

GNCOC General Committee Meeting

Wednesday April 5, 2023

Minutes prepared by Hannah Stohler, Clerk

1. Call to Order and Introductions

- a. Vice Chair Scott Wellman started the meeting at 9:01 am. Attendees introduced themselves.

2. Approval of the Minutes

- a. Scott Wellman asked for a motion to approve the March 2023 General Committee minutes. Bob Mack made a motion to approve the March 2023 Minutes. Sue Mead seconded. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

3. Monthly Presentations: Youth Homelessness Services in Nashua

a. HEAL, Violet Aureli

- i. Violet shared his personal experience as a youth who recently experienced homelessness in our community: Violet is 19 years old and became homeless last February. He was homeless for three months until he received an apartment. While three months is relatively short, it felt like a very long time for him due to the challenges of being homeless. He was able to make his way out of homelessness because of the support of friends and the support of Stepping Stones.
- ii. Based on his experiences with homelessness and community of peers built at Stepping Stones, Violet and other youth experiencing homelessness at Stepping Stones created HEAL (Homeless Education And Advocacy League) as a Youth Action Board. HEAL's mission is to raise awareness for youth homelessness, with an ultimate goal of ending youth homelessness. They do outreach to youth experiencing homelessness in Nashua and work to connect individuals with resources and raise awareness for the presence of youth homelessness in Nashua. They plan to do more events with the City.
- iii. HEAL's outreach is particularly important as they come as peers and from a place of understanding with those currently experiencing homelessness. They have an opportunity to help other youth currently experiencing homelessness and can foster connection based on shared lived experience.
- iv. Violet shared that many youth experiencing homelessness often have been discriminated against for their gender identity, sexual orientation, and other components of their personal identity. He also shared that many young people do not feel comfortable in shelters with older adults, where they may experience discrimination or be exposed to substance use. Many youth would rather sleep outside than in a shelter with older adults.
- v. Violet named that a struggle for many youth experiencing homelessness is managing finances – it is a challenge for most young adults just starting off into adulthood, but particularly so for those who have had challenging

childhoods and family lives. This is something that HEAL is looking to help with and that Stepping Stones helps with.

- vi. Violet is working on becoming a Social Worker through a UNH Program. He is taking 3 courses per semester and interning and being paid for his time in class and internship (Go Violet!!).

b. Stepping Stones, Kathy Farland

- i. Kathy Farland is the Director of Stepping Stones. Stepping Stones is a drop-in center for homeless, unaccompanied youth in Nashua.
- ii. Kathy began by sharing the stories of what youth experiencing homelessness are facing and what brings them to Stepping Stones:
 - a. Zack came to Stepping Stones at 19. He was removed from his birth parents at three due to their substance use. He was adopted into an abusive household, where he suffered significant physical abuse and negligence. He ran away many times.
 - b. Ashton came to Stepping Stones at 19, after spending his childhood in foster homes, living with various family members, and in group homes. He became homeless on his 18th birthday after being kicked out by his grandmother.
 - c. Robin is a 20-year-old mother of two who was kicked out of home at 12. She started using drugs at a young age, and became pregnant at 15 while in a group home. She dropped out of school at 17 after becoming pregnant with her second daughter.
- iii. Kathy shared statistics on youth homelessness:
 - a. 1 in 10 youth between the ages of 18-25 will become homeless this year.
 - b. 1 in 30 youth will become homeless and will be unaccompanied who are between the ages of 13-17 this year. That means that you can go into any high school or middle school classroom and one of those children is statistically currently an unaccompanied homeless youth.
- iv. Kathy shared that youth homelessness is a vastly underrepresented issue as most youth do not want anyone to know that they are experiencing homelessness. They are often couch surfing with friends and family. There are estimated to be 800 homeless youth (up to age 25) in Nashua. Half of those are couch surfing and do not consider themselves to be homeless. Kathy gave an example of one young person they are supporting who is currently staying in a 2 room apartment with 8 other people. Other youth are living in cars, tents, with other friends, in emergency rooms, and outdoors. Kathy reported that physical abuse, substance use, and sex trafficking are all significant risks for homeless youth, as well as increased risk of substance use, mental illness and criminal activity.
- v. Kathy shared the three main reasons youth are usually experiencing homelessness are: 1) aging out of foster care, 2) runaways (70% of whom

are experienced sexual/physical abuse at home), and 3) throwaways (parents who throw youth out of house for financial reasons, unplanned pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental health reasons, and more.

