

**City of Lawrence, Kansas
COMMUNITY COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS
April 14, 2009 Minutes (Lawrence City Commission Room)**

Members present: Jeanette Collier, Hubbard Collinsworth, Katherine Dinsdale, Loring Henderson, Charlotte Knoche, Mike Monroe, Sandra Winn Tutwiler

Members absent: Wes Dalberg, Robert Mosely, Shannon Murphy

Staff present: Danelle Dresslar, Scott McCullough, Margene Swarts,

Public present: Janey Burgess, Carla Helm, Heather Hoy, Forrest Swall, David Tucker, Brad Cook, Scott Mulyran, Matthew Faulk, Jacob McKee, Hilda Enoch, Michael Tanner

ITEM NO. 1 INTRODUCTIONS

Dinsdale called the meeting to order at 8:30am. Members of the Community Commission on Homelessness introduced themselves.

ITEM NO. 2 Approval of the Agenda and the March 10, 2009 Minutes

ACTION TAKEN

Motion by Monroe, seconded by Knoche to approve the March 10, 2009 minutes.

Motion passed unanimously.

ITEM NO.3 HOMELESS OUTREACH REPORT – HOMELESS OUTREACH CASE MANAGERS

Carla Helm, Bert Nash Homeless Outreach Supervisor, presented the report for the first quarter of 2009. She indicated that the number of clients who received outreach services has increased during this quarter by 30% compared to the fourth quarter of 2008.

Collier asked the outreach team why children are not being counted.

Scott Mulyran, homeless outreach worker, said that the count of the children is not specifically indicated by demographic information. Although not broken down, the count of children is included in the first page with the information on "persons served". Most of the report is done on an individual or head of household basis.

Dinsdale asked how the numbers are presented on the report in that there are two numbers shown separated by a hash mark.

Matthew Faulk, homeless outreach worker, said that the criteria is that someone is considered enrolled if they have been seen three or more times. The first number that you see is the number of those who have been seen three or more times, the second number is an individual who has been seen less than three times.

Mulryan added that the count for children is something that could be added to the report.

Faulk said that the report can be updated to show additional information.

Knoche asked if this meant that 103 individuals or head of households were contacted this quarter.

Brad Cook, homeless outreach worker, said yes.

Dinsdale asked the outreach team to provide the CCH with a breakdown of their roles for Bert Nash.

Cook said that he is placed at Lawrence Community Shelter, Faulk is placed at the Salvation Army, Mulryan is placed at ECKAN, Tucker is the PATH worker, and McKee is a half time staff member.

Dinsdale asked about the billing practices at Bert Nash and if this has become part of their job description.

Faulk said that out of budgetary issues they have had to utilize the billing system as outreach workers. The program costs Bert Nash more than what the grant funding allocation is from the City. The case managers need to make up the difference in the funding. The half-time worker was partially paid from Bert Nash, so they have to work with billing. Now, because of budgetary concerns, the workers are billing out clients who are receiving case management services. When the grant was first created, the agreement stated that outreach workers were different than case managers. The outreach team provides the same services, although there are some significant differences. Case management is a Medicaid term. It provides a definition of services for which one can be billed. Medicaid specifically defines what can be billed. Case management is not a blanket term for all services. In order for case management to apply you need to have an individual who is severely and persistently mentally ill and there needs to be an insurance policy of some sort present.

Faulk explained that outreach does not require billing. The basis for the outreach team billing is due to the budget issues at Bert Nash. In the capacity that the outreach team is billing, they are providing case management. Technically, as outreach workers they should only be dealing with clients who qualify as homeless. Case managers work with a population that is primarily housed. They are helping them to maintain their symptoms, receive services, and find employment. While the outreach team is providing billing for services, they are only working with those who are homeless. The need is increasing because of the budget. In time, the dynamics of the outreach team will change because of the budget. A certain set of hours of outreach may be set within the population. This all goes back to the budget. Agencies are looking for ways to come up with the differences.

Knoche asked if the outreach team can only serve billable clients.

