

**City of Lawrence, Kansas  
HOMELESS ISSUES ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
December 13, 2011 Minutes (Lawrence City Commission Room)**

**Members present:** Hubbard Collinsworth, Brad Cook, Karin Feltman, Charlotte Knoche, Mike Monroe, Shannon Murphy, Samantha Snyder

**Members absent:** Wes Dalberg, Cary Strong

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

**Public present:** Steve Cowan – LDCHA HPRP Program, Saunny Scott, Hilda Enoch, Angie Baur – Balance of State CoC Coordinator, Dana Ortiz - Executive Director, Family Promise of Lawrence, Brent Hoffman – Board member, Family Promise of Lawrence, Loring Henderson – Executive Director, Lawrence Community Shelter, Elyse Towey – LDCHA Resident Services.

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

**ITEM NO. 1 Introductions**

The members of the CCH introduced themselves.

**ITEM NO. 2 Approval of the Agenda and the November 8, 2011 Minutes.**

Knoche requested that a Balance of State Continuum of Care (BoS CoC) item be added to the agenda as the State's coordinator was in attendance.

**ACTION TAKEN**

Motion by Murphy **to approve the Agenda with the addition and the November 8, 2011 meeting minutes of the CCH.** Seconded by Cook.

Motion passed unanimously.

**ADDITIONAL ITEM Balance of State CoC**

Angie Baur, coordinator for the BoS CoC, informed the HIAC that the application had been successfully submitted to HUD for the renewal and new projects for the continuum. She said that later on in the meeting the body will be reviewing a document that is a "check-up" survey provided by HUD. The purpose of this document is to provide a self evaluation of the continuum and will also serve as a map for getting the continuum prepared for the implementation of the HEARTH Act. She said input from this region will be taken along with 19 other areas. The draft copy that the body will be reviewing today will help Swarts prepare to ultimately submit the final report to HUD. Baur said the stronger the continuum is in answering the questions and identifying strengths and weaknesses the stronger the continuum will become.

Collinsworth asked Baur what the BoS was looking to do to replace HMIS.

Baur said HMIS will stay intact as HUD continues to see its usage as an important tool to document resources. The HMIS provider may change, but HMIS is staying.

**ITEM NO. 3 Housing Vision Reports.**

***a. Emergency Shelter – Loring Henderson***

Loring Henderson, Executive Director of the Lawrence Community Shelter (LCS) said the Board closed on the sale of the new shelter location on Franklin Park Circle on December 8. He said the timeline has begun as the shelter has met with the architect and they are in the process of issuing a call for bids for contractors. They are only asking for bids from local Douglas County contractors. Once those have been received they will select a general contractor. They hope to start construction in early February since it is a clean building and no other construction has ever taken place inside. It should be an easy space to work with, and the estimate for completion of work is about six months from start to finish. Henderson indicated they should be able to move into the space in late summer or early fall.

Feltman asked Henderson how their current lease is structured at the present location.

Henderson said the lease is a month-to-month lease. The Special Use Permit (SUP) is set to expire in April of 2012, so the shelter will go to the City Commission and request an extension. Henderson said he is unsure of how the City Commission will grant the extension based on the timeline. One year is more than enough time, but six months may not be enough.

Swarts said the City Commission may elect to approve a one-year extension and have it be contingent on vacating the facility. If the shelter is able to move before the year is up, the SUP will expire earlier.

Henderson said the Planning Commission and City Commission hearings will start soon on the renewal of the current SUP.

Knoche asked Henderson what the current count of guests at the shelter is.

Henderson said the shelter is experiencing overflow each night. He said the shelter owes a huge expression of gratitude to the Salvation Army because they are providing the overflow space and the shelter has not had to utilize any space in churches yet this winter. They are overflowing more than 15 people a night, and 15 people is the maximum that can be housed at a church. They are able to house more than 15 at a time at the Salvation Army. Henderson said they have been overflowing into the Salvation Army each night, and he is working on setting up a rotation of churches. They will have to overflow into two churches each night, which calls for two additional staff people. They have also been feeding 100 people a day at the shelter.