- vi. Kathy reports that many youth experiencing homelessness struggle with mental health, and that depression and anxiety is very prevalent. Many are diagnosed with PTSD due to trauma experienced.
- vii. Many homeless youth often lack basic education skills due to home lives. By the time they get to older ages they feel “stupid” because they don’t have basic math/reading skills.
- viii. Kathy shared that youth are 3x more likely to start using drugs if they’ve experienced homelessness than those who have not. She shared that the youth they serve are the most resilient youth you will ever meet – they want to move forward, reach goals and become self-sufficient.
- ix. Stepping Stones’ mission is twofold: they provide basic services to youth at their drop-in center: meals, laundry, showers, Wi-Fi, and a safe place to be during the day. Once they become more comfortable, they begin working with staff towards their goals via coaching (not case management). In coaching, they help them reach self-defined goals such as: finish GED, get Drivers License, Go to College.
- x. Kathy shared a huge component of their work is listening – youth mostly just want to be heard by safer older adults who will provide support and feedback.
- xi. Kathy shared their newest project is looking at a property where they can offer transitional housing for up to 90 youth in a four-level program. By the time a youth completes all four levels they will have a landlord reference, career and stability, so that they can truly be self-sufficient. They are hopefully signing the lease by next week!
- xii. Following up on Zach, Ashton, and Robin who Kathy shared about earlier: Zach and Robin now have their own apartments. Zach and Ashton are both working. Robin is starting a CRSW program next week. Zach got his driver’s license and is getting his own car this weekend.
- xiii. Questions from the community:
 - a. What is the age range for the transitional housing program? 25 and under.
 - b. How are you paying for the housing program? They are leasing, not purchasing. Two buildings on the same property. Parts of it will be staffed 24/7 (depending on the phase of the program) – Age range for transitional program? 25 and under.
 - c. Can parenting youth participate in transitional housing? No, just for single youth.

c. Shelby Brown, McKinney Vento Coordinator at Nashua Public Schools

- i. Shelby started by defining her role – as the Nashua School District McKinney Vento liaison, she works with all students to ensure educational rights and protections for youth experiencing homelessness or in transitional living. The McKinney Vento definition of homelessness is much more inclusive than HUD’s definition of homelessness. They support families in a variety of situations – doubled up, sharing residence due to loss of income, hotels/motels/campgrounds, living in emergency shelters, transitional housing shelters, living in places not meant for habitation, living in parked cars, trains, etc. They also support unaccompanied minors.
- ii. To serve unaccompanied minors via McKinney Vento, they must fall into the above definition of homelessness – inadequate space, doubled up. They see a lot of families and children who are not aware of what they are entitled to.
- iii. Shelby shared an example – last week in a Vice Principal’s office was a student who was kicked out of their family’s home because of their LGBTQ+ identity. They did not have a place to do homework where they were staying and were walking long distances to get to school. Through McKinney Vento they were able to get this student transportation and extra resources so that they could continue to focus on school work.
- iv. Shelby stated that 70% of the identified McKinney Vento population are living “doubled up”, and 10-15% are unaccompanied youth. There are currently 270 kids identified in the McKinney Vento program, but they know this number is low and that they are missing a lot of families. Many people identify living doubled up as “host families”. An example of a real host family is moving in with an aging parent to a mutually beneficial supportive situation. Many housing situations are mis-defined as “host” and therefore not homelessness.
- v. Shelby is working with state to further define the definition of McKinney Vento so that they can better address family’s needs the best they can. It is a loose definition which is both helpful and hard depending on the situation.
- vi. Shelby shared multiple benefits of McKinney Vento:
 - a. A family has the option to continue to attend their school of origin, or to begin attending their school of location.
 - b. They can immediately enroll a child in school (even with a lack of necessary enrollment documentation).
 - c. All children enrolled in McKinney Vento automatically qualify for free breakfast and lunch without need for income verification.
 - d. They provide transportation so that education is not interrupted.
 - e. They connect child/families with critical community resources.
 - f. They cover tutoring costs, field trip fees, sports equipment, school supplies, food, hygiene products.

