

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

WHEN: September 25, 2024

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

AGENDA:

1. Vote: August 28 meeting minutes.
2. Information: Funding Opportunities Update.
3. Information: Encampment Closures Update.
4. Information: AHAC Feedback.
5. Discussion: Adult Shelter Capacity.
6. Information: Contractor Search Update.
7. Discussion: Other News.

ATTENDANCE:

Name	Attending (Yes/No)	Name	Attending (Yes/No)
David Meyer, Chair	No	Lisa Jones	No
Adrienne Hosein	Yes	Maura Williams	No
Aimee Garcia	Yes	Megan Goffney	Yes
Ashley McSwain	No	Michael Axler	No
Cathy Benn	Yes	Pamela Michell	Yes
Claire Keena	Yes	Penelope Rood	Yes
Douglas Dane	Yes	Randy Shusman	Yes
Fatima Khalid	No	Rena Alexander-Lewis	Yes
Gwenn Minton	Yes	Ruth Pearson	Yes
Janet Kedzie	Yes	Seth Pearson	No
Julie Hendricks	Yes	Sue Armstrong	Yes
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 CoC Board Member Penelope Rood, who facilitated the meeting in the scheduled absence of CoC Board Chairman David Meyer.
- Introduction of new Board member, Sue Armstrong, who was appointed by the Department of Family Services.

II. Approving Last Meeting Minutes:

- CoC Board member Claire Keena made the motion to have the August 28, 2024, CoC Board meeting minutes with the new changes approved. CoC Board member Gwenn Minton seconded the motion.
- The minutes for the August 28, 2024, CoC Board Meeting were approved with no objections.

III. Information: Funding Opportunities Update

- Funding opportunity updates were reported by the OPEH Continuum of Care Manager, Stephen Knippler.
- It was reported to the CoC Board that the total amount that the CoC can apply for is up to \$13,087,355.
- HUD offers Bonus funding that is not guaranteed and the maximum that the Fairfax CoC can apply for is \$1,233,583. This is for new projects.
- In addition, there is also a Domestic Violence (“DV”) Bonus funding that is not guaranteed but the amount that can be requested is \$1,059,917.
- OPEH Continuum of Care Manager, Stephen Knippler, informed the Board that the CoC received two applications for the regular bonus funding and zero applications for the DV Bonus funding. The two applications exceeded the allowed amount with a total of over 2 million dollars.
- It was reported that 18 renewal applications were submitted that will be included in the collaborative application and the total funding requested for these projects is \$10,279,862.
- The total amount of funding for all projects requested at this point is \$12,326,131.
- Fairfax County plans on applying for more Planning Grant funding than in the past to deliver additional training and support.
- OPEH Continuum of Care Manager, Stephen Knippler, advised the board of how HUD runs the competition and broke down the use of their Tier 1 and Tier 2 ranking scale.
- Tier 1 projects make up for 90 percent of the annual renewal demand., which means all projects that do not fall into Tier 1 will fall into Tier 2 and be at risk of possible loss of funding based on HUD’s final funding decision.
- OPEH Continuum of Care Manager, Stephen Knippler, reviewed the ranking approach that was adopted this year and has been used in the past.
- The next steps for the Selection and Ranking Committee and the organizations applying for funding were reviewed. The priority list and the CoC application will be shared via the OPEH website prior to the closing of the competition on 10/30/2024.
- OPEH Continuum of Care Manager, Stephen Knippler, provided an update regarding the CoC Builds Competition. This funding will allow for additional permanent supportive housing projects through new construction or the acquisition of existing buildings.
 - ❖ The CoC can submit only one project application. Applications from interested organizations are due to OPEH by 10/2/2024.

- ❖ The Selection and Ranking Committee will hold a meeting tentatively scheduled for 10/23/2024 to rank all projects.
 - ❖ The selected project will obtain a CoC Letter of support from the Board Chair.
 - ❖ Submission of the application by OPEH will be undertaken prior to the November 21, 2024, deadline.
- The floor was opened for questions from the CoC Board members:
 - One member asked if there is only one application, would it be submitted? Why would the CoC not submit the only application that was submitted. Staff stated that there is a chance that if there is only one application and it is a poor proposal that it may not be submitted or staff might assist the offeror in strengthening their application.
 - Another CoC Board member asked if the CoC Board will see any of the applications to determine if any of the projects need to be adjusted within Tier 1 or Tier 2. The Board would not see any of the applications for adjustments or approvals because the CoC Board had previously approved the Selection and Ranking Committee to be responsible for evaluating the applications.
 - Currently the projects are evaluated by a Monitoring and Evaluation Tool that is developed and revised yearly by a workgroup.
 - CoC Boards can help to decide what projects they would like to be submitted to HUD. The CoC currently accepts applications for all project types.
 - OPEH staff offered to bring more information to the CoC Board about the monitoring and evaluation process, which explains why and how the projects were ranked. Then the Board could decide if there needs to be more involvement from the Board during the selection process.

IV. Information: Encampment Closures Update

Update provided by Deputy Director, OPEH, Thomas Barnett.

- Hunter Mill District, “The Hill” in Reston
 - ❖ Final closure was on September 10th
 - ❖ Approximately 70 people are now sleeping in temporary overnight shelter (TOS) at the North County Human Services Building.
 - ❖ This places the TOS at near full capacity and raises a concern about space available for the Hypothermia Prevention Program that starts December 1.
- Providence District, “Pump House” in Fairfax.
 - ❖ September 4 was the final closure.
 - ❖ One individual remained on site after the closure but was able to be encouraged to move on and no one was arrested.
- Staff continue to receive reports of individuals sleeping on private and public property near both sites.
- The Fairfax County Branch’s NAACP Housing Committee submitted a letter to the Board of Supervisors with recommendations for Fairfax County to use in their approach when closing encampments. The Chairman of the Board of Supervisors has asked that the CoC Board work with staff to evaluate their recommendations.

