

Western MA Task Force for Housing First Meeting Minutes – January 15, 2022

In attendance: MJ Adams, City of Greenfield, Keleigh BenEzra, Friends of the Homeless/CSO, Kathryn Buckley- Brawner Catholic Charities, Juan Anderson Burgos, Office of Rep. Duffy, Farida Bature, WMNEH, Keith Benoit, City of Northampton, Tom Bernard, Berkshire United Way, Rep Natalie Blais, Alexis Breiteneicher, Valley CDC, Sen. Jo Commerford, Kevin Chambers, Office of Senator Velis, Corrine Coryat, Office of Rep Blais, Shaundell Diaz, Three County COC/CAPV, Cathi Emery, Opioid Taskforce, Tiara Fisher, Opioid Taskforce, Lisa Fletcher-Udel, Office of Rep. Farley-Bouvier, Erin Forbush, Service Net, Michaela Grady, Westfield CDBG Coordinator, Jon Gould, Office of Senator Paul Mark, Rick Hart, Hampshire County Friends of the Homeless, Randy Herk, OTF Connect, Sen. Laman Jackson, Denise Jordan, Springfield Housing Authority, Kathy Keeser, Louison House, , Meredith Lewis, Community Foundation of Western MA, Jennifer Lucca, Samaritan Inn, Tim McCarthy, Gerry McCafferty, City of Springfield/ Hampden county COC, Craig's Doors, Deb McLaughlin, Franklin County Opioid Task Force, Rachel McMahaon, Office of Rep. Whipps, Bill Miller, CSO, Peter Miller, City of Westfield, Kristen Otter. Ai, Lizzy Ortiz, C3ACO, Jennifer Pickering, Office of Rep. Patricia Duffy, Kristen Pease, Opioid taskforce, Liz Plouffe, City of Easthampton, Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa, Phil Ringwood, Dial/Self, Keith Rhone, FOH/CSO, Rep Lindsay Sabadosa, Rep Aaron Saunders, Dan Sontag, DMH, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Cherie Spinks, Office of Rep. Puppolo, Lily Stowe-Alekman, Office of Rep Domb, Kelly Turley, Alan Wolf, City of Northampton, Lisa Wong, City of South Hadley, Susan Worgaftik, Rep Sussanah Whipps, David Ziomek, Town of Amherst

Happy New Year and Congratulations to our Legislators on a new or first term! Special welcome to our new legislators who attended: Senator Jake Oliveira (formerly Rep. Oliveira) and Representative Aaron Saunders. We also acknowledged newly elected Senator Paul Mark (formerly Rep. Mark) and Rep. Shirley Arriaga and all of our returning legislators. Congratulations!

Shelter and Housing Updates

Springfield - Friends of the Homeless/CSO: In the last year, 987 unduplicated individuals entered sheltered in the Springfield site with 185 placed in permanent supportive housing. On a nightly basis, the shelter is full to capacity with 175 beds.

Holyoke - Center for Human Development: Their 48 bed motel shelter is always full and serves between 50- 54 individuals on a daily basis. 46 units of low-threshold housing are predicted to become available by the end of January (awaiting final occupancy permits).

Greenfield - Service Net: Continuing to be full at 30 beds.

Northampton - Service Net: Also at capacity between the two shelters(Interfaith Cot and Grove Street) with about 30-35 individuals.

Service Net shelters in Greenfield and Northampton will be transitioning to CSO April 1, 2023.

Pittsfield - Service Net: Averaging 45-50 individuals with room to accommodate more since the shelter is in a high school

Amherst -Craig's Doors: Currently at full capacity at both sites, Immanuel Lutheran Church (23 beds), University Motor Lodge (40 beds). Craig's Doors is completing the renovation of their resource center which will serve as a drop-in center and a warming space. Working with DHCD to create a safe trans space within their congregate issue. Craig's Doors has been able to secure PVTa bus passes for their shelter guests for the next 6 month with access to all routes. This will be an opportunity to monitor the impact of transportation access on job and housing placement.

Craig's Doors is managing Easthampton's DHCD funds for emergency motel beds – roughly half spent so far

Craig's Doors is also sub-contracting with CHD on the Community Foundation award of \$50,000 to provide emergency motel shelter for individuals this winter. These funds will help bridge this emergency need until CHD receives its "triage/diversion" funding from DHCD on April 1. A huge round of thanks to the Community Foundation for this critical support.

Independent Housing Solutions (Northampton): Opening of the 16 bed permanent supportive housing has been delayed due to unexpected issues raised by the fire dept – these are being addressed now and hopefully the opening will take place in the coming weeks.

North Adams - Louison House: The hotel in Adams is no longer being used as a shelter due to town issues, including the "30 day rule" for motel. Now using motels in Williamstown. They have engaged with state legislators on the issues. Hopefully individuals are stable for now.

Friends of the Homeless/CSO Greenfield and Northampton planning for next year: Service Net and CSO are working well together as the transition is underway to CSO's management of Greenfield and Northampton shelters as of April 1. Big thanks to ServiceNet for their partnership and support. CSO is working towards replicating its model in Springfield with wrap-around services and is aiming to find a new site in Northampton to merge both shelter sites.

Valley CDC purchased the Econolodge, Hadley on Jan 4. It will become 50 units of studios and one bedrooms, with 50% allocated to people exiting homelessness. In process to negotiate some kind of short-term lease so the building is occupied.

Valley CDC has also obtained a contract from the City of Northampton to develop 20 units of affordable housing on Crafts Avenue behind City Hall.

In total, Valley CDC has 208 units of affordable housing coming online in the next 4 years, 61 of which will be allocated to people exiting homelessness.

RAFT/Prevention Updates:

Wayfinders: Update via email: Approximately 3000 applications in process. There are over 1000 applications waiting to be matched with landlords - most of them awaiting landlords to complete their portions before they can move forward. Roughly 150 individuals seek assistance at their housing centers every day.

New Legislative Session – Thank you to Senator Jo Comerford for providing an excellent overview of the legislative process.

The bill filing deadline is January 20. The Network will be in touch regarding its priorities, which will definitely include the bills that did not pass last session: access to counsel in evictions, eviction record sealing, transfer fee for affordable housing and the transportation bill among others. Please be sure you are subscribed to the Network blog to stay connected on our advocacy. [Please sign up here.](#)

Rep. Whipps also suggested we bring in the new Housing Committee chairs to share the Network agenda. Pamela will follow-up as soon as committee assignments are made.

Western MA Housing Coalition: This group is newly formed (thanks to Way Finders leadership) and includes dozens of housing providers and local communities across the four western counties. Its goal is to increase housing production in the region and advocate for the legislative and administrative changes necessary to make that happen (working in partnership with the Network). The group's first meeting with the legislative delegation is taking place on Feb. 10. We will receive a report back at our next Task Force meeting.

Winter Walk: Please join the Winter Walk to raise awareness and funds to end homelessness on Sunday, February 5, at 9:00am –11am in Court Square, Springfield. It is open to all and covers all 4 counties. You do not need to donate to participate. All can register [HERE](#).

Network Annual Event: The Network is holding its 7th annual Network gathering in person (with a zoom option for the program) on Friday, May 12, 10:00am -11:30 am, at HCC Kittredge Center. See the Save the Date flyer [Here](#)

Next meeting date: Tuesday, February 21 at 9am