- g. They partner with community for holiday baskets, food baskets, and after school care. .
- vii. A positive story: There was a child in one of our elementary schools who was refusing to take their hood off. The school social worker found out that Mom had left the family, and the child had ethnic hair which Dad did not know how to properly care for and her hair had become matted. Dad did not have transportation to get her to a salon. Through McKinney Vento, they used transportation and brought the child to Nashua North's cosmetology program who helped her demat the hair without needing to cut it, as well as provided education and supplies for the child to care for her hair.
- viii. McKinney Vento can make a lot of things happen for families – help to make lives easier for kids experiencing homelessness, reduce barriers, so kids can continue to focus on their education.
- d. **Learn United, Mike Apfelberg - United Way**
 - i. Mike Apfelberg, President of the United Way, shared his personal experience with homelessness as a youth at age 15. In retrospect, he recognizes it could have been a very dangerous situation and is proud that our community is taking strides towards tackling Youth Homelessness. He named Doug Howard and Kathy Farland's contributions to making progress towards better Youth Homelessness services in Nashua.
 - ii. United Way launched LEARN UNITED during pandemic with the goal of supporting young people impacted by learning loss due to remote learning. LEARN UNITED is a volunteer based tutoring program – it is very flexible, no curriculum which Mike described as a “Big Homework Club”. Each student is paired individually with a volunteer. There is no cost or qualifications for participation. They receive referrals from parents, teachers, guidance counselors.
 - iii. LEARN UNITED also has a school supply pantry, which is a fully stocked store geared towards all the supplies that kids might need to be successful in school – technology – laptops, chrome books. Pencils, pens, backpacks, notebooks. Open to teachers and guidance counselors, which creates a stigma-free environment because school staff can help to get supplies to children most in need.
 - iv. Mike also shared about Rosie's Pantry. Rosie's Pantry was started two years ago with volunteers who are Girls Inc. graduates. Rosie's Pantry aims to combat Period Poverty – ensuring that girls/women don't have to miss school due to their menstrual cycle. They began with a pantry at Girls Inc. on Burke Street, which is a cabinet filled with all supplies someone may need. They are now expanding into the schools, in two elementary schools, all of the middle schools, all of the high schools, Nashua Community College and Rivier University. They stock the program every month with a period supplies drive, and then they resupply each pantry.

They also use money donated to buy supplies needed, such as leggings so there are a change of clothes for girls and women in need. Their ultimate goal is that no girl/woman misses a day of school because of period poverty.

- v. United Way Youth Homelessness Specific Funds:
 - a. Skydiving Fundraiser - United Way hosts a Skydiving Fundraiser every year. These funds are restricted to be used towards youth homelessness, but beyond this are completely unrestricted and can be used creatively for different resources to support ending Youth Homelessness in our community.
 - b. Youth Homelessness Scholarship Fund – The United Way has a Youth Homelessness Scholarship Fund, named in honor of Former United Way Board Member, Kevin Slattery who had a passion for youth issues. The scholarship helps to pay for supplemental costs of college – books, transportation, etc for youth experiencing homelessness.
- vi. Mike encouraged all attendees to join the GNCOC Youth Homelessness Subcommittee and reminded everyone that they are looking for a new chair.

4. Support Services – Capacity/Openings and Updates

- a. Shelters
 - i. NSKS – Full. Brought in a family of four last night. Men and womens full. Waiting for electrical panels to come in for fourth floor, then moving people upstairs to the studio!
 - ii. Rescue Mission has 7 beds available for men.
 - iii. Hope Center has 8 beds available for women.
 - iv. Bridges Emergency Shelter is full.
- b. Transitional Housing
 - i. Family Promise of Southern NH – Full but waitlist is under 10 people.
 - ii. Marguerite’s Place is full with a waitlist.
 - iii. Front Door Agency is full.
- c. Permanent Supportive Housing –
 - i. Harbor Care has identified 28 individuals as chronically homeless, 7 of whom have vouchers in hand, 15 of whom are in process of being screened for a voucher, and 6 of whom they are unable to contact right now.
 - ii. Harbor Care is currently housing 187 households and 258 individuals.
- d. Rapid Rehousing
 - i. Front Door: People can apply to Front Door for Rapid Rehousing support.
- e. Outreach
 - i. Sue Mead from Greater Nashua Mental Health shared an update on different outreach efforts including:

- a. Outreach Subcommittee – Meets on the Third Monday of each month from 12 pm – 1 pm at 5 Pine Street Extension.
- b. Encampment Meeting (includes DPW, Fire, Police, Revive, GNMH, NSKS, and others).
- c. Actively doing outreach on these days – please join if you are interested:
 - a. First Wednesday of the month – Meet at Noon at 5 Pine Street Extension.
 - b. Third Wednesday of the month – Meet at 9 am at 5 Pine Street Extension
 - c. For more information, reach out to Susan Mead at meads@gnmhc.org
- ii. Bob Mack provided perspective on our Encampment response: at a recent meeting at the Governor’s Homelessness Council, they learned via a US regional representative that we are approaching encampments in Nashua responsibly and to the best of our ability. We engage in active communication and try to involve the folks living in the encampments in the clean up when possible, and only move a site after conversation and assessment for safety and fire concerns, and assessing the safety of both those in the encampments and the general public.

