

**City of Lawrence, KS
Community Commission on Homelessness
April 8, 2008 Minutes (City Commission Room, City Hall)**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jeanette Collier, Hubbard Collinsworth, Wes Dalberg, Katherine Dinsdale, Loring Henderson, Charlotte Knoche, Shirley Martin-Smith, Mike Monroe

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jane Faubion, Phil Hemphill, Robert Mosely

STAFF PRESENT: Lesley Rigney and Margene Swarts

PUBLIC PRESENT: Hilda Enoch, Saunny Scott

Martin-Smith called the meeting to order at 8:30 am.

Approval of the March 11, 2008 Minutes

Knoche **moved to approve the March 11, 2008 minutes.** Henderson **seconded the motion, which passed.**

Study Session Update

Martin-Smith announced that the Study Session (SS) with the City Commission (CC) will take place April 28 at 4:00 pm. She typed up some points that she wants to cover and if anyone has additional items to include, let her know.

Henderson asked if anyone has had a discussion with any commissioners.

Martin-Smith said she occasionally speaks with Commissioner Chestnut but they are expecting to hear from the CCH as a group in the SS. The new item since June is the Housing Connector and it is a very important addition to the vision.

Swarts said staff had a meeting with planning staff and they are concerned with asking the CC to waive the 3-unrelated ordinance and there is much angst in the community about people finding loopholes in this ordinance. Planning staff suggested focusing on the Connector as vacant units rather than people opening up their homes. If the program is successful and the program finds a need to have a variance in this the CCH can ask for it at that time.

Martin-Smith said that was fine. She wants the CC to know that a lot is going on in the community. She would like to capture everything.

Knoche said she went to Shelter+Care (S+C) training and LDCHA is going to make an application for that program.

Moderated Panel Discussion - CCC

Martin-Smith said this event is at the Dole Institute on West Campus. It is a workshop and will include various speakers. She suggested inviting the CC so they could hear a bit more about the conversations and how things are getting addressed. She would like to hear solutions.

A lot of people still expect the director of the emergency shelter to police outside of their legal boundaries. That is absolutely against the law and so while people may say that is a solution, it is unreasonable.

Henderson said so often he hears complaints second-hand, but the complaints do not come directly to him. He is willing to reach out, help out and talk to people.

Martin-Smith said it is about how the CCC is going to work with the community around these issues. She suggested letting the County Commissioners know as well. She would like to ask for a county appointment soon. With the new re-entry effort this makes sense.

Homeless Count Update

Rigney handed out the homeless survey and explained the survey – how it is done and the purpose.

Martin-Smith said there is really no change in the count of homeless children and their really has not been a change in 20 years. Our work in housing families is very important.

Swarts said if the community was able to implement the projects that are being considered, the numbers should drop. Those families with children would be getting housed and an S+C program would make inroads to the chronically homeless population.

Knoche said for the purposes of S+C, anyone who has been incarcerated for less than 30 days and was homeless at booking would be considered homeless. She asked that staff add the definition of chronic homeless to the document.

Martin-Smith said the community is going to want to know how many kids are homeless – not doubled up. Let's not show the "children impacted" number. It is an important number for us because it impacts the amount of housing we need to make available.

Knoche said housing is so critical because it allows parents to get children back if they have been in foster care.

Martin-Smith asked if the CCH can do anything to make sure people show up to do the count.

Swarts said sometimes things happen – agency turnover at First Step House might have had something to do with it. People get sick.

Knoche said perhaps next year, since it will be a formal count, we can extend the planning period and have some backups in place in case some of the surveyors get sick.

Collier would like to see the "children impacted" there. Children, for many grants, are considered homeless even if their parents are not.

Dalberg said to say "an additional 67 kids are impacted by homeless family numbers."

Collier said we also need to be able to monitor the number of kids impacted by people who are incarcerated.

Murphy said it is going to be a big number.

Martin-Smith asked if it would be appropriate to go back and get the jail count.

Murphy will try to provide that information.

Knoche said it isn't that big a deal to add what was missed since it isn't the official count. We can make sure that next year we gather all of the information at the same time.

Enoch asked how accurate the addiction stat is.

Dalberg said many more than that number has addictions.

Henderson said we know that about 35% of the shelter population has problems with addiction. The mental illness stat is low too.

Martin-Smith said we need to have some explanation about how the count is done. The explanation should include the percentages that typically have addiction/mental illness.

Henderson said the Emergency Shelter number of 150 is shared between Lawrence Community Shelter (LCS), Salvation Army (SA), Women's Transitional Care Services (WTCS).

Dinsdale where those 150 people are other nights of the year?

Henderson said the river.

Knoche said to add Point in Time to the title.

There was some discussion about having alternating summer/winter counts – winter on required years and summer on optional years.

Knoche said the area would have to be expanded as well for summer counts.

Collier said the one thing we do not ever seem to report is the prevention activities. FEMA, ESC, etc. It might be important to include that in what is going on.

Martin-Smith asked for a couple of paragraphs on prevention for the presentation to the City Commission.

Collier will speak with some agencies and churches and come up with something.

Dinsdale said that is important because we have been focusing on adding units. We need to talk about prevention too.

Henderson said as time goes on, that is something we are going to want to include in our overall big picture.

Martin-Smith agreed, that as we evolve, that might become more of a focus. History says that if you don't document these changes going forward, people will end up asking in the future what the commission is supposed to be doing. It would be wise to annually review our work and set a direction. She wants the resolution to reflect the work of the CCH.

