



INTERAGENCY COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS

Housing for all = A Stronger Montgomery

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/homelessness

HousingForAll@montgomerycountymd.gov

Virtual Zoom Webinar Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 22, 2020 | 3-5p

Members (Present or Represented)

Chesney, Amanda	London, Sharan
Crowel, Raymond	Miller, Eneshal
Glass, Evan	Roynestad, Brian
Goldman, Jeff (Chair)	Seidel, Stan
Damaris, Frank (rep. Nigam, Aseem)	Sinclair-Smith, Susie
Habte, Asmara G.	
Harris, Amanda	
Johnson, Ebony (Vice Chair)	
Kauffman, Louise	

Members (Absent)

Bennett, Teresa
 Reuben, Ruschelle
 Spann, Stacy
 Talley, Angela
 Zucker, Craig

Presenters:

Branda, Ilana
 Hong, Christine

There were 85 guests who attended this meeting.

WELCOME | REMARKS – Jeff Goldman

Stan Seidel motioned to approve the May 20 meeting minutes and Eneshal Miller seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

ICH LEGISLATION UPDATES – Councilmember Evan Glass

Councilmember Glass reported the good news that the ICH legislation passed the Council yesterday unanimously. This legislation is the results of many months of hard work by the commission and emphasizes that the mission of the ICH is not only to address homelessness but to end and prevent it. The legislation also clarifies the specific population goals including families with children and seniors.

In addition, yesterday the Council introduced \$20 million dollars of Rental Assistance as part of the CARES Act. These funds will help residents with rental assistance and payment of arrears due to the current health and economic crisis. The DHCA and DHHS will be working out the process for the distribution of these funds. Evan stated that anyone who needs assistance should contact his office for help in accessing the funds.

COMMITTEE UPDATES – Chairs

Partnership and Funding Committee – Chairs: Mary Gies and George Leventhal

Mary Gies shared that the Committee has selected Co-Chairs – Mary Gies and George Leventhal of Kaiser Permanente. The committee is working on developing recommendations for CBDG State funding that is expected. The amount is \$16 million for Maryland (not sure the allocation for MC). Initial thoughts and recommendations for the funding are:

- Acquiring hotels for affordable housing options.
- Targeting special populations, particularly individuals exiting out of our criminal justice systems, for rapid rehousing and diversion so they avoid homelessness.
- Other activities of the committee include: Developing 2020 priorities which include identifying and agreeing on clear vision with city municipalities
- Conducting further research on alternative research alternative funding models including pay for success.

- Establishing a Housing is Healthcare fund. Mobilize private sector and health care partners to join our efforts to promote housing and health for all. The objective of the Housing for Healthcare funding would be to have a flexible pot of funding to get people out of homelessness.

People’s Committee – Derick Bailey

Derrick reported that the People’s Committee is currently working on reviewing contracts for men and women shelters. The committee will complete reviewing all the contracts by the end of the week.

Amanda added that the next step is to have a collaborative virtual meeting with the shelter providers to share the committee’s thoughts and get feedback from the providers. Ensuring that the contract review is collaborative before presenting the results to the ICH and make specific recommendations.

Strategy and Planning Committee – Chairs: Sharan London and Fred Swan

Sharan London reported that the Committee meet yesterday and there were three takeaways, the Committee will:

1. Ask the chairs and other committees to review the Strategic Plan for changes, unrealistic strategies at the current time, and what future strategies need to be bumped up for consideration.
2. Begin to form workgroups to address racial equity and housing.
3. Look at the membership of the Strategy and Planning Committee and talk about who should be added to the Committee

System Integration Committee – Chairs: Amanda Harris and Susie Sinclair-Smith

Susie Sinclair-Smith reported that one of the goals of the committee is to ensure that people in the homeless service delivery system has access to services. To accomplish this goal the committee is focused on:

- Creating a one-stop shop to combine a range of services in one portal both virtually and literally.
- Providing technology to accomplish this goal in terms (i.e., telehealth, applying for employment, etc.)
 - The committee used available funding to purchase over 100 tablets for clients across the CoC.
 - The longer-range goal is to load the tablets with software that will help people to access services.

Issues that have given us additional lenses to focus our work is:

1. The impact of COVID which has overlaid public health into the homeless delivery system.
2. Addressing racial inequities due to the disproportionate of people of color.
3. Drilling down on behavioral health system of ways to further provide coordination for people in the CoC.

