

**City of Lawrence, Kansas  
COMMUNITY COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS  
April 13, 2010 Minutes (Lawrence City Commission Room)**

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

**Members absent:** Robert Mosely

**Staff present:** Danelle Dresslar, Margene Swarts

**Public present:** Steve Cowan, Saunny Scott, Brad Cook, David Tucker, Heather Hoy, Beth Wilkenson, Samantha Snyder, Diane Etzel-Wise

Chair Dinsdale called the meeting to order at 8:30 am.

**ITEM NO. 1 Introductions**

The members of the CCH introduced themselves.

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

Murphy pointed out a typographical error in the minutes on page six.

Staff will correct error.

**ACTION TAKEN**

Motion by Collinsworth, seconded by Collier to approve the Agenda and to approve the March 9, 2010 minutes with typographical correction.

Motion passed unanimously.

**ITEM NO. 3 LCS Relocation Update: CC Consideration of the LCS SUP**

Henderson said that the City Commission has deferred the shelter SUP item until the April 20, 2010 meeting. There was a legal question brought by the business neighbors of the proposed site. They have some private covenants on the property. The site is part of a private development, and the covenants are not controlled by the City. There is a possibility of a lawsuit, so a few extra days were needed to look over things. The item should be heard on the April 20 agenda with no further complications.

Martin-Smith asked Henderson who requested the postponement of the item on the April 13 agenda.

Henderson said that the City technically asked for the postponement. There was a conversation among various parties and it was determined that the item should be held out for another week. In light of the covenant it might be a confusing discussion without a clear opinion from the lawyers. Henderson said that he has had some productive meetings with Commissioners and neighbors, the Chamber of Commerce, and Downtown Lawrence, Inc. There are many parties involved in the discussions and it has been beneficial to the conversation.

Collier asked if the City could protect the site from the covenants under zoning procedures.

Henderson said possibly. He said that the covenants could affect the ability for LCS to locate at that site. It could also affect the City's ability to approve an SUP if LCS does not have the ability to be there.

Martin-Smith reminded the CCH that there was no regular meeting of this body until after the item is heard by the City Commission. She said that she would like to share some comments that she has heard from the business community.

Swarts said that if the CCH had concerns or comments at this time that they should share them and reminded the Commission they had already passed along a recommendation to the City Commission for their support in the shelter relocation site.

Dinsdale said that it is important for the CCH to continue to have a voice on this issue. There is enormous opposition to this site, and that opposition was in place before the issue of the covenants came up. The Management Plan has been updated, and this shelter issue has been the major work of the CCH in the form of the Housing Vision. The starting point for the Housing Vision is the emergency shelter, and this is the last good location that has been identified. There needs to be a candid conversation about how we can support it, and if there is a reason that we cannot support it then that should be discussed.

Martin-Smith said that she has heard several things from the business community in speaking with people at events that she has attended. When she speaks to a member of the business community about the shelter, she is very quick to disclose that she is a member of the CCH. Martin-Smith said that her obligation on the CCH is to represent the business community. She recently met with seven or eight business community members who all have experience in volunteering for public service agencies, so these are people who care a lot about the Lawrence community. These people want to see things go well for the shelter in their efforts.

Martin-Smith said that a point that has been brought to her is that the community is having a difficult time picturing how the new location will be different from the current site. There is a common thought that the shelter will be picked up and moved from downtown to the edge of town and not much will be different. Martin-Smith said that there is a lack of information being relayed to the public about the shelter relocation. She said that there are no media members that attend the CCH meetings, and that the word is not getting out there about the shelter. She said that in talks with the business community, she is very quick to defend the Housing Vision, and outside of the CCH, not many community members are familiar with the Vision. She has worked hard to present that Housing Vision to those that she talks to.

The opinions that people have are based on anecdotal things that they hear. The concern is that there are going to be people staying there with no plan to get out of homelessness and into housing. The reality is that the message is not out there and what is out there is not clear. Martin-Smith said that when she explains the Housing Vision, she says that it is the intent of the shelter to run parallel with emergency housing. The intent of the shelter is that once someone has been there a few days then they are put into a program or a plan, and the intent is to get them into more appropriate housing. The business community members that Martin-Smith talks to are glad to hear that because they did not understand the intent. Once they

understood the intent, then they felt more supportive of the new shelter location. The community is not watching the Management Plan as closely as the CCH is. The initial plan for a shelter was to get the homeless out of the snow and the heat. Over the years many things have evolved and happened.

