

**Committee on Ending Homelessness**  
**Minutes of the May 7, 2008 meeting**  
City Hall, Nashua

Present at the meeting were: Bob Mack, Wendy Furnari, Eileen Brady, Linda Jeynes, Jerry Leclerc, Katie Merrill, Peter Kelleher, Carol Furlong, Lori Lonsdale, Laura Nault, Candace Gebhart, Anne Quinn, Kathy Paquette and Germano Martins

The meeting began at 9:10 with introductions.

Minutes of the April 2, 2008 meeting were reviewed and approved.

Bob began the meeting by handing out a sheet with the results of the recent shelter focus groups done at Connections, Maple Street shelter, Kinsley Street shelter and Ash Street shelter. Kathy, Eileen, Candace and Katie shared their experiences, stating that attendance was good with 10-15 people per session. We reviewed the list of topics of concern, first being the lack of ID cards. The women who provided the groups said that ID cards and transportation were the top two issues.

Much discussion took place surrounding the issue of ID cards. Germano suggested that this be brought up to the DHHS officials during the listening session on May 20. Peter asked if anyone knows of any empirical data showing the improved outcomes for those with ID cards, or proof that the lack of ID cards adds to the recidivism rate. He stated that this would make much more of an impact if presented with data. Eileen mentioned that at a legislative session, she heard Senator Clegg state, "If anyone has any problems due to lack of ID, please call me personally". Kathy shared her experiences of driving clients to the DMV in Merrimack; Bob suggested that it could be beneficial to develop a process to get folks to Merrimack for licenses. Peter thought that this might be a valid use of the Medicaid infrastructure grant. Germano suggested bring this up at the listening session on May 20.

Regarding the transportation issue, Bob said that Nashua Transit has expanded their routes and NRPC is working with local providers to establish a Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) in line with State efforts around transportation brokerage.

As we continued to review bullet points on the shelter focus groups, it was noted that medical assistance / health care was number three. Germano reminded us about NH Easy on line application for DHHS. Jerry talked about the free care program at St. Joseph as well as their prescription program. He said that if someone comes to the ER and doesn't have a PCP, the hospital will refer them to a PCP.

More discussion took place about the items on the focus group list. Peter asked if the list was in order of priority, the reply was yes. He said he thought that this info would be great to have for grant opportunities, particularly if the info had data such as the number or percent of people that responded in a certain way.

There was additional discussion about food stamps and the cost of food escalating. There was significant discussion about DHHS issues, particularly regarding the perception of rudeness from DHHS staff. Germano said the supervisor should always be notified. Laura talked about literacy issues and how one woman she knows signed some documents at DHHS that she did not understand and was then accused of fraud. Candace talked about her experience of talking to case worker at DHHS and reminding her to say “do you understand?” to the client as many clients won’t volunteer that they cannot understand or they cannot read. Eileen reminded us that it is all about lack of resources and not the individual staff person’s fault.

Kathy talked about a housing conference she attended and the speaker said that before giving someone housing, we need to address other issues first or they will just end up back homeless. Wendy mentioned that this is just the opposite of the Housing First model.

Bob shared his conversation with Chris Williams at the Chamber of Commerce and indicated that they may be able to help with a job fair or something like Project Homeless Connect (PHC). Jerry shared that he has significant experience in running job fairs. Bob said that Lara from Bridges was going to bring info to the next Wrap-around Services Committee regarding collaborative efforts of local employment services providers and a job fair.

Katie said that the shelter focus group participants indicated that they really loved PHC and would like to see it more often. She also said that clients said they would like someone to escort them around the PHC as they are intimidated to approach the providers themselves. Laura said she and Anne want to do that. This topic to be explored further once the PHC Committee convenes for planning the next event.

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 AM

The next meeting will take place on June 4, 2008 the City Hall auditorium.