



INTERAGENCY COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS
Housing for all = A Stronger Montgomery
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Tuesday, January 14, 2025 | 3-5p
Approved March 18, 2025

Present		
Chelsea Andrews	Jeff Goldman	Christine Hong
Scott Bruton	Courtney Hall	Pelumi Olatinpo
Ebony Grey, Co-Chair	Gwendolyn Harter	Karishma Sheth
Stacey Gold	Manuel Hidalgo	Earl Stoddard

Welcome, introductions and approval of the November 6, 2024, meeting notes: Co-Chair Dr. Ebony Grey led the vote to approve the November 6 meeting notes. The notes were approved unanimously.

Preparation for policy implications on DHHS services with incoming federal administration: Dr. Earl P. Stoddard

On January 20, there will be a change in federal administration which will come with a slew of executive orders to be issued. The areas we are paying immediate attention is the immigration space and in changes in federal funding.

- In immigration space, the County will be protecting our residents of all status because we recognize the cultural and economic value to having immigrants and others in our community. The County will not change the way we deliver services.
 - Montgomery County (MC) Executive Order 135.19 prohibits staff, contractors, grant recipients, etc. from asking about immigration status as a threshold measure.
 - The only time the County is required to ask status, is if a federal program mandates that we seek that information to provide funding or prohibits certain recipients to receive the funding.
- The MC Police will continue to focus on enforcing local and state laws and will not be cooperating with federal immigration enforcement.
- Potential raids could be conducted in the region which will be more of an optically show of force rather than addressing some larger issue in the immigration space. The County is communicating with our business partners because the raids may be conducted on construction sites, restaurants, and other business spaces. Shelter providers could potentially be a target of raids.
- The County will have a training for their front-line staff to help them understand:
 - The spaces federal immigration agents can have reasonable access and what spaces they cannot.
 - The different between a detainer and a warrant. If it doesn't have a judge's signature it does not carry the weight of law
 - County trainings are for county staff members and are only for informational purposes for providers/partners.
 - Information sharing will be done discreetly and not on social media.
- Partners and/or providers need to contact their legal representatives for advice on how they should handle immigration enforcement agents. A version of the County's training will be shared with our partners for informational purposes only.
- The County is preparing for changes in the total amount of funding and the proposed requirements that may be attached to receiving funding. Challenging will be when we are asked to compromise our values and determining whether money is more important than the value. Funding for education is huge, health and human services, department of justice, and homeland security are also spaces where federal funding is very important.
- Discussing with the attorney general office and congressional offices on how legal challenges from some of the measures will proceed from the State.

- Asking partners to not overreact due to fear and to ensure that we continue to encourage the people we serve to report situations (such as domestic violence and child abuse) and continue to seek our services because the harm from not reporting may exceed the way the enforcement is being rolled out.
- Reach out to the County Executive's office if you have concerns about data collection. Not collecting certain data could affect where resources are needed so we can make future investments.

Zero For All Rebranding-Vote: Paloma Arroyo-LeFebre

Paloma shared that Community Solutions chose the name "Zero for All" because of the goal to seek functional zero for all populations. The CoC formed a workgroup of housing providers, emergency shelter and street outreach workers) to discuss and create a new branding specific to the County. The following are the three options the workgroup decided upon:

1. Homeward Together
2. Housing Together
3. Housing Serves Us All

Christine Hong added that after attending a learning collaborative in November the topic of branding was raised. The Zero for All branding gets confused with the Build for Zero program offered by Community Solutions. Also, the Zero for All branding does not register with all people. We are rebranding so we have ownership of the name, and the name is clear and understandable to everyone.

Pelumi Olatinpo motioned that **Housing Together** be our new branding and Ebony Grey seconded the motion. Eleven commissioners voted yes to adopt the new name. **Housing Together** carried the vote and that will be our new brand.

Zero for All Populations Goal update: Paloma Arroyo-LeFebre

Paloma shared the Built for Zero data updates by subgroups and the inflow out flow for September to December. [PowerPoint Presentation See slides 5-9 for details](#). The big picture is that in January MC saw 1,435 clients experiencing homelessness (Households without minor children=808; Households with minor children=165).

