

## **PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

**WHEN:** December 4, 2024

**WHERE:** Fairfax County Government Center  
Conference Rooms 9/10  
12000 Government Center Parkway  
Fairfax, VA 22035

### **AGENDA:**

1. Debrief CoC Builds Submission
2. Committee Structure
3. Encampment Resolution Recommendations
4. Vote: October 23, 2024, meeting minutes
5. Next Meeting

**ATTENDANCE:**

Name	Attending (Yes/No)	Name	Attending (Yes/No)
David Meyer, Chair	No	Lisa Jones	No
Adrienne Hosein	Yes	Maura Williams	No
Aimee Garcia	No	Megan Goffney	No
Ashley McSwain	Yes	Michael Axler	No
Cathy Benn	Yes	Pamela Michell	Yes
Claire Keena	Yes	Penelope Rood	Yes
Douglas Dane	Yes	Randy Shusman	Yes
Fatima Khalid	Yes	Rena Alexander-Lewis	Yes
Gwenn Minton	Yes	Ruth Pearson	No
Janet Kedzie	No	Seth Pearson	No
Julie Hendricks	No	Sue Armstrong	No
Kameron Wilds	Yes		

Non-Continuum of Care (CoC) Board Members

Organization	Name	Attending
Housing and Community Development, Fairfax County <i>Office to Prevent and End Homelessness</i>	Thomas Barnett	Yes
	Stephen Knippler	Yes
	Meghan Heaney	Yes

## **I. Call to Order.**

- The meeting was called to order by Continuum of Care (CoC) Board Member Penelope Rood, who facilitated the meeting in the scheduled absence of CoC Board Chairman David Meyer.

## **II. Announcement**

- Deputy Director, Office to Prevent and End Homelessness (OPEH), Thomas Barnett provided an update to the CoC Board regarding the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority's purchase of a hotel located on Fair Ridge Drive, which is intended to be used as a family shelter and open in the spring of 2025. A Board of Supervisors vote of 9 to 1 was passed regarding the transfer of ownership of the hotel from the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority to the Board of Supervisors.

## **III. Debrief CoC Builds Submission**

- The OPEH CoC Manager, Stephen Knippler provided a debrief on the CoC Builds application submission.
- CoC Builds application was submitted by OPEH on behalf of the CoC in November.
- It was reported that the CoC received a total of two applications. One application was from Pathway Homes and the second application was from Wesley Housing Development Corporation.
- The Selection and Ranking Committee reviewed the applications and determined the Wesley Housing Development Corporation project, called "Beacon Landing", would be submitted to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for their consideration.
- This project would replace a current vacant hotel with permanent supportive housing (PSH) and will prioritize individuals who are chronically homeless.

OPEH CoC Manager, Stephen Knippler, provided the following reasons for why Wesley Housing Development Corporation's project was selected:

- Selected Project had site control
- Financing is in place, including Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)
- Strong Leverage of non-HUD Funds
- More Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) unit being proposed (54 versus 15)
- Poised to move to construction in 2025
- Partnership with the Lamb Center and work with Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS)
- The site is walkable to transportation services

## **IV. Committee Structure**

Deputy Director, OPEH, Thomas Barnett provided an overview of the Summary of CoC Responsibilities:

- Charged with designing a local "system" to assist sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness and providing the services necessary to help them access housing and obtain long-term stability.
- Promote community-wide planning and strategic use of resources to address homelessness.
- Enhance coordination and integration with mainstream resources and other programs targeted to people experiencing homelessness.

- Improve data collection and performance measurement.

### **Current Committee Structure**

Deputy Director, OPEH, Thomas Barnett, reported that currently there is only one committee that exists within the CoC: Selection and Ranking.

The CoC Board has delegated some responsibilities to OPEH, which it fulfills through four interagency workgroups:

1. Coordinated Entry Steering
2. HMIS Super Users
3. Point-in-Time Planning
4. Racial Equity Action

### **Review of Other CoCs' Subcommittees**

Deputy Director, OPEH, Thomas Barnett, reported that a review of 12 different CoCs was conducted by staff, and it was found that the most common subcommittees were as follows:

- Coordinated Entry (7 out of 12)
- Racial Equity (7 out of 12)
- Youth (4 out of 12)
- Lived Experience (4 out of 12)
- HMIS Data Management (4 out of 12)

### **Proposed Committee Changes**

Deputy Director, OPEH, Thomas Barnett proposed the development of the following new CoC Board Committees:

- Coordinated Entry Policy
- Lived Experience
- System Improvement

### **Updated OPEH Workgroup:**

- Racial Equity and Accessibility

An updated Org Chart with the new recommendations for Committees was shared with the board.

