									
Hubbard Collinsworth	+	+	+									
Wes Dalberg	+	+	+									
Katherine Dinsdale	+	+	+									
Loring Henderson	+	+	+									
Charlotte Knoche	+	+										
Shirley Martin-Smith	+	+	+									
Mike Monroe			+									
Robert Mosely	+	+										
Shannon Murphy	E	+	+									