Martin-Smith said that later on in that same week, she met with another business owner, and their feeling was that if the new Management Plan is so good then why is it not in place at the current shelter location? Martin-Smith said that she saw the comments in the Lawrence Journal World that Henderson made regarding the case management component, and the way it was worded it said that it could take up to 90 days to get a guest into a plan. This is different from what she has been telling people because it was her understanding that guests were to be placed on a plan within a couple of days of coming to the shelter. Martin-Smith said that when she saw that in the paper, she felt that she did not know anything more today than she did when the effort began. Martin-Smith said that her feeling was that unless the CCH and LCS is clear on what this shelter will provide to the homeless it will be hard to get public support. The community wants to see this population get the help and assistance that they need to be functional in the community.

Henderson said that he was not sure where Martin-Smith had read that it could take up to 90 days for a shelter guest to receive a case management plan, as that is not something that the shelter representatives say because it is not how it happens. Henderson said that within 72 hours from when a person comes into the shelter they do an intake. After that they start a program. That should be how that reads. Once the guest starts a program, LCS has up to 90 days to evaluate the person's performance in the program. They do not mean that the person has 90 days before they have to start a program. They start it right away. The 90 days is for shelter staff to determine if the person is serious about their case management. The staff has to evaluate if the person is scamming the system or if they are serious about getting out of homelessness. As they progress in a program and staff sees that they are making improvements they are able to move within levels at the shelter. The Management Plan has changed, and the 90 day element is causing a lot of confusion. Henderson said that they can take the 90 days element out of the Management Plan.

Knoche asked Henderson to clarify that the 90 days aspect is similar to a probation period for the guest.

Henderson said that it was very similar. He reiterated that the 90 day element is causing a lot of problems with interpretation. The 90 days clause makes it sound as if a person can get a free ride.

Martin-Smith said that if she had been misquoted or quoted out of context she would be contacting the newspaper to have the quote corrected.

Swarts said that the questions have all largely focused on the Management Plan. The article in the Lawrence Journal World did read as if a person had 90 days to get on a program. The issue with the interpretation of the 90 day element is one of semantics. Swarts said that she was not sure how that could be clearly defined.

Martin-Smith said that to the layperson, the question is if they get on a plan and are not doing anything for 90 days then what happens after that. The private citizen does not have the benefit of knowing this information. The intent of the shelter this whole time has been to help the homeless to become fully functional. The base criterion of an emergency shelter in the Housing Vision is that they will be in the shelter from 90-120 days. This issue was discussed and debated even at the time of pulling the Housing Vision together. Martin-Smith said that Henderson should be careful in pulling the 90 day element out of the Management Plan because then the minimum expectations can begin to unravel. Martin-Smith said that it concerns her that there is still a level of misunderstanding after all the Housing Vision and shelter have been through.

Henderson said that part of the problem is the media and the process gets garbled in translation. People do not just sit at the shelter for 90 days. He said that they are working on language to clarify the 90 days and to clarify that it is not a drop in center.

Martin-Smith said that some people believe that it is not going to be a drop in center. The major concern is what happens to the 20-30 people who have used the drop in center on a consistent basis. Where will they go if the drop in center is not located Downtown? The community has not had this conversation. There is a lot that the community does not know, and they are attending the City Commission meetings and expressing those concerns. Martin-Smith said that she is urging for clarity for the community. The community has to move forward with this emergency shelter. Every time there is a comment out there that is not true the shelter takes a step backwards.

Henderson said that he is working on clarifying the drop in center piece. He said he has had discussions with the Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Lawrence, and the City Commission about the drop in center.

Swarts said that some people have asked if the drop in center can stay open at that location. If this was to be suggested, the process would require a whole new SUP and a new entity to operate it. The Planning Department is relaying the information that if LCS moves out and someone else wants to move in and operate a drop in center, that will require a brand new SUP process. They are trying to get the word out that it will not be something that can happen without a significant process.

Martin-Smith said that she had two other concerns to share with Henderson. She said that it has been said that there may be a lack of interest in allowing agencies to come to the facility and work with the clients. She said that it is perceived that there might not have been much effort to get the agencies to locate out of the shelter. She said that she has told people that this is the intent of the shelter, so she suggested that Henderson speak to that publicly that this is part of the plan and agencies are on board with locating an office out of the shelter location. Martin-Smith said the second thing that she has heard is that LCS is not working with the Douglas County Jail's Re-entry program. Martin-Smith said that if that is true then the CCH needs to know that, and if it is not true then the public needs to know it. People need to know that those discussions are going on.