The floor was opened for questions and comments from CoC Board members.

- A board member asked what is the difference between the newly proposed Coordinated Entry Policy Committee and the current Coordinated Entry Steering Committee? It was stated that the Coordinated Entry Policy Committee will be more policy driven and that this committee would work together with the Coordinated Entry workgroup under OPEH, which could research and design the implementation of the CoC Board's policies.
- A board member asked if these committees would function like the Selection and Ranking Committee, and would there be additional individuals for that committee, perhaps board members appointed by the Board of Supervisors? It was stated that the Selection and Ranking Committee is intentionally not members of the CoC Board that are CoC grant recipients to avoid conflicts of interest but members without conflicts could serve on the committee. The new

committees would mostly be staffed by CoC Board members, except the Lived Experience Committee, which could include staff, volunteers, and program participants that have experienced homelessness. The System Improvement Committee would use data to drive system improvement, such as the well-established HUD System Performance Measures. For example, how many individuals are homeless for the first time in a year, how many individuals are housed, how many people return to homelessness, etc. The board can even develop their own system measures that are important for this community.

- A board member asked if there is a way to have the committee meetings in a less formal manner? Can the board break into some small groups and then come back with some suggestions? Staff noted that the committee meetings would need to follow the same rules of the CoC Board because the committees, as sub-bodies of the board, are also public bodies and need to be in compliance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (VFOIA). If more than two members are meeting and discussing CoC business, it is required to be a public meeting which means meeting announcements must be made, minutes would need to be taken, etc. Work delegated to OPEH and the workgroups facilitated by OPEH do not have to follow VFOIA rules for public bodies as long as there are no more than two CoC Board members in attendance.
- A board member recommended that the board itself be broken into equal numbers among the committees and that they would meet quarterly. The board could possibly have the committees meet an hour prior to the Board meeting.
- A board member asked if they would have the option to choose what committee they want to join or would they be assigned. It was stated that the board members would nominate themselves to a committee of interest. They would then serve on no more than two committees.
- A board member asked if the information and suggestions that the committees are developing be brought back to the board for the board to make final suggestions and approve any changes? It was stated that the information and suggestions would be brought back to the board and the board would conduct a vote.
- A board member suggested that the committees will need to meet more frequently than quarterly. The committees themselves could set the timeframe for how often they are going to be meeting. Some committees may need to meet more frequently, especially in the beginning.
- A board member asked if tasks would be assigned to committee members and then brought back to the meeting and presented.
- A board member recommended that if people are available to meet prior to the monthly board meeting then the committees could meet monthly versus quarterly. Combining the meetings with the established CoC Board meeting would provide a time and space for the committees to meet and then present back to the board. The board could also flip it in the other direction so that any new information could be discussed during the committee meetings if the committees met following the larger CoC Board meeting. The board meeting would need to decrease to only one hour and then after the full board meeting the separate committees would meet for 30 minutes to an hour. The committees would then report at the main board meeting the following month. Staff cautioned regarding having too many committees meeting at the same time because there would not be enough staff available to support the meetings.
- Staff clarified that the Selection and Ranking Committee is seasonal and that the Lived Experience Committee would be an ad hoc committee, meaning it only meets when there is a specific policy or issue that requires feedback from this population.
- Board members have requested more details regarding what each committee would be responsible for covering. Staff have requested more input from the board regarding which

committees they believe should be formed and if there are any additional committees that should be formed. Staff will provide a summary of each committee and send out a poll to the board members.

- The board would need to develop a process for recruiting and maintaining membership for the Lived Experience Committee, as well as a process for other committees to solicit input when needed.
- It was requested that a full report be sent out by staff in the first week or two of January that will cover what the purpose of each committee, a description, and a survey of what committees board members are interested in.

#### **V. Encampment Resolution Recommendations**

- Deputy Director, OPEH, Thomas Barnett, requested feedback on the draft responses from board members to the Board of Supervisors regarding the recommendations that were made by the NAACP. A summary of the draft responses was presented to the board.
- It was stated that some of the responses need clarification on the CoC Board's position on the recommendation, particularly where it involves public safety issues such as officers carrying weapons or encouraging witnesses to be present.