V. Information: AHAC Feedback.

Deputy Director, OPEH, Thomas Barnett reported that he shared homelessness-related updates with the Affordable Housing Advisory Council (AHAC) at their September 13, 2024, meeting with a focus on two recent encampment closures. AHAC members expressed concern about insufficient emergency shelter and permanent housing capacity for people in need and the differences in access between regions of the county, as well as the need for greater coordination between local government jurisdictions.

VI. Discussion: Adult Shelter Capacity.

Presented by Deputy Director, OPEH, Thomas Barnett.

- Reviewed the process by which individuals access shelter. “Coordinated Entry” = A process designed to coordinate program participants intake, assessment, and referrals, including eligibility and prioritization.
 - Eligibility: HUD Definition of Homeless, Cat 1 & 4.
 - Prioritization: Unsheltered or imminently, County residency, and highest assessment score.
 - Access: Call or walk-in to shelter, or representative.
 - Referral: Managed through “STARRS” (Shelter Triage, Access, and Referral System for Singles) in HMIS.
 - Discussion:
 - Board members asked if length of time homeless is a factor in determining prioritization? Staff responded that anyone with 6 months or longer of homelessness is eligible for a priority point if they have another additional risk factor.
 - A question was asked about the ability for individuals who become homeless that night or become homeless on the weekend to access the shelter. Deputy Director, OPEH, Thomas Barnett, explained that it varies by each shelter and that shelter staff are encouraged to be flexible in accepting clients as temporary walk-in for shelter based on their vulnerability.
 - A question was asked about the relationship with hospital social workers and the detention centers. A Board member spoke about a relationship that was built with the County and Department of Corrections to ensure that inmates were not being discharged in the middle of the night.
 - Another Board member spoke about how they worked with Inova to improve the discharge process and not have individuals discharge directly to homelessness. This was in 2008/2009 and sustaining this process has been a huge challenge. There is a work group approaching Inova together to rework this relationship and improve the discharge process because it is currently a problem.
 - Health Department nurse practitioners have been meeting with Inova to try and improve the process and keep them from discharging critically ill patients to the streets or directly to the shelters. The nurse practitioners have tried to create a relationship with the case workers so they will contact them prior to discharging a patient to the street or the shelters.
 - A Board member voiced that they are concerned about the fact that there is only 1 female respite bed and could the CoC work to address this disparity. This will be re-evaluated with the construction of the New Embury Rucker shelter due to the increase in females within the homeless population.

Adult Shelter Capacity:

The Deputy Director, OPEH, Thomas Barnett, presented information to the CoC Board in response to questions from the last meeting.

First, “What is the average wait for a bed in shelters serving adult-only households?”

Answer: The average waiting time for people entering shelter between June and August 2024 was 33 days. Typically, 350 individuals were on the list at any time and the average length of time on the list was 73 days. 345 individuals were removed from the list after reaching the maximum limit of 90 days.

Beds Needed:

The Deputy Director, OPEH, Thomas Barnett, reported to the board that the CoC has 170 year-round adults only beds and that the Hypothermia Prevention Program increases shelter capacity each winter, which leads to a reduction in the number of people on the shelter bed waitlist.

The floor was opened for discussion:

- A CoC Board member stated that many jurisdictions do not have a wait list, and they asked what it was like prior to developing and implementing this process. Staff responded that it was a walk-in process with the first person requesting assistance being served. The process was not fair or equitable as staff often heard that people experiencing homelessness had to know someone who was in shelter or someone that worked at the shelter in order to obtain a bed.
- A CoC Board member asked how often the list is visited to complete the 90 days clean up or if it is done automatically by HMIS. Staff reported that there is no standard for the clean-up process, and it varies by providers.
- A CoC Board member asked what the intersection between individuals who walk in with a true emergency and the utilization of this list. Staff stated that providers are encouraged to use their discretion when individuals walk into the shelter experiencing a true emergency. Many of them have overflow space that can be utilized to temporarily place the most vulnerable after hours.

VII. Information: Contractor Search Update.

The Deputy Director, OPEH, Thomas Barnett, presented information to the CoC Board regarding the search for a contractor to assist with developing a strategic plan. He reported that existing contractors have limited availability, but staff are exploring local universities as a quicker path to securing a contractor. A solicitation may be required to accomplish full scope of work. Staff encouraged the CoC Board to consider what it should do in the interim to make policy recommendations to the Board of Supervisors based on what it has learned.

The floor was opened for discussion:

- A board member asked if there is a reason that we don't just go ahead and do the solicitation? Staff said that may be necessary if a university is not available.
- A board member recommended reaching out to the National Alliance to End Homelessness to see if they have any resources or the ability to facilitate.
- Staff reported that they will resubmit the scope and function to the Board members.
- A Board member recommended reaching out to organizations operating on a national level because they maintain a roster of retired individuals that provide contractor assistance in specialized areas.

- A Board member asked about local organizations, committees, or private funders that could financially support the hiring of a contractor. Staff were not aware of an organization that is interested in doing so.

VIII. Discussion: Other News.

The Deputy Director, OPEH, Thomas Barnett, reported to the CoC Board that he recently did a presentation for the Interjurisdictional Committee of the City of Fairfax and County of Fairfax, and that he will share the slide deck with Board members via email.

Next Meeting will be on October 23, 2024