Henderson said that other agencies and their ability to locate an office at the shelter is part of the official transportation plan. The agencies will be there so it will minimize the need to travel

through neighborhoods. Henderson said he was grateful to hear this information from Martin-Smith and the rest of the CCH because it helps him know what to say. He said that he would not have thought that he needed to cover the aspect of working with the jail. The Jail is one of their agency relationships.

Dinsdale said that Family Promise of Lawrence has written a letter in support of the shelter. She asked if they could solicit letters from other agencies to show their support for LCS and to note if they plan to participate in locating an office at the LCS location.

Martin-Smith said that should be requested by the shelter.

Dinsdale said that it is not the job of the CCH to approve the Management Plan, but she appreciates the information that Martin-Smith has shared with Henderson and the rest of the body. The CCH needs to be confident in the shelter if they are going to lobby for it. Dinsdale said that she looked over the Management Plan over the previous days and had some of the same questions that Martin-Smith had. She said that the direction of leadership of LCS for decisions made regarding shelter guests needs to be outlined in the Management Plan. With the deferral of the City Commission on the agenda item, LCS has another week to clarify the questions that have been raised. She asked if the CCH wanted to look at the Management Plan again and make comments or suggestions to Henderson so he can prepare for the April 20 City Commission meeting.

Knoche said that it was the place of the CCH to review the Management Plan and compare it to the Housing Vision and determine if it meets the needs that the CCH outlined in the Vision. They should be able to provide Henderson feedback about what elements are good, but approval of the Management Plan is not where the CCH should go. The CCH should review the document and provide input for the benefit of the effort.

Henderson said that the Management Plan has always been an internal management tool. Much of the contents are rights and responsibilities, the safety plan, and internal management items. Henderson said that he reviewed the Boulder Management Plan and theirs is very similar and a little shorter. The headings and categories are very similar between the two plans. LCS did not consult with Boulder's shelter beforehand, but it is good to see that they have the same practices running in both shelters.

Dinsdale asked Henderson what will happen to LCS if the SUP fails on April 20 at the City Commission Meeting.

Henderson said that if it fails then they will continue to move forward. They will have an understanding of why it failed, as there will have to be a reason. Hopefully if that happens then it is an issue they can work on. This is a very good site. Right now there is not an alternative site if this one is not approved.

Collinsworth said that it was not known to him that if other stakeholders such as DCCCA and SRS come out and use this office space that it might create more traffic to the shelter site. Collinsworth said his major concern has always been the transportation element, and that is also a major concern of the City's transportation authority. The dollar amounts are staggering. If Henderson can assure the City that this amount will be substantially less due to these

services providing additional transportation, then Henderson will gain additional support. Money is always the driving issue.

Swarts said that the requirement of the Management Plan is a fairly new tool. It became part of the adopted text amendment for an overnight shelter and a day shelter. It is also a tool used to address issues that LCS has experienced at their current site, and it was brought together to make one document. It is a part of the process and an acknowledged component of the SUP process. In conjunction with the City Commission looking at the Management Plan, they are also asking for an updated Management Plan for the current site. This process has brought the two plans more in line with one another. The specificities for each Management Plan are different as each location is unique, and it is important to remember that the Management Plan has become a big part of this process, and it is a good part. It has enabled everyone to look at the issues and how to address them. The current Management Plan is coming back to the City Commission after the shelter relocation is heard, no matter what the outcome of the vote.

Collier said that it is important not to confuse the case management component with actual housing. The public cannot be assured that within 90 days a person will be housed.

Martin-Smith said that the concern was with how long someone could be there before they got helped.

Swarts said that this assures people that they do have a plan. People are less concerned with how long it will take to get someone housed, and more concerned with what we are doing to help these people get to a point where they can be housed.

Beth Wilkenson, Coalition for Homeless Concerns, said that there should be work with prevention. The public needs to know the prevention piece as they are seeing the rest that happens after the fact.

Murphy said that the perception is of the shelter clients doing nothing, and that is something that Henderson knows is out there. One person who has been publicly vocal with their opposition saw people at the shelter playing dominoes. The perception the public has is where those seeds are being planted.