Recommendation #1 Draft Response: The CoC Board agrees that shelter should be provided for individuals living in an encampment prior to a closure. The CoC Board recognizes that shelter capacity is insufficient to meet the current needs of adults experiencing homelessness and there are serious negative impacts to individuals' lives when forced to move without a place to go. The CoC Board also acknowledges a significant increase in resources is required to shelter every adult in need and recommends that, at a minimum, Fairfax County should offer a couple of nights in a hotel for individuals told to leave an encampment.

- A board member asked what is the benefit of providing a couple of nights' stay in a hotel?
- A board member proposed that a vote be taken to remove the recommendation of a couple nights' stay in a hotel room when an encampment is closed.
- Another board member stated that a portion of the recommendation would not be able to be removed because it means that the board does not accept the recommendation.
- A board member recommended that the board should define the number of individuals that it wants to use to classify an encampment and then recommend that shelter space be provided if the encampment has a certain number of individuals present (for example over 15 individuals present).
- It was stated that when reviewing the recommendations the board needs to take into consideration the actions that the county can feasibly follow through on.

Recommendation #2 Draft Response: The CoC Board agrees that a two-week notice, at a minimum, must be given not only to encampment residents but also publicly so that organizations serving unsheltered residents may also be informed and help prepare unsheltered residents for alternate arrangements. A notice of more than two weeks would be preferred.

- The CoC Board determined that the draft response for recommendation #2 is acceptable.

Recommendation #3: The CoC Board agrees that mental health professionals and police officers trained in crisis intervention and de-escalation must be present when encampments are closed. Fairfax County has well documented policies and procedures for this approach already approved by the departments involved.

- The CoC Board determined that the draft response for recommendation #3 is acceptable.

Recommendation #4 First Draft Response: The CoC Board has not taken a position on the presence of witnesses during an encampment closure. Some board members suggested that the presence of a high-level County staff person may be sufficient. Police officers' body cameras may be sufficient documentation of what occurs.

A board member who was unable to attend the meeting in person provided a response via email for recommendation #4. Second Draft Response: I don't agree that this is a "must." If lawyers or members from civil rights group choose to attend after learning about the encampment closures through public postings, that is their decision. However, I see no reason to mandate their presence. We already have several skilled individuals involved, including county employees, mental health professionals, and officers trained in de-escalation. Adding more groups to the process could become overwhelming for everyone involved, especially during such a sensitive time. The thoughtful and capable parties currently participating are sufficient for the needs of the process.

- A board member stated that the second draft response for recommendation #4 spoke towards dignity. It is a very difficult time for these individuals and there is no dignity when the world is watching you lose your home. It is an affront to the dignity of the individuals to bring in countless numbers of folks under the assumption that there may be a need for their services without asking the participants if their presence is even wanted.
- A board member stated that when the Reston encampment was closed there were very few parties involved. The successful closure of that encampment supports the fact that the presence of all these parties is not needed.
- A board member stated the organizations are being asked by the county to help with the closure of these encampments and engagement with these individuals prior to the announcement of the closure of the encampment. Is there currently adequate funding for outreach, to maintain staff, to decrease high rates of turnover? The board member stated that there is a lot that can be done through prevention efforts. Can the board recommend increased funding for prevention and outreach efforts versus paying for a hotel room for a few nights?

Recommendation #5 Draft Response: The CoC Board is in full agreement that no one should be arrested for experiencing homelessness.

- Staff clarified that people are not facing possible arrest for being homeless but for trespassing. That is the potential legal threat during the closure of the encampment as a last resort.
- It was suggested that the word "solely" be added to the response for recommendation #5.

Recommendation #6 Draft Response: The CoC Board supports this recommendation; while also acknowledging it would require additional County resources to be invested to provide the staff and space required to make it work effectively. Careful consideration needs to be given to identifying a suitable location, screening out hazardous items, and defining a chain of custody for private property. Vacant commercial buildings might be an option for storage locations.

- A board member asked if the response could be edited to reflect that the spirit of this recommendation is supported but it is unable to be obtained.
- A board member recommended that the timeframe for a notice be increased from 14 days to 30 days to provide individuals with more time to relocate their belongings and develop a plan.
- A vote was conducted to measure the board's support for recommendation number 6:

There was a total of 10 board members who voted No, one board member voted Yes, and one board member abstained from the vote.

**VI. Approving Last Meeting Minutes:**

- CoC Board member Gwenn Minton made the motion to have the October 23, 2024, CoC Board meeting minutes approved. CoC Board member, Cathy Benn, seconded the motion.
- The minutes for October 23, 2024, CoC Board Meeting were approved with no objections.

**VII. Next Meeting**

- January 22, 2025
- Board of Supervisors' Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Proclamation will be held on January 14, at 9:30 a.m.