LCS Request of City Commission

Martin-Smith asked Henderson to present his request to the group.

Henderson said LCS submitted an earmark request. He has had many discussions with Senator Brownback's staff who helped him through the process. This initial request is the first step in the process. He settled on \$600,000 because it will help LCS enormously and it is in line with a typical earmark amount. If Brownback feels it is a worthy project, LCS will be asked to submit more information. The request does not limit LCS to the specific building, but they mention the specific building in the request. The two things they will look at are whether or not there is a connection to a federal interest and community support. Support can come from individuals and also from the city and county. Chances of getting this are better if we can show broad community support.

Martin-Smith said it is very exciting that there is a possibility of accessing funding. The question was "did we know about it." She saw it on the CC agenda and at that time asked Henderson to present to the CCH.

Dinsdale said this could have been another time when the CCH was not involved in something we should have been. Formally blessing things like this is important.

Martin-Smith said she hopes that we will always know what is going on. When she gets a call from commissioners asking if the CCH knows about it, and they don't, it compromises the credibility of the CCH. That being said, she would entertain a motion to support Henderson's request. He could even mention that there was a 5-0 vote in favor of the housing vision and that the CCH supports LCS as the one Emergency Shelter in Lawrence.

Collinsworth said he would love to have that document in his hands before the discussion occurs. It is his pet peeve getting information out of left field that directly impacts the homeless, but makes the CCH look uninformed.

Henderson said he does not feel it happened any particular way. He gave a report of what LCS is doing at the meeting last month. He wasn't sure at the time about what was happening with the earmark. He didn't think it would take on the scope that it has.

Swarts said Dinsdale mentioned authorizing a letter. It is too late to send a letter for the meeting tonight. It would be better to authorize a member to go speak in support.

Dinsdale said she will come down at 7:00 to speak on behalf of the CCH.

Dinsdale **moved that the CCH approve and voice support for LCS' appropriations request.** Collinsworth **seconded the motion, which passed.**

Henderson said regarding the zoning issue, they are asking that the code be amended to include transient or homeless shelters in allowed uses for industrial areas. It was pulled from the agenda – he has since met with East Lawrence and Brook Creek Neighborhood Associations and Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods. He had an info table at the ELNA Yart Sale. He has been doing his best to reach out to neighborhoods. They would like the code changed because it opens up more opportunities for LCS. Industrial buildings lend themselves well to shelters. They will resubmit it to the CC in the coming weeks.

Martin-Smith asked if Henderson could keep the group apprised generally speaking.

Henderson said the major problem with the current building under consideration is that it is right next door to Delaware Street Commons.

Martin-Smith said it is a NIMBY issue.

Henderson said ELNA was more creative and open to having the shelter. BCNA was clear that they do not want the shelter.

Swarts said depending on the timeline – this could likely be emphasized at the SS.

Henderson said the CC will refer it to the Planning Commission and there is a process with that.

Dinsdale asked if the group should have something formal to voice about this at the SS.

Martin-Smith said we could take this opportunity for CC discussion before it moves through the process.

Henderson said there are other reports that he submits to the city.

Martin-Smith said anything they can be provided with will help.

Dinsdale said but with the zoning issue, it is much bigger than LCS.

Martin-Smith said it is a SS issue, but probably doesn't need to be an agenda item for the CCH.

Collier asked if variances are allowed.

Henderson said it is not currently permitted, even with an SUP. He is willing to have a SUP but as long as it is a longer period of time.

Enoch said it would be helpful to make a motion in support of broadening the zoning law. It would put the CCH on the same team as LCS.

Knoche said she does not have enough information at this time.

Martin-Smith said as we get closer, and as Henderson provides more information, the CCH can become more involved.

Henderson said at the point the CC refers it to the PC, there will be time to get involved.

Martin-Smith said it can be a discussion point at the SS. Staff and Henderson can keep the group apprised of the process so they can offer support at the appropriate time.

Other Business

Swarts said regarding the support of the Family Promise Initiative, there could be zoning issues that need to be worked out.

Dinsdale said people will not be living in churches, but they will be staying there for 7 days at a time. This is a national program that works all over the country and she is certain that has been addressed. She hopes that this group can get to a point where they can support it. There is great support and momentum. The CCH's blessing will be valuable.

Enoch said this is the very soul of what the CCH should be about. They should be very supportive of this program. It is strictly interfaith among communities that do this.

Henderson asked if this could be on the agenda for next time.

Martin-Smith said the SS is the one chance to have an official meeting. We can build enthusiasm for this issue.

Public Comment

Scott asked why FSH didn't participate in the count and can they provide information from that day too?

Swarts said she thinks it was a staffing issue. We can ask them for data, but it won't be a point-in-time count.

Martin-Smith said Knoche's idea of planning a bit more ahead will result in a more successful count.

Knoche asked if we could talk about the May meeting. She will be out of town as will Collier.

Tentatively, the May meeting was scheduled for May 6.

Enoch said the CCH is supposed to have a broad scope. The Coalition on Homeless Concerns has established a subcommittee on addiction to address the lack of detox in Lawrence. It is the CHC's hope that there is a detox/rehab service in Lawrence. The CCH needs to help initiate this so that it can happen. The hospital should also be a part of this. SA has been very supportive.

Martin-Smith said we started with the housing vision – this is a part of the housing vision.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 am.