Knoche agreed and said that was what was visible a lot of the time. People see clients lounging around outside on the porch, and that is what they think goes on there. The community does not see the case management that goes on behind the scenes. This is not being explained to the community and it is not what people are seeing to base their opinions on.

Martin-Smith said that Henderson should focus on the successes of the shelter. Here is what this guest came from and here is what they accomplished. People have come through our programs and have become housed. The world does not know that LCS is helping people get jobs. LCS and Henderson are so busy putting out fires all the time, but they need to make time to focus on the successes.

Henderson said that the month before the guest was playing dominoes at the shelter he was in the gutter, and two of the other clients had just gotten off their eight hour night shift at K-Mart. Henderson said that it is hard to get that information across.

Knoche said that the invisible facts are going to be offset when someone drives down the street and witnesses the visible facts. LCS can say that these clients just got off work, and x number of people are getting on the bus to go to work. The general public does not see this and they do not know this.

Dinsdale said that it could use a statement of philosophy. The CCH knows these details, but what she would like to see is a clearer description of what happens if someone does not abide by their action plan, or if they refuse an action plan. How can a client reenter the shelter if they drop out of the program? There should be a short description of the shelter's philosophy. The CCH knows these stories, but the general public does not know that system.

Dalberg said that there are those in the community that have a tendency to stereotype the homeless population.

Martin-Smith said that in the case of Topeka, she does not recall a lot of negativity around the Rescue Mission when it was built. The Rescue Mission has become an excellent neighbor, and Topeka is designing their Arts District adjacent to the shelter. The homeless in Topeka are known as great neighbors and they have taken a lot of steps to help to keep that area clean and presentable.

Dalberg said that once the shelter is operational that will be people's experience. Until then it is a case of NIMBY.

Martin-Smith said that the CCH can help with that image of what is really going on. People will realize that there is an appropriate plan and the building to make that plan a reality. LCS is close, and the comments made here today are to help Henderson get a little closer. The comments being brought forward today are those that are not heard except in social settings. The media also needs to be corrected if any of the CCH is quoted incorrectly or out of context.

Dinsdale asked Henderson to redistribute the Management Plan and if anyone has comments to let him know.

Swarts reminded the CCH to reply to Henderson with comments and not to "reply to all" as it is not a CCH discussion.

#### **ITEM NO. 4 Outreach Report Format Discussion**

Dinsdale said that the CCH appreciated the effort made by Bert Nash staff to work on the readability of the report. She said that this report format reads much easier.

Knoche said that LDCHA had a meeting with Bert Nash, The Salvation Army, and LCS. At the last meeting there was a discussion about Bert Nash looking into using HMIS. This might be a source to help build and develop their reports. There is useful information for everyone on these reports.

Brad Cook, Bert Nash, agreed with Knoche, and said that if the outreach team begins inputting information into HMIS then the report will not look similar to this going forward. Bert Nash is having someone come in and provide a demonstration of HMIS for them.

Swarts said that as Lawrence is part of the Balance of State Continuum of Care they can probably provide the software at no cost. Bert Nash would just need to have appropriate computer access.

#### **ITEM NO. 5 Discussion of Retreat with CDAC to Consider Funding Strategies**

Swarts said that the CDAC is interested in having a retreat to discuss the Step Up to Better Housing Strategy. The strategy was adopted by the City Commission in 1997 and it is the strategy that guides the allocation process for the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds and HOME funds. This strategy has not been updated since then, but it has been reaffirmed by the CDAC each year and the City Commission has reaffirmed it as well. Housing is the main component of the strategy, and all funding allocated through the CDBG and HOME programs is targeted toward housing in some fashion. The housing component is underscored by neighborhood revitalization. In the last year the emergency shelter has been a big focus for funding as well. This year, there are several new members on the CDAC, and they looked at the strategy and thought that it was in need of a review. Since the CCH implemented the Housing Vision, there is a good understanding of housing components to the strategy. It was suggested that both groups attend the retreat. Sara Taliaferro will facilitate the meeting. Staff has talked to Taliaferro and she is available to facilitate a retreat on June 8 or June 10. June 8 is a regular meeting for the CCH. It will be the final meeting for three CCH members.

The Commission discussed the dates and decided on Tuesday, June 8 from 10am to 1pm. Lunch will be provided and the retreat will be held in the Development Services Conference Room.