Governance Committee – Ebony Johnson

Ebony Johnson shared that the Governance Committee will meet on August 10. Ebony expressed appreciation to Councilmember Glass for the approval of the legislation which will help the Committee to move forward in filling vacancies and new member positions. The Committee will analyze the current membership to determine where there are gaps. The goal will be to have a diverse membership as well members with various skills and experience. Ebony encouraged all to spread the word about the ICH and submit names of potential members.

COVID UPDATES – Amanda Harris

Amanda discussed statistics (Presentation slides 5-14)

Major Accomplishment: The County conducted universal testing at shelters on a monthly and bi-monthly basis. The number of positive results has been minimal due to the hard work of Homeless Providers, the Healthcare for the Homeless Team, County Staff, and the community to implement safety measures and educating the clients on the importance of compliance. The testing results in Montgomery County were **less than 1% positivity rate** (583 Clients tested with 5 testing positive; 138 staff tested with 2 positives). The swiftness of the County to move vulnerable people into hotels and the expansion of the shelters helped to ensure social distancing. Special thanks

to the Department of General Services and the Department of Recreation who helped in the shelter expansion. Susie shared that the providers appreciate the availability of hazard pay for their staff.

Amanda explained the need to obtain additional shelter facilities. Due to COVID and other infectious diseases, returning to a place where people will be safe crowded together into a small facility will not be possible. We must think about a new way to address our shelters. Three of the expansion shelter locations are temporary loan facilities (6 Taft Court and the Recreational Centers). Additionally, due to the need to social distance, two of the permanent shelter locations must reduce capacity. The new Crabbs Branch Way men’s shelter (which will open in August) capacity will be reduced from 100 to 55. The women’s shelter at 2 Taft Court will shelter 25 women instead of 70. Potential additional shelter facilities are Carroll House, Holly Hall, and Rainbow Shelter. The DHHS and DGS are exploring the use of these additional shelters.

Amanda provided an overview of homeless statistics. Some of the highlights were:

Single Adults New Intakes Since March 1	
Total Inflow	724
Total Outflow	461
Avg Length of Stay for leavers	21 days
People added to Coordinated Entry list	117

People who have moved into Permanent housing since April 1	
Total number	246
Single Adults	84
Families with Children	162

COVID Rent Relief Program	
1,271	Households deemed eligible
205	Housing have received benefits to date
250	Closed due to no response, client decline, other
800	Applications in process
1,500	Approximate Households on the waitlist for services
\$3,258	Average Benefit

Profile of COVID Rent Relief Recipients N=202	
Asian	2%
Black and African American	18%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%
White	42%
Other Race	29%
Unknown	9%
Identified as Latinx	74%

Why is it taking so long to process COVID Rent Relief applications? The COVID rental relief program is moving slowly because the response time is slow. Households are taking 2-4 weeks to respond due to this being their first-time accessing services, technology barriers, limited English capacity, and illiteracy. It is taking longer for case managers to communicate what documentations are required. There is also a wait for unemployment claims to come through to ensure that we are not using resources strategically and not overpaying.

BUDGET UPDATES – Amanda Harris

Funding is limited at this time. We do have limited federal resources and the COVID Relief funding but there is a need to be creative about funding and look for other sources besides the County. The DHHS had to put forth a 6% savings plan and that is just the beginning. The economy is not going to bounce back quickly, and we need to look for ways to be cost effective and creative with limited funding. Additionally, there is a need to be smart in the use of the influx of COVID Relief funding and to set people up for sustainability.

Councilmember Glass expressed that yesterday the Council approved budget cuts in the millions of dollars. The first round of cuts were easy decisions because the cuts involved public events and public outreach which due to COVID are not happening. The cuts included lapsed jobs that we are choosing not to fill. We are hoping that the Federal government steps us and helps so we do not have to make deeper budget cuts.

COUNTY-WIDE RECOVERY EFFORTS – Raymond L. Crowel

Raymond Crowel stated that when an event such as a pandemic health crisis occurs the first step is response (i.e. testing and services) and afterward begin a long process of recovery. The County has established a series of recovery missions to help get the County back up and running when the crisis is finally over:

- Government Operations and Services – Lead: Fariba Kassiri | Focus: County Government offices
- Economic Revitalization – Lead: Jerome Fletchers | Focus: Entertainment industry and businesses
- Health and Human Services – Lead: Dr. Raymond Crowel | Focus: Early childcare and education; Behavioral health including domestic violence trauma, housing and homelessness, older adults and persons with disabilities, Public Health, Services access equity
- Housing – Lead: Aseem Nigam | Focus: Eviction prevention and housing
- Education – Lead: Dr. DeRionne Pollard, Dr. Monifa McKnight of Montgomery College | Focus: Schools, colleges, and distance learning

HOUSING AND HOMELESS RECOVERY GROUPS – Amanda Harris

The Health and Human Services recovery group composition consists of multiple stakeholders (DHHS, DOCR, DHCA, HOC, Non-profit partners, Cities of Gaithersburg and Rockville, and Council staff).