Knoche asked how many families are utilizing the shelter.

Henderson said the number varies. Lately it has been down a bit, but the high was 43 family members at one time. There were over 30 family members being housed last week. It averages about 10 families.

Snyder offered Henderson congratulations for a successful capital campaign and said the community is very excited about the upcoming shelter relocation. She expressed she has concern regarding the need for a drop-in center downtown after the shelter moves. She asked Henderson what was projected to happen in the downtown area when the shelter moves, and if there is any plan for an alternate downtown center for those who do not make the trip to the new location.

Henderson said now that the relocation is a reality that is a discussion that the community needs to have. He said the Coalition for Homeless Concerns (CHC) has talked about the issue of a drop-in center, as well as some churches. The Salvation Army has also had conversations about the issue. Henderson said the one thing he does know for sure is that the City will not issue a new SUP for this activity at the current location once LCS has moved out.

Snyder asked specifically what the talk has centered around.

Cook said the question has been if there is anyone to run it. The conversation was tabled because the relocation was up in the air, but now that the relocation has been finalized the talks will resume.

Snyder asked if there was anything the HIAC could do to facilitate the conversation.

Knoche said it was a discussion that the HIAC needs to have.

Swarts suggested that if the HIAC wishes to discuss the issue of a drop-in center they do so under Miscellaneous/Calendar or have it on a future meeting agenda.

Feltman asked Henderson if LCS was able to raise the money needed to secure their Mabee Foundation Grant.

Henderson said they did. He indicated the grant was not a match grant, but it was a challenge grant. The money is not distributed when the goal is reached or at closing. LCS had to borrow money from the bank in order to close on the building. Once they did that they were able to request the Mabee grant. Henderson said the community of Lawrence is who is responsible for the shelter relocation by the breadth of donations and pledges.

Henderson said on the issue of the drop-in center LCS is willing to be part of the conversation. The drop-in center is not moving with the shelter and is not a part of the proposed site plan or management plan. There will be people downtown after the shelter moves. Something has to happen.

Feltman asked if the shelter will only operate during the nighttime.

Henderson said the shelter will operate during the day, but the idea is that if you are at the shelter you are in a program. There will be agencies and providers onsite that will work with shelter guests through case management to get them out of homelessness. The guest that is at the shelter is there because they are in a program.

Snyder said there will be a handful of extreme cases where a homeless individual will not choose to stay at the shelter because they will not want to be in a program. This is not a case where the community wants to wait until folks are downtown on the street to discuss the issue.

Henderson said the new shelter will have a capacity of 125. This was a number that was decided upon when the Salvation Army was still operating an emergency shelter. When both shelters were operating, on a freezing night combined they would be sleeping 100 people. At the new shelter, it is possible that on a freezing night people may come in to sleep when they are not in a program. The Salvation Army currently has a warming and cooling center. This is a place that can be used for a pick-up site to take people to the new shelter to sleep and then they can be dropped back off in the

morning. It is a two sided issue when it is below freezing in that while they want people in programs to get them out of homelessness, they are also there to save lives.

Murphy said there was a concern that there will be an influx of people not staying at the new shelter that may be coming in and out of the jail and the emergency room. This will be expensive for the community and the stays will be short term. The Sherriff's office wants to be part of the drop-in center discussion as well.

Knoche said it seemed important to add this to the agenda and open a discussion of the drop-in center in the next few months. The discussion should center around what needs to be available and what services will continue on.

Feltman said it would be ideal to have all the stakeholder agencies involved in this conversation.

Monroe said the discussion is that there are those that are taking advantage of the programs at the shelter and those folks are not the ones that the HIAC is talking about here. There is a group that will continue to hang out downtown regardless of what is happening at the shelter.