Henderson asked if new commissioners will be appointed by then.

Swarts said if there are new members on the CCH they would be included in the retreat.

Dinsdale asked why the outgoing commissioners were included in the retreat.

Swarts said that the appointments for the three CCH members that are up in June actually expire on June 30. She said that although the three commission members are moving on, they still bring good ideas, experience, and history to the table. They can still offer valuable experience even if their term is expiring.

Collier thanked the staff, and said having served on both advisory boards in the past it is very important to get the two together for decisions such as this. Each committee does not really have a good grasp of what the other one does.

## **ITEM NO. 6 Future Commission Appointment Discussion.**

Swarts reminded the CCH that the Mayor extended the terms of the three CCH members whose terms were expiring in late 2009 to June 2010. There was one vacancy that was not filled because the CCH was at the apex of some work that they were involved in. It has come to the time that there should be community outreach to fill these positions. The community needs to be educated on the openings and the charge of the Commission.

Martin-Smith said that when she looked at the work of the task force and the charge of the CCH to carry out, her opinion is that the work of the original task force is pretty complete. It is hard for her to suggest that the CCH continue on without hearing what the City Commission sees as their charge going forward.

Dinsdale said that she agreed with Martin-Smith.

Martin-Smith said that she is not comfortable reaching out to the community if the CCH does not have a vision of where they go from here. The Housing Vision is adopted, and the emergency shelter is moving forward. Martin-Smith suggested asking the Mayor where he sees the CCH going. The original make up of the CCH represented certain components of the community. Collier, Knoche, and Murphy were later invited to help advise the CCH. The CCH has evolved beyond what the original resolution had outlined. The City Commission needs to know what the CCH has done and what they have accomplished, and then the City Commission can decide how they want to manage the service going forward.

Dinsdale said that there needed to be a clear charge from the Mayor, and that any discussion that takes place before that charge is known will not do much good.

Henderson said it seemed to him that there was still a lot of work to do. He said that a huge role of the CCH is education for the community to dispel myths about homelessness. The community has a chance of going backwards on their progress if this Commission ends. As part of the Vision, there is a lot of work to do with Supportive Housing. There is a huge gap in that service and a huge need in the community. Henderson said that getting someone to serve on the CCH that represents the mental health field is a very important step moving forward.

Swarts reminded the CCH that the CCC did exist and could possible help with the educational piece.

Henderson said that the CCC does not do much in the way of education. He said that he does not see the City Commission giving the CCH much direction in that sense. Henderson said that it seemed to him that the City Commission wanted direction from the CCH as far as where they should go next.

Martin-Smith said that without a conversation with the elected officials and looking at the resolution and the original charge, they need to provide the City Commission with what the needs in the community are going forward. The CCH needs to tell them where they are so they can look at it on a different level. If the CCH is continued, it may require a new resolution. Martin-Smith said that she felt very good about the work that they have done, and that they have moved the Housing Vision forward. The City Commission has not had the opportunity to have this

discussion. It has been several years since the CCH met with the City Commission. The CCH should give the City Commission some indication of what still needs to be done.

Henderson stressed that the discussion needed to take place prior to the three members leaving the CCH.

Swarts said that staff would work on setting that up.

### **ITEM NO. 7 Miscellaneous/Calendar**

There was no additional calendar information.

### **ITEM NO. 8 Public Comment**

Wilkenson said that she has been reading Strategic Plans to end Homelessness from other states recently and she has been unable to locate such a plan for Kansas.

Diane Etzel-Wise said that there is a rough draft but it has not been published.

Wilkenson said that the Mayor needs to be aware of the strategic plan being in transition. There are steps forward that need to be made in this community.

Etzel-Wise said that at the State level if there are those who are not working together it is impossible for localities to have a model to follow. The five Continua of Care are meeting to work on the strategic plan. It is moving forward, and it has been awhile in the making. The current draft is with the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation.

Wilkenson said that in regards to the new shelter, the focus should be on the larger size and the room for families with children and programs. There should also be an education component because some of the children staying there have no access to learning situations. There should also be focus on the other agencies that are involved, the onsite dining area, and the fact that there is no loitering allowed.

### **ITEM NO. 9 Adjourn.**

#### **ACTION TAKEN**

Motion by Murphy, seconded by Martin-Smith to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 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	+	+	+								