

Greater Nashua Continuum of Care Ending Homeless Committee

Meeting Minutes of December 7, 2011

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Present at the meeting were: Eileen Brady, Wendy LeBlanc, Magaly Rios, Bob Mack, Sue Mead, Ellen O'Shea, Laurie Skibba, Tom Woodward, Lt. Bryan Marshall, Olga Cruz, Kay Golden, Pamela Deres, Jerry Leclerc, Phillip McArdle, Glenny Liranzo, Sylvia Gale, Jen Hinderer, Ray Villeneuve

B. Mack, Chair, called to order at 9:00AM, Introductions were made by all.

Minutes from the October 5th meeting were reviewed. A motion to accept the minutes was made by W. LeBlanc which was second by E. Brady. The minutes of the November 2nd meeting were reviewed. A motion to accept the minutes was made by W. LeBlanc which was second by E. Brady. Both motions passed unanimously.

Winter over flow

Everyone deals with homelessness differently; police, hospitals, the library and other agencies/organizations. Discussion seeking feedback from all the different places and how do they deal with homeless persons, particularly during the winter months.

E. O'Shea works at the Southern NH Medical Center late night at the ER department. In the late evening homeless people will come in. On cold nights they can stay but if they cause a disturbance then the police are called. The hospital wants to keep people safe and try not to kick anyone out. A long time ago the hospital was able to call Maple St Shelter and for the most part get them in but now they are always full. In the behavioral health unit there are 10 beds. If a person is homeless and has mental health problems they will get evaluated but if the person doesn't have a mental health problem then they would have to leave. During the day time homeless people are generally not an issue in the hospitals.

Lt. Marshall from NPD stated that the police department gets more calls from Southern NH Medical Center than St. Joseph Hospital. Some people commit petty crimes to go to Valley St Jail because they are homeless. It gives them a place to stay for the winter. O. Cruz stated that The Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter has limited space. They only have 5 female beds, 5 family units and 14 beds for men. Maple Street shelter was not represented at the meeting and apologized for not coming. The Mission Shelter is only for men, no women allowed. They are operating at approximately 50 bed spaces.

J. Hinderer from the Nashua Public Library stated that she is seeing more people. The rule is that you cannot sleep at the library. She indicated there is a lack of knowledge and asked who can be called to help these homeless people. People will sleep in the alcoves outside the library. For many people they will be approached and they will refuse help because they cannot drink alcohol in the shelter. B. Mack suggested that they call 211, and also showed the group how resourceful the Greater Nashua Continuum of Care website can be. People can contact Kathy Paquette, Homeless Outreach. The problem continues to be that the shelters have been full and over capacity.

T. Woodward questioned how many people are in need overflow assistance and how can we make people aware. It's very hard to know exactly how many people are in need of shelters but a good tool to use is the Fuel Assistance statistic from last year. Ideally we need affordable housing for people to move out of shelter programs.

In Concord NH there is a cold weather shelter that is only open during winter months from December through March. The First Congregation Church runs this shelter. Doors open at 6:00PM and they close at 8:00AM. It's a wet shelter and no children allowed. They work with another church that is a dry shelter. This shelter has been running for 10 years by volunteers and members of the Church. W. LeBlanc asked if there are any churches willing to be open at night time here in Nashua. T. Woodward stated that there is an Interfaith Council meeting today and the issue would be discussed at the meeting. Concord is a good model. Nashua has incredible people that care. We can contact Dawn or Terry that run the shelter at the First Congregation Church located at 177 N. Main St, Concord NH.

The Rescue Mission holds about 25-32 and up to 50 people on mats on the floor. If you have someone that needs to go there all you need to do is call. You can call Carlos' cell phone or knock on the front door. It's important that people use the front door not the back door.

The goal for today is to have awareness. There is not a solution for all of this. We don't have a clear number of how many homeless people are going to the Library or how many people the hospitals are dealing with.

If people have questions about the Maple St. Shelter they can contact Katie Merrill directly as she is the shelter manager. If a homeless person goes to the hospital and is being disruptive the police will be called. The police will then escort the person out. If the person goes back to the hospital they will get arrested for trespassing. The police officer gets a sheet on the beginning of their shift called the "hot sheet" which identifies issues and these areas are closely monitored.

B. Mack thanked everyone for coming to this meeting.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 10:03 AM

Minutes taken by Magaly Rios, Southern NH HIV/AIDS Task Force