Henderson thanked the committee for their support over the years. He said he also wanted to thank the City for their support. He added that one of the conditions that they are putting in their construction bid documents is that there is a preference to hire skilled workers from the shelter.

### ***b. Temporary Housing***

Steve Cowen, director of the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP) said the program is right on track for what has been reported over the last few meetings as they are in the process of closing out the grant. There will be approximately \$50,000 left in the grant at the end of December. The last financial assistance will be paid out either January 15, 2012 or February 1, 2012. They will continue to take Homelessness Prevention applications until that time. LDCHA closed out the Rapid Re-housing funding on December 8. This was to ensure that staff had enough time to work towards getting the client stabilized in the program. Cowen noted LDCHA is still keeping in touch with Heartland-RADAC as well as they are on the same timeline for grant expenditure.

Cook asked about the new funds that will be available for HPRP activities.

Cowen said these funds will come from the new Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG). LDCHA will not have the department or the staff to administer these particular funds, but he knows that LDCHA is exploring their options as far as offering a similar program through the Resident Services department. He said he suggested that there be a person who reviews the Transitional Housing applications in order to triage the client from the onset of the relationship. This should help reduce instances of clients bumping around and seeking help in multiple places.

Hilda Enoch asked what had happened to the program that LDCHA used to have in place that worked to fill unoccupied units with homeless individuals. According to the Census there are 2500 vacant living units in Lawrence.

Cowen said the program that Enoch is referring to was the E-Housing Connector. The hope with this program was that LDCHA would be able to find landlords that would offer reduced rent and lesser screening criteria on vacant units in order to house folks that would otherwise have barriers to

housing. For a short time, this program was successful. LDCHA found out that as time went on, some of the program participants did not follow through on their obligations. Landlords are business people. If they can rent a unit at full price, they will.

Enoch asked if this program will be implemented again.

Cowen said there was not any funding to move forward with the E-Housing Connector.

Knoche said there were several problems encountered with this program. The funding for the program was HOME funding, and it was only used for deposits. There was no subsidy funding for the units. The families needed to come up with the rent payments entirely on their own. The landlords were also unwilling for the most part to give their units away for a substantially reduced cost. There are legal ramifications for landlords no matter if the rent is free or if it is expensive. There are liability issues, and the landlords still have to pay all the appropriate fees and taxes to own the property. There were a lot of financial concerns on their part with the program. In the long run, the people that were clients in the E-Housing program could not pay rent at the rates being offered by the landlords. When the program worked, it worked great. Knoche said it was incredibly difficult to convince a landlord to give their property away cheaply enough for the families to rent. Matching the apartment vacancies with people in need was a gargantuan task. It was also difficult convincing landlords to participate.

Feltman said she could see how that would be difficult as being a landlord was their business.

Cowen said it came down to the question of if they would house a person in a \$700 unit for \$300.

Feltman said while something like that is better than receiving nothing, long term it added up to be a lot of money left on the table.

Cowen agreed and noted that the shorter term leases were problematic as well.

Knoche said LDCHA asks landlords all the time to discount their properties. In this case, though, the tenant has an ongoing subsidy and the rent is not asked to be discounted forever.

Enoch said that when the City is approving massive apartment permits there should be something that could be done.

### ***c. Transitional Housing***

Knoche said LDCHA is housing 59 families and individuals within transitional housing. There were 20 new families added in this grant year to the program.

Swarts said staff received notification of the HOME award for this year and it has been severely cut. This is the grant that funds the Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program. There are going to be very limited things that the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME funding will be able to do this year. CDBG provides funding to several public service agencies in the community.

Collinsworth asked what the cut to the HOME program will be.

Swarts said the grant went from \$611,000 last year to \$396,000 this year. It was cut 37%. CDBG will have an approximately 11% cut as well. Staff notified LDCHA regarding the cuts so they could

plan for the new grant year, as well as making contact with Tenants to Homeowners (TTH). TTH works with the First-Time Homebuyer program which uses HOME funding as well. It will be a tough couple of years.