Cook said not at this time, but they may need to in response to the proposed budget cuts. Bert Nash's response is that they need to make up money. There will be a budgetary amount that they will be required to bring in per month. If there is a budget constraint then they have to make up the money somewhere.

Knoche asked if they are asked to serve billable clients first.

Faulk said not specifically, but that is something that will become more of an issue because of the lack in funding. They are being told that they need to work with those who are billable but not specifically before other clients.

Knoche said she had concerns regarding job performance because of this billing issue and budget constraints leading to the billable standard.

Faulk said that two workers have already had billable standards set in place. No one tells them that you have to work with the billable client first, but there are billing standards in place. It is one thing to say no, you are the homeless outreach worker, but in it another to say that if you can bill someone, go ahead. There are billable standards, so there is conflicting instruction on billing.

Cook said that the billable standard is not a horribly stressful number. At the end of the month it does weigh on your mind. Bert Nash is on a pay raise freeze, so although they cannot get raises, the ability to obtain the billable standard does impact their performance reviews.

Faulk said that they have heard that there are some concerns about the job that they are doing and what exactly it is that they do. He began reading from the original Task Force grant for the program. There was discussion about several of the topics on the grant, and Faulk said that there are a few items that need to be reworded in the grant upon renewal. The third item on the grant refers to a thorough needs assessment for their clients. The outreach team does a Needs Assessment on all their clients. In order for Bert Nash to do a thorough Needs Assessment there would need to be basis for the client to require mental health services. His interpretation of the grant is that he did not think it was an intention for Bert Nash to do a Needs Assessment on every homeless person. Primarily, these Needs Assessments are being done on the basis of mental health needs. The outreach team asks the questions they need to in order to provide services to the individuals. That is their Needs Assessment.

Dinsdale agreed that the grant should be reviewed each time before it is renewed. She suggested that it was important for the outreach team to have input in the process.

Faulk agreed that there should be discussion on that when the time arises.

Dinsdale said that she understands that some changes will have to be made. She asked Faulk for the sake of saving time, if instead of going through the grant item by item, could he briefly explain the remaining items.

Faulk said that the concern of the outreach team is that they will have to start telling clients no because of the increasing demand and corresponding budget issues. As Helm mentioned earlier, there is a 30% increase in this quarter alone. The need is not becoming less. He does not think there will be a need for more team members, but there will be a need for funding to better manage their case load that they do have.

Mulryan added that he works with a lot of families and children. He said that they are asking him to take them to Kansas City or Olathe because they are more able to find housing and resources there as opposed to Lawrence. He said that the comment has been that people have been nicer outside of Lawrence and this is causing people to retreat.

Dinsdale commented that the outreach team has hit a wall because they do not have the resources to effectively move the homeless anywhere.

Faulk said the lack of resources is affecting the team in relation to the goal originally set forth by the Task Force. Bert Nash has to make up funding. They have a need to focus on traditional mental health as opposed to homelessness.

Cook said that the outreach team seems to be the only piece of the original Task Force recommendations that has been implemented.

Collier said that the outreach workers need to service a specific population. It is so overwhelming that there is not enough staff to handle it.

Dinsdale thanked the outreach workers for the jobs that they do. She has heard nothing but good things about their efforts. She said that the program has been a huge success and that the CCH wants to help in any way they can to sustain and expand the program.

Knoche said that the outreach team was one of the first items from the Task Force that was implemented. The group strongly felt that it would make a difference in getting people out of homelessness and into housing. Once they were in housing they would be able to stay out of homelessness. That is why the case management element was so crucial. The CCH needs to support the outreach team and improve on what they are able to do. The Task Force said that case management would make a positive difference.

Dinsdale said that Faulk opened the presentation by saying that there were some concerns about their performance. She said that she has not heard of any and that the CCH does not have any concern about how they perform their jobs. Many of the members of the CCH were part of the original Task Force. That group fought hard to get the outreach team in place and now the CCH wants to do everything it can to assist them. She knows it is very frustrating for them that they cannot offer the homeless a place to stay.