Update on Special appropriation to extend SHARP for Households with Minor Children: Christine Hong

On Tuesday, December 10, 2024, the County Council resolved to approve Special Appropriation #25-42 to the FY25 Operating Budget, MC Government, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Services to End and Prevent Homelessness in the amount of \$3.6 million.

Christine reported that we have started to increase preventive efforts because of the appropriation.

- Eviction Prevention: We were approved 1.1 more in eviction prevention which allowed us to increase the Area Median Income limit from 30% to 60% to help more families.
 - This is needed because the homeless numbers continue to increase. The last number that Paloma shared was 1,435 which is a 25% increase over the 2024 PIT.
 - Prevention is the best way to focus our efforts because it allows us to save all the funding needed to shelter a household and to help with the trauma that results.
- Rental Assistance Program (RAP): In addition, we received \$367,584 in RAP funding which allowed us to process applications for the serve the 139 households on wait list.
- Short Term Housing and Resolution Assistance Program (ShaRP):
 - We were spending a huge amount on motel shelter for families and is not a most cost-effective means to help families and it is temporary.
 - Now we have funding to re-open SHaRP which is a short-term resolution allows us to place families in permanent housing while proving 12 months of rental assistance and navigation services.
 - This funding will be targeting families in our motels. We currently have 165 families in shelter system (27 emergency shelter and the rest in motels).
 - We will use some of the ShaRP funding for families just about to enter homelessness (if diversion does not work for the families) moving toward permanent solutions instead of sheltering in motels.

Overview of Updated Residency Policy for SEPH: Diana Pina

MC has a new residency policy will go into effect February 1, 2025. SEPH was asked by Senior Leadership to draft a new policy to address our previous approach that limited individuals from moving between States for homeless services. The goal was to create a policy that is trauma informed, person centered and does not add barriers to services. SEPH worked with various members of the CoC, SEPH staff on the policy and the policy was reviewed by the County attorneys and approved by the Executive. ([Read the Entire Policy.](#))

Residency Eligibility for Homeless Services Programs Policy

Highlights of the residency policy:

- New policy removes mention of durational requirements for residency. A household may be considered a resident regardless of how long they have resided in MC or where they lost housing.
- The question as to where you lost your housing was removed. It does not matter.
- No change to our approach—we will continue to offer diversion as our first intervention.

MC uses the term household to refer to an adult-only household (individual), a household with multiple adults, or a household with minor children. We also follow the HUD definition of homelessness. Three of the HUD definitions are our focus, households:

1. That are literally homeless (living in a place not meant for human habitation); living an institution in for 90 days.
2. At immediate risk of homeless (residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance).
4. Fleeing/Attempting to flee from domestic violence (compiling with the Violence Against Women Act).

Public Comments

Jeff commented that the public comment section is very appreciated by the Interagency Commission on Homelessness (ICH) and helps the commission determine priorities. He emphasized that people be respectful, collegiate and collaborative. ICH want to be open to different perspectives and values this time on the agenda.

Rabitah Moses brought to the attention of the ICH allegations of ongoing abuse (verbal, emotional and physical abuse) at Interfaith Works (IW) women shelter of black women. Rabitah and others are advocating for these women. Rabitah claims the women have been victims of intimidation by management and police and will not advocate for themselves because of fear of losing their placement at the shelter.

Christine Hong and Courtney Hall responded that the MC and IW teams have investigated the concerns raised by Ms. Moses with the IW shelter guests.