Knoche said LDCHA received the same notification from the State of Kansas regarding a few of their other grants. No current funding is affected, but applications going forward will be. The cuts will affect the Bert Nash allocation as well. These applications will not be due until next spring. The good news in all of this is that the new HEARTH Act will come with new instructions for the homeless count. Transitional Housing residents in the private market will be able to be counted. As money gets tighter, the ability to demonstrate a greater need will be helpful.

Swarts said the definition of homeless will change with the HEARTH Act as well.

Knoche said the new definition will be in effect as of January 4, 2012. Some things have changed and some things have been clarified. With the new definition, unaccompanied adults and families with children have been brought to the definition to include those doubled-up, creating some parallels with the McKinney-Vento definition. The Hearth Act also tries to address the needs of children in foster care and families with children. LDCHA will be taking this to their board in January.

***d. Permanent Supportive Housing – Project Able – The Salvation Army***

Knoche indicated that Hope Building was full.

***e. Permanent Housing – Update on Vacancy/Unit Availability***

There was no report on Permanent Housing.

**ITEM NO. 4 Receive Bert Nash Third Quarter Homeless Outreach Report.**

The report can be found here.

Cook said Bert Nash case managers started using MAAClink for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data entry in January of 2011. They tried to get help from MAAClink but never got a response. It was not until the third quarter where some technical assistance was offered. The data that had been entered thus far could not be effectively extrapolated. They began reporting in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter in a different way. This report shows the top data that they wanted to show and going forward they will have this data available on a quarterly basis. They tried to recreate the first three quarters for this report, so there is some missing data.

Swarts said it was important to understand that HMIS is a system that is required by HUD. MAAClink is the HMIS vendor for the Kansas BoS CoC. As mentioned before, there have been issues with the software. At this time, the BoS is intending to try to work with MAAClink to resolve the technical issues and to be able to extrapolate meaningful data. If the system continues to have issues, the BoS may search for a new vendor. At the root of the problem is the fact there is not adequate training. Swarts said the intent of MAAClink is good and the attempts of the agencies entering the data are good, but with no training there is no workable product.

Cook said the outcomes do not get the agencies where they want to be. The demographics and information are going into the system, but what the agencies actually did is not translating out into quantifiable measures. The outcomes do not get entered at all into the system.

Knoche asked about the numbers provided on the report and asked if the number showing 26 homeless was the number that they helped.

Cook said this was a number of unsheltered homeless that they worked with and was not representative of the full number served. He said this was an issue with the data that was entered in HMIS in that some of the information was scattered and they lost a lot of usable data. It never showed a clear picture of what they were doing. There will be accurate numbers going forward.

Cowen added Bert Nash was working with some homelessness prevention clients as well.

Knoche said her hope was that improvement will occur in the HMIS product that MAAClink provides.

#### **ITEM NO. 5 Discussion of Balance of State Continuum of Care Check Up Self Assessment.**

Swarts said as Baur mentioned, this self assessment is a HUD document that is meant to understand what the different CoCs are using as best practices as well as where they could use some technical assistance. There are areas within each of the eight regions in the Kansas BoS that are completing this assessment. The BoS executive board worked with the lead regional agencies to circulate this assessment. It is a 15 page document, so staff worked with Knoche to fill out the questionnaire to the best of their ability, and it is now being brought to the HIAC for review and discussion. Swarts said the HIAC will not be going through this document question by question, but rather by page. If any member of the Committee wishes to receive clarification on a question or has a different idea of how the question should have been answered, Chair Knoche will call out the document page by page and the Committee member will have a chance to discuss their concerns or questions.

The HIAC completed the review of the document, and authorized Swarts to submit the agreed-upon assessment answers to HUD when the final survey is sent to the CoC.