Dinsdale went on to say that in light of the upcoming budget this program is on the cutting block. She said the CCH will do everything they can to see that this program remains funded.

Hilda Enoch told the CCH that they are in a position where they can make recommendations to the City Commission and make actions happen. The CCH sees that the outreach workers cannot do what they need to do with the resources they are given. The CCH can urge the City Commission to cut the budget somewhere else.

Henderson added that the outreach team does a fantastic job. The community would be in real trouble if they were not there. This program works in many ways. His only concern is the report that they complete quarterly. This raises concern because the numbers are interesting enough because he understands that Bert Nash needs to tell the City what is going on, but it is not necessarily helpful information to other agencies. The information should be integrated with what other agencies are doing. This report has limited value in the community. The value is between Bert Nash and the City.

Cook said that the report is modeled after the PATH report. There were a series of adjustments made, and it has stayed in this same form for quite some time. This is so there can be accurate comparisons of information quarterly.

Martin-Smith asked when the next grant renewal will be for the program.

Swarts said that it is on a calendar year basis and it is an annual renewal, so it will be the end of the year.

Martin-Smith asked when the grant renews, will aspects be rewritten?

Swarts said that there is an upcoming meeting between her, McCullough, and members of Bert Nash staff to consider some concerns, both with what Cook brought up as well as some that staff has heard. They will talk through where we are and what the budget impact may be.

Martin-Smith told the outreach team that she does not understand this report, but she puts trust in the fact that the report is doing what it is supposed to do. She has a lot of confidence in the staff to catch what is needed to make the program successful. What she thinks is the most important part of this issue to the community is the real stories about real people. This is what brings the point home to the taxpayers. A lot of time in the past five years has been spent on this issue, and those types of stories are the ones that really make the tax payers understand. They are of big value. It puts a face on the real things that we are trying to do and the things that the outreach team is accomplishing. There were several members of the Task Force that asked to be appointed to the CCH to see the recommendations through. When they went to the City Commission as a Task Force, they were met with complications because the paper ran a story that there would be a four million dollar price tag on all the Task Force recommendations. This destroyed the credibility of the group for a short while. When they got before the City Commission, the City Commission said that the recommendations were a great idea, but there was no money to fund them. This group

has come a very long way, but prior to them, nothing was done about the issue. There were many years that went by that nothing was done about homelessness. The Task Force enlisted Bert Nash and the LDCHA among others to determine priorities. They found that they needed outreach workers most of all. Every other recommendation can continue to be worked on, but the outreach was the major focus. It sets a good, firm foundation for the rest of the recommendations. As time passes the needs change. Today the CCH has a Housing Vision, and she thinks that now everyone is on the same page. The CCH is here to educate the City Commission and the tax payers and as everyone continues to do good things then she is confident that there will still be support.

Collinsworth asked Swarts if the original funding amount for the outreach team has stayed the same throughout the duration of the program, or if the amounts have fluctuated.

Swarts said that she believed that it has stayed the same through each renewal. There was a case last year where there was a proposed decrease in order to fund the E-Housing Connection, but in the end the funding was not decreased to Bert Nash. This is the third year of the program and it has not increased in funding at any time either.

Michael Tanner mentioned concerns about the idea of providing housing and keeping housing for everyone. He said that he has evidence that the Housing Authority does not do this. He said that he had sacrificed his day to be there and that he was led to believe by an announcement at the Drop In Shelter that the Mayor would be attending the meeting.

Dinsdale explained that the Mayor has appointed this body to work as the CCH. She told Tanner she valued what he had to say, but public comment was to be limited to the agenda item that is being discussed, and the Housing Authority was not what the agenda item was referring to.

ITEM NO. 4 HOMELESS CAMPING PROPOSAL – DAVID TUCKER, BERT NASH PATH CASE MANAGER.

The camping proposal submitted by David Tucker was provided to the CCH and is attached to the minutes.

After reading through the proposal, Tucker handed out a letter of support from the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty for the campsite. The letter is attached to the minutes. .