Homeless Crisis Response Recovery Group:

- The goals and objectives are to reduce inflow into homelessness, decrease length of stay in shelters, identify additional shelters, establish protocols for COVID-19 testing at congregate facilities.
- What we have done thus far:
 - Developed protocols for COVID-19 testing at congregate facilities
 - Committed to centralized shelter intake and diversion on single adult shelter

Christine Hong shared the strategies that the recovery group have identified (Presentation Slide #22-27).

- Sharan London asked for the opportunity to send in feedback on the recovery group recommendations in writing. Answer: Amanda suggested recommendations be submitted by the end of the week to Amanda Harris and Ilana Branda.
- Dr. Chapman asked that their NCCF Family Services Administrator be included on the committee input and perspective and asked why is youth homeless drop-center located in east county? The planning for the drop-in centers are in progress through the Collaboration Council. Answer: There is not a solid location but there is a need to have something up county to provide needed services.
- The work group's recommendation is to remove barriers to accessing substance use treatment by providing support through more Harm Reduction based treatment programs.
- Jen Schiller shared that one of the most innovative things about this plan is having a centralized shelter intake and diversion at the front end. Trained diversion workers and the diversion process in place will help as we anticipate an increase of 40-45% inflow of homelessness including young people (24 and under) accessing emergency shelter for the first time.

Housing Supports Recovery Group Recommendations

- The goals and objectives are to scale rapid rehousing, resume pre-COVID legal of community-based services, address inequity in access to permanent housing
- What we have done thus far is create policy for resuming home visiting

Ilana Branda shared the strategies that the recovery group have identified (Presentation Slide #30-33).

- Regarding exploring available hotel portfolios and repurpose of extremely affordable micro units, is this something that the County has started to explore? Answer: This strategy is in early stages of being explored.
- Stanley Seidel asked why are we not looking at possibly leasing instead of purchasing hotels? Answer: The idea of micro units is to provide long-term affordable housing purchasing hotels will be more cost-effective and give the County control and flexibility.

Eviction and Homeless Prevention Recovery Group – Frank Demarais

The group is a joint effort of DHHS and DHCA (Leads: Amanda and Frank). The economic emergency has led to a housing emergency. A survey represented about 20% of our total multi-family properties was conducted to determine the scale and pace of housing delinquencies. The survey showed that the number of tenant delinquencies from March to June increased from about 4 1/2% to over 15% total delinquent (10% of MC rental populations is 13,000 households the total 15% is over 20,000 households). The stay on evictions expires July 25 and courts will begin to post notices of evictions (probably 200 households facing evictions 2 weeks after Saturday). After August, there is estimated to be about 150 eviction court cases per week. COVID Rent Relief (\$20 million) administered by DHHS will attempt to accommodate the households at greatest risks to maintain their housing. If this situation persists through the end of the year, the County will be looking at assisting people in the amount of \$50 million (leaving \$30 million uncertain as to the source). We are supporting financial resources and legal aid to help landlord and tenants to work together to prevent evictions.

NEW BUSINESS – Ebony Johnson

Ebony suggested that the ICH could possibly host a community-wide meeting to address the police, race relations and homelessness post COVID. Both Amanda and Raymond advised an integrated approach by waiting to weigh in and partner on the work that is already being done in the County on these issues. For example:

- The County Executive and County Council are working on standing up a task force on Reimagining Public Safety in August that will work through the end of the year. There is an opportunity to weigh in and connect. The group will analyze police data to determine patterns and trends in how they respond.
- Expanding on the Decriminalization of Homelessness efforts folding the effort into public safety.
- The County Council passed legislation yesterday appropriating funding to expand the Mobile Crisis Team Outreach to deal with people on the streets in crisis.
- The Mobile Crisis Team will provide a non-police response to people experiencing mental health, substance abuse or other issues instead of the having the police be the first responders.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Amanda shared that there is no information on the CoC competition at this time.

Next meeting: Wednesday, September 30 at 3-5p via Zoom.

Adjournment