#### **ITEM NO. 6 Miscellaneous/Calendar**

Swarts provided a spreadsheet of potential agenda topics for 2012.

Swarts said the elections for Chair and Vice-Chair will be held at the January meeting. She noted that both Knoche and Snyder have expiring terms and have chosen to step down from the HIAC. There have been two appointments made for their replacements. Elyse Towey from LDCHA and Brent Hoffman from the Family Promise board will begin their terms in January. There will be no gap in coverage.

Swarts said Collinsworth inquired to the City Auditor about speaking to the HIAC about his duties. The City Auditor, Michael Eglinski, audits programs within the City. He is not an auditor in the purely financial sense. He is available to do a 10-15 minute presentation about his duties in the City.

#### **ITEM NO. 7 Public Comment**

Scott asked if the Community Cooperative Commission (CCC) was still a part of the HIAC.

Cook said they were, and that the drop-in center is an ongoing discussion in that group as well.

Swarts said staff can put the CCC on one of the upcoming agendas to receive a report on their activities.

Enoch said she appreciated the initiative of the HIAC to discuss and stand behind the unmet needs of the community when the shelter moves. She said the City will need to take some responsibility. She said she understood that the Check Up Self Assessment was important red tape that needed to be completed, but it would be good if there was a way to handle this in a way that it does not take up time addressing the real needs of the community. She indicated it was frustrating to her to have to sit through that item and not be able to comment. There should be other important issues that need to be emphasized in these meetings. She said the City should take responsibility about the mental health aspect of the community when the need is so high. She said she is unsure what services Bert Nash provides, but reports are not reflecting to the HIAC or the community what is happening. Enoch also requested the new definition of homeless be discussed.

Swarts said the new definition of homeless under the HEARTH Act will be an agenda item for January.

Enoch said she feels the City or the HIAC should take initiative to bring landlords and others dealing with homelessness and those that are there out of hard luck and make them responsible for filling the vacant units in the community. There might be humane landlords in December who would look at what the community can do to fill these units. She said Dana Ortiz from Family Promise knows some of the people that could fit into these units and could help take away the unoccupied units. Enoch said this could have been a discussion instead of addressing the red tape self assessment survey which could have been done at another time.

Collinsworth asked Enoch where the new jobs were. He said job creation is a number one goal in the City, and it is what is at the heart of the matter when determining how someone can pay for housing. Job creation in the City is at a standstill. He said he wanted to know where the replacement jobs were to help those who were laid off or lost their job due to the economy. A lot of people are aware of the new high-dollar jobs, but where are the entry jobs coming from. It is expensive to live in Lawrence. At some point groups have to meet and address this issue.

Knoche said that in the updated agenda timeline there is an agenda topic for jobs and workforce development.

### **ITEM NO. 8 Adjourn**

Motion by Cook **to adjourn the December 13, 2011 meeting of the HIAC.** Seconded by Feltman.

Motion passed unanimously.

**Attendance Record**

Members	01/ 11	02/ 11	03/ 11	04/ 11	05/ 11	06/ 11	07/ 11	08/ 11	09/ 11	10/ 11	11/ 11	12/ 11
Hubbard Collinsworth	X	+	U	+	+	+	+	+	E	+	+	+
Brad Cook	X	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Wes Dalberg	X	+	U	+	+	U	+	U	+	U	+	U
Karin Feltman	X	+	+	+	E	+	E	+	+	+	E	+
Charlotte Knoche	X	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	(+)
Mike Monroe	X	U	+	+	+	+	U	+	U	+	U	+
Shannon Murphy	X	E	+	E	+	+	E	+	+	+	+	+
Samantha Snyder	X	+	E	E	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	(+)
Cary Strong	X	+	E	+	U	+	+	U	+	+	U	E

X - Meeting Cancelled Due to Inclement Weather  
 E - Excused Absence  
 U - Unexcused Absence  
 () - Last meeting in term.