Knoche asked Tucker to detail the yearly cost of \$2500.

Tucker said that \$700-\$800 will be for the portable toilets. The dealer that he spoke with said that they would be able to give the City a good deal. The rest of the cost is trash service. The larger dumpster size is what the price quote was for. Any additional costs would be associated with the purchase of tents and other goods. The outreach

team will fund this if City funding cannot be utilized. The cost is very low in relation to other social service projects. He has spoken to churches and private organizations, and outside of minor monetary assistance there were not many other offers made. Everyone is stretched to their limit with regard to housing people with the other programs that are functioning in the community.

Tutwiler asked about other cities like Lawrence where you have a situation where the homeless population outweighs the amount of shelter beds available. Where do the extra people go in these communities?

Tucker said that locally, people are sleeping in parks, on heater vents, or in cars, among other places. Many of these people are getting fined for sleeping outside. The arrest logs show that the number of arrests for camping is low, but this is a deceptively low number. Only 11 individuals were arrested for camping this year. Often a different type of charge is the factor, such as an open container violation. This makes the camping number of arrests lower than it truly is.

Henderson asked if the arrests may be lower because of the 24 hour posting of the sites. He asked if the 24 hour time period was enough time for the campers.

Tucker said that the problem is the harassment of the homeless from people moving from spot to spot. The homes that they have made and the time investment is gone. Their material items are lost. The City gives them 24 hours. The camping solution is one that no one is happy with. People do not want this to be a solution. This is not the solution; this is the first step to the solution. This will give the homeless a chance to hold down a job because they know where they are going to sleep that night. The outreach team has agreed that they will be present in the camp at least once a day, every day. At least once a month someone needs to work with and check on the campers. Cook is currently located at Lawrence Community Shelter. He goes there every day and helps the people there and it makes a difference. These people currently do not have the luxury of having these services offered to them every day.

Tucker added that as far as sites go, the site in November when the tent city was bulldozed is a good site. There is another location off of Burcham Park beyond the new boathouse. There is a service road that goes back there. This makes for easier access of trash removal, toilet maintenance, and police patrol. All the patrol will not need to be done on foot. Chief Olin indicated that there would not normally be a regular patrol, but the Police Department will do what the City Commission directs them to do.

Henderson asked about the estimated number of campers they are looking to accommodate.

Tucker said that early estimations are approximately 70 people. The Salvation Army closing is subtracting 40 beds from the shelter space in the community. The Salvation Army is doing an admirable job of finding their clients housing in the interim. A lot of the time they are placing the people with their parents. This will give them an alternative and will tackle the problem of the shelter being closed.

Tutwiler asked if the proposal mentioned how those who are let in will be monitored.

Tucker said that there will be monitoring in terms of conduct, and the City will be released from all liability. The rules will include no drugs or alcohol. The outreach team cannot be there 24 hours a day, but this aspect needs to be understood by all that stay there. Temporary bans may be in order if rules are broken. The truth is that in order for it to be accepted by people there needs to be rules.

Dinsdale asked about allowing children in. Most camps have a rule about a person having to be 18 or older.

Tucker agreed that it would not necessarily be the best environment for a child because there will be no real supervision. In his proposal all residents must be 18 or older.

Dinsdale asked about limiting the number of nights a camper can stay there.

Tucker said that there are no limits in the proposal. There is nowhere for them to go after their limited stay is over.

Tutwiler said that many may fear that this may turn into a long term strategy.

Tucker agreed and said that in this case there will be a case management element that is going to have to be present to keep that from happening. A person needs the supports to get out of homelessness. Case management needs to be there a minimum amount. Every first step in action plans to end homelessness count having a stable place to sleep at night as the first step.

Tanner said that the campsite would come at the cost of losing freedom.

Henderson asked Tucker if he had a sense of how many homeless would say that they are losing their freedom with a campsite.

Tucker said that his original goal was to overturn the camping ordinance. The City Commission did not favor that. This is the next best solution, and it does come with restrictions because it has to.