- Christine Hong shared that each of the MC contract monitors regularly visit and monitor the MC shelters (6 emergency shelters for singles and 3 for families). The work is demanding and never will be perfect. The investigations did not uncover any reports of abuse from the residents that were interviewed.
- Courtney stated that IW sees the importance of the role that advocates play and IW has conducted investigations into the claims of abuse that Ms. Moses has reported but found no match to the concerns being expressed. Courtney shared specifically that IW's leadership has:
 - Arranged community meetings to give guests the opportunity to express themselves freely and to eliminate any concerns that their placement would be at risk and what we heard did not match what is being reported.
 - The County held a listening session with clients without IW staff members present and again the findings did not match the reports.
 - IW offered to have clients meet one-on-one with Housing Justice Montgomery and that offer was rejected. IW is working with the People's Committee to have similar one-on-one conversations with clients, and we are expanding our partnership with the People's Committee.
 - IW has a grievance process in place, and we continue to work with our clients because the clients living at the shelter are our concern.
 - For the record, the things being reported here do not match the numerous investigations and conversations that we have had with clients who live at the IW shelter.

Committee and Workgroup Updates

- **Systems Coordination, Christine Hong**—The Committee has been discussing ways to collaborate with the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) to proactively provide outreach in Clarksburg.
 - The Committee is excited to report that we have successfully connected to provide diversion resources for those exiting the correction facility.
 - In addition, we are working to create dedicated beds at the Nebel Emergency Shelter for DOCR (five dedicated beds will come online July 1).
 - The DOCR staff will also receive access to HMIS to work on reentry of residents. The HMIS system will provide information so that efforts can be coordinated for those who were in the homeless system and the providers that assisted them in the past.
- **Racial Equity Workgroup**—Ralph Belk reported that the workgroup continues to meet. Updates are members of the Peoples Committee have joined the workgroup to provide their input. The workgroup's strategy plan is being updated and the group will present the new plan to the ICH later this year. Ralph ended by extending the invitation to others to join the Racial Equity Workgroup.
- **Peoples Committee**—June Henderson gave updates on several projects:
 - Collaborating with adult shelter providers (Montgomery Coalition for the Homeless and IW) attempting to move clients out of the shelter into housing programs quickly.
 - Expanding referral processes to include our CoC referring clients to recovery residences and other housing for special needs populations.
 - Heightening awareness of the grievance process. We want clients to be aware of the grievance process and we are working on developing informational posters.
 - Focusing on the MC eviction practices making this traumatic experience more compassionate.
 - Promoting passage of two-House Bills (HB):
 - The Maryland Self Storage Act (HB979) which requires notification of the sale the tenant belongings.
 - The Tenant Possessions Recovery Act (HB1114) which requires landlords to provide evicted tenants with a specific timeframe to reclaim their personal belongings left behind after an eviction.
 - Promoting the People's Committee by drafting rules, announcing work on social media platforms, and designing posters. We want those experiencing homelessness to know the People's Committee is here for them, and they are welcome to participate in our meetings.
- **Workforce Development Workgroup**—Stan Siedel reported that tomorrow (January 15) the workgroup is hosting an unhoused job fair at Seneca Creek Community Church at 13 Firstfield Road. A special thank you to Donna Gabriel and Kunda from Carrer Catchers. Currently, there are 200 people registered, and 11 to 12 employers scheduled to participate.
- **Youth Workgroup**— Cornelius Kuteesa reported that the youth workgroup continues to meet, and the Youth Action Board (YAB) is working on various projects.
 - Working with the Montgomery Connect, which is a youth, drop-in center in Wheaton.
 - Policy works on Zero for All to create new coordinated entry system (CES) for youth.
 - Having discussion with the McKinney liaison under MCPS see how we can help young people experiencing housing insecurity ensuring they have access to resources to sustain themselves.
 - Preparing a virtual Youth Fair specifically for young people who are currently undocumented.

Announcement:

- **Job Fair for the Unhoused**—Scheduled January 15 at the Seneca Creek Community Church at 13 Firstfield Road
- **Terence Hill's Memorial**— Scheduled Friday, January 17 at 10 a.m. at the MC Executive Office Building at 101 Monroe Street, Rockville.
- **2025 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count** on scheduled Wednesday January 29. Volunteers will gather at 2 locations— 1301 Piccard Drive and the Silver Spring Civic Center for training and organizing of groups.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 18, 2025, 3-5p Zoom Webinar.