5. Other Announcements

- a. Donna Marceau from the Nashua Regional Planning Commission shared that the Greater Nashua Regional Coordination Council for Community Transportation Monthly Meeting will occur on Thursday April 27 at 10 am. They also will have a meeting this Monday April 10 at 3 pm where you can share feedback on transportation issues in Nashua. For more information, contact Donna at donna@nashuarpc.org.
- b. Tonia Knisley shared that 29 Prospect Street is up for sale – 29 units. Would be a great real estate option for many programs!
- c. Tonia Knisley shared that if anyone has clients who are interested in gardening and growing their own food, Grow Nashua has opened up community garden slots. They provide seeds, educational resources, starts, and garden tenders available to answer questions. Visit grownashua.com for more information.
- d. Tom Lopez shared that the GNCOC Employment Committee takes place on the second Tuesday of each month at 9 am at the Nashua Public Library. The next meeting will be this coming Tuesday 4/11 at 9 am.
 - i. Tom shared that they are planning an Employment Connect event for May 16. For more information see www.involvedtoimpact.org/employmentconnect
 - ii. Main Street Methodist Church and Revive are partnering to have a “Suit Yourself” event on May 15 where individuals can access work clothing prior to the Employment Connect event.
 - iii. Main Street Methodist and Revive are partnering to do a “Suit Yourself”

- e. Lamprey Health Care shared that their Mobile Health Services van will be at 5 different sites, 4 days a week. At NSKS, Family Promise, and other locations throughout city.
- f. Bob Mack gave an update on the expiration of the ERAP program. ERAP ended for adult households this past weekend, and they have seen a few people come in for services but inquired whether shelters or emergency departments are receiving some of these individuals as well. Family ERAP program is due to end mid June. There are 70 households total in this program – about 48 who are adult households and fewer families.
- g. Becky Gagne announced that Front Door Agency is purchasing the property known as Mary’s House, which is Single Room Occupancy for single adult females. She does not expect the operation of Mary’s House to change, and that people will still apply through Nashua Housing Authority.
- h. Mike Apfelberg shared that United Way will continue their tradition of giving flowers to homeless Mothers on Mother’s Day. Please contact him if your agency would like to participate. Drop off for flowers is the Friday before Mother’s Day.
- i. Mike Apfelberg shared that on May 18th they will be hosting a volunteer fair. 40 nonprofits already signed up to attend. Please contact Sara Caesar to register.
- j. Mike Apfelberg shared that Best Ford on Amherst St is donating a portion of proceeds this month back to Bridges in honor of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. If you need a new car this month, he recommends you shop at Best Ford!
- k. Tom Lopez shared about the recently formed “Main Street Crime Watch”, which engages business owners and residents in the Main Street corridor to share concerns about crime. This integrates police and other community services, helps with clean ups, supports local agencies, and helps constituents pass on important safety information to the police. It will take place this Monday 4/10 at 9 am.
- l. Tom Lopez reminded all who live in Ward 4 area that there is a Special Election on May 16 to elect a replacement State Representative. As the highest concentration of those in poverty in the city of Nashua, it is important that Ward 4 has State Representation!
- m. Chertina Walker from ICA congratulated us on having the cleanest non-HMIS homelessness data we have ever had. She said great job using the google form! ICA – Chertina Walker . This year the non HMIS literally homeless data is the
- n. Bob from the Nashua UU Church recommended the book Rough Sleepers, which is about the history of 40 years of the homeless/healthcare program in Boston overseen by Dr. O’Connell. It follows multiple individuals over a long period of time and analyzes the role that funding sources had across a 40 year period.
- o. Bridges Announcement - On April 23, Bridges has partnered with Ritual Grooming Barber Shop to provide education to hair professionals to identify signs of domestic violence, and how to support survivors through disclosures.
- p. Bob Mack made a plug for the efficacy of wrap-around resource meetings and encouraged others to participate.

- q. NSKS shared that they have Easter Baskets at the pantry today through Friday. Please come by if you would like some.
6. **Adjournment**
- a. Scott Wellman thanked everyone for attending, especially presenters Violet Aureli, Kathy Farland, Shelby Brown and Mike Apfelberg for educating us all on Youth Homelessness and Youth Homelessness related resources.
 - b. Scott Wellman adjourned the meeting at 10:28 am.