Henderson asked who in the homeless population will utilize this camp.

Tucker said that not all chronically homeless will be there. If they cannot abide by the rules they will continue their way. He said he tried to change those rules and he could not. This is what he can offer. Large amounts of the chronically homeless population will avoid this. That will not keep him from going out under the bridges to look for them to offer assistance.

Janey Burgess asked if there would be a water source, and also what would the campers do in the very cold months.

Tucker said that water is difficult because the water service requires a water line. If a source can be found then he will approach the City to ask for that. Water is not provided at this point. Every camper has their own method of finding water. In extreme weather LCS will be able to open their shelter as they are currently doing. They will still be considered homeless.

Due to numerous interruptions, McCullough reminded the public to make comments directly to the chairperson. The dialogue now is between the speaker and the CCH.

Tucker said that right now people are surviving the cold weather and it is extreme. Camping by a heater is a far cry from being by a fire pit or inside a tent. They have the full cooperation of Lawrence Community Shelter.

Knoche asked if the outreach team had an idea about how this would impact their case load. This seems like a lot of additional responsibility.

Tucker agreed that it is a lot. He said that the outreach team does not think that there will be that many new people that they do not already have an awareness of. They will be able to better assist them in a camp setting. If he had a place like this he could find around 60-70% of the clients he needed to locate. Being able to find the population at the Lawrence Community Shelter is easy also.

Knoche said that the proposal says that the outreach team would be supervising the campsite.

Tucker said that they are supervising the creation, but after that they would be there in an advisory role.

Knoche asked if they knew how many people that would be utilizing the camp would already be in their case load.

Tucker said that almost all of them. He said that there may be a few others that come out of the woodwork also, but mostly all the campers will have familiarity with them and the services that they provide.

Forrest Swall spoke and said that from his observation this seems like a reasonable and modest proposal. The answers to the questions that the CCH are asking really cannot be answered until the outreach team gets into the project and has the experience. He appreciates the praise that the CCH is giving the outreach team for their work in the community. The homeless have the same kinds of needs and aspirations that everyone else has. He has learned a lot about tent cities. He has discovered that there is a self governing capacity for these folks. Outreach workers will be able to enhance this aspect for the campers. The question has come up how many will use the camp. The answer is that one will not know that until the resource is available. From his observation this is an important step. This proposal says what is possible now. It is a modest proposal.

Tucker said that primarily in his talks with other campsite representatives the self governing method is the one that is utilized most often. Local case managers are usually there in an advisory role.

Dinsdale said the CCH needs to make the recommendation if this needs to be moved forward to the City Commission. This was discussed in depth three months ago. The City Commission asked for this proposal to come before the CCH. This is a very important issue. People differ greatly on this issue. The CCH needs to decide if there will be a motion on the floor.

ACTION TAKEN

Collier moved that the CCH recommend the campsite proposal be sent to the City Commission for further review. Collier said that she works with several individuals and families that are camping. Their dream is to be in housing. Until the community has shelter and adequate housing this is much needed.

Collinsworth seconded the motion. He said that while there are still questions that overall he greatly appreciates what Tucker has done.

Dinsdale reminded the CCH and the public that this motion is to recommend that the proposal go on to the City Commission. It would still need to pass them to be enacted.

Swarts clarified that when Chief Olin said that there would be irregular police patrols, due to staffing it might not even be once a day.

Tucker agreed and said that it would be treated as any other place in the city, especially since it would partially need to take place on foot.

Discussion on the motion followed.

Dinsdale said that she has sat with this issue for a long time. She has dreaded this day because it is such a difficult issue. The memorandum from the City staff lists pros and cons of a campsite. She said she voted in the beginning against it and she will vote against it again because she still does not think it is in the best interest of the community. She said that she does not agree with two sets of laws for people – those who camp and those who do not. She feels very strongly that there is a moral obligation to move toward housing. She understands that in the idea of camping that the outreach team feels like they are doing that, but she still disagrees at this time with the proposal. She said the community needs to get together to get housing going. The 300 homeless number is misleading. The number that cannot get into housing is much smaller than that. It is a tragic thing. The mental health situation is tragic. This is not a solution she can support. As Chair, if this passes the CCH she will do what she can in putting it in front of the City Commission to support the group and the vote.

Tucker clarified that anyone can stay at the campsite, not only the homeless.

Tanner wished to make a comment and Chair Dinsdale asked the comment to stay to around two minutes.

Tanner said that he had a comment about housing. He said that Dinsdale commented that the CCH is more interested in getting people in housing. People at LDCHA do not enforce rules to make that happen. Landlords do not follow rules and City Code enforcement does not follow rules in that City codes are not enforced. Homelessness is going to continue until the LDCHA follows the rules.

The CCH asked Mr. Tanner to stay on topic and that they will be accepting comments on the campsite proposal only.

Tanner said that he was on topic as the issue of housing has come up in this conversation.

Tanner became very upset and irate and left the meeting.

Enoch said that the vision that this commission has needs to encompass all of the homeless people in the community. They cannot start where they think it is the safest. Everyone has their right to some form of shelter and decent permanent housing, so the CCH cannot turn their back on this population of people who have nowhere to go.

Ted Boyle, President of the North Lawrence Improvement Association spoke to the CCH. He is a member of LAN, and mentioned that they spoke pretty intensely at their last meeting regarding this topic. The comment was made earlier in the proposal that LAN supported this idea. The true endorsement from LAN was that they thought that a tent city was not good enough. There are plenty of buildings around Lawrence that you can utilize. There are two types of homeless he sees. There are those who are momentarily down on their luck regarding their financial stability and those who are professional campers. They do not have many campers on the north side of the river because they have them removed. There is a need for a large shelter. The professional transient camper wants nothing to do with a campsite. A tent city is the wrong way to go. If they want to do that then the City needs to find a building and convert it into a shelter. There was a meeting of the NLIA last night and there was 100% agreement that this is a great liability to the City and will take away police, fire and medical efforts from other parts of the community.

With consensus from the CCH, Dinsdale extended the meeting until 10:15 am.

Dinsdale closed public comment.

Henderson said that he appreciated Tucker's presentation. The tone was right. It is a terribly complicated decision. There are currently people camping. They frequently get ticketed or their camp gets destroyed. They all of a sudden become criminals. There is not a place for them to go. The camp proposal is an effort to being supportive and to add control to that situation. It would be a credit to the community to have something as compassionate and structured responsive to the ongoing situation. The problem will

always be there. This does not solve anything. There will be some who will camp, and this will be a step in the right direction. He supports the proposal.

Dinsdale called for a vote on the motion.

The Motion passed 4-3-1.

Dinsdale thanked Tucker and told him that she appreciates his proposal. She wants to make sure that it does not deter the plans for Lawrence Community Shelter's new building.

ITEM NO. 5 PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ITEM NO. 6 MISCELLANEOUS/CALENDAR

Heather Hoy, Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority, handed out a summary of the progress of the e-Housing Connection. It is attached to the minutes.

Scott McCullough, Director, Planning and Development Services told the CCH that the City Commission has tentatively scheduled to hear the Homeless Shelter Text Amendment on April 21, 2009, and the portion related to shelters as accessory uses to religious assembly uses is scheduled to be considered by the Planning Commission at their April 22, 2009 meeting. The revised language will be available one week prior to the Planning Commission's meeting date.

Henderson added the Lawrence Community Shelter is in support of the Homeless Shelter Text Amendment.

Monroe wished to say that he abstained from the vote on the camping proposal recommendation to the City Commission because of his employment with the City. He did wish to add that he did think that it would create some problems in staffing and servicing the area.

Knoche said that she had serious concerns about reallocation of the outreach worker's time. She does not think there is the capacity to do it, and it will have an impact on the Transitional Housing wait lists also.

ITEM NO. 7 ADJOURN

ACTION TAKEN

Motion by Martin-Smith, seconded by Dinsdale to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 am.

Motion passed unanimously.