

Homelessness Solutions Task Force (HOST)
General Meeting
Tuesday, January 9, 2018, 10:00am
Community Room, Patriot Hall, Clatsop Community College

DRAFT MINUTES

Attendance list at end of notes

1. Mayor's Welcome.

Recommends adoption of a purpose similar to Beaverton's Blue Ribbon Commission: *To recommend three things we should do this year, as a city, to help on the issue of homelessness in Astoria.*

2. Introductions.

New members: Craig Hoppes, Superintendent, Astoria School District. Sarah LaCoste-Brown, Coordinator, Community Advisory Council, Col-Pac.

3. Recap by Chief Spalding.

Respect for all points of view. Homelessness isn't a crime. Use a minimum version of Robert's Rules. Sign the attendance roster. Much good work has been/is being done. Don't reinvent the wheel. In Clackamas last week saw a man holding the sign: "Need a ride to Astoria."

Review of homeless definition. Bill VanNostran notes we're using the word "homeless" as an adjective, thus labeling people. Homelessness isn't like left-handedness. Others note that there are people experiencing homelessness who work night shifts and need a place to rest during the day.

Revised definition:

Individuals and families experiencing homelessness are those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate residence. They include those who are doubled-up or sharing housing, are living in motels, camping grounds, or shelters, or are in unsheltered settings such as cars, parks, or abandoned buildings.

Motion by Alan Evans, seconded by Cindy Price, to adopt revised definition. Passed unanimously.

4. HOST webpage has been added. Access restricted to HOST members and Astoria City Councilors. Will include minutes, agenda, relevant articles and research. <http://astoria.or.us/HOST>

5. Helping Hands (HH) news (Alan Evans). Helping Hands serves four counties and 11 cities with 190 beds. HH has been meeting with Astoria, Clatsop County, Public Safety Coordinating Committee to find support. Based on these discussions, on February 1, HH will make an offer on a building in Astoria that will provide 60 beds. HH is well into negotiations. Transients will be allowed in the door, but there will be qualifications for them to stay there. "You have to help yourself."

6. Identify extent of the problem. (All)

PUD (public urination and defecation).

Big increase on downtown streets and Riverwalk over past year. Three “blue rooms” are available -- two at People’s Park, 16th and the Riverwalk; one at 9th and the Riverwalk. Cost is \$6,000-\$7,000 per year without vandalism. Vandalism of the blue rooms drops when the Warming Center is open. Restrooms at the Doughboy (Bond & Marine) are now being vandalized. Meth in one of the urinals caught on fire. Public restrooms also at 12th & Exchange. Blue rooms can’t be place on Riverwalk east of 39th Street because trucks don’t have access for maintenance. The Portland Loo is a good alternative to blue rooms. Is practically vandalism-proof; one-foot clearance of walls from floor level prevents sleeping. Costs nearly \$110,000 including installation.

Public safety.

- Several reports to APD of physical assaults on the Riverwalk. Many reports within the community of panhandling, verbal abuse, physical threats.
- Business owners reluctant to park in all-day lots because they’re inhabited by people experiencing homelessness and/or require walking past threatening situations.
- Perception is reality. People are fearful of the transient population. It keeps people off the streets after dark. Windows broken, litter, car-jacking, tolls demanded to cross the street.
- Residents near the Warming Center continue to report problems with loitering, smells from dogs using the grassy area and not being cleaned.
- Much of the burden is shared by one part of the city, but public safety concerns extend well beyond the downtown core. The college has noted concerns.
- The hospital has had to change its locking system due to theft and vandalism. People come in to get out of the weather, impacting those who need care. Come into the cafeteria hoping someone will buy breakfast. Buying one person breakfast brings in others, creating a vicious cycle. Nursing supervisors on duty at night, when there is limited staff, are increasingly insecure. The hospital is looking into armed security at those hours.
- Safeway has shortened its hours, reportedly out of safety concerns due to the large population living in the bushes by the Riverwalk there.

Education.

- In Astoria schools, an estimated 5-10 percent of the 1900 students are experiencing homelessness. Many of them are couch-surfing with their parents and their siblings. The parents are dealing with issues much greater even than getting their children to school, so there is much absenteeism. The poverty level citywide of students is greater than 50 percent. Fifty to 65 percent of students receive free lunch. To help fight homelessness, the district receives \$5,000 per year, in total, from the federal government.
- At HH, seniors have increased 16 percent over the past three years. All categories of homelessness are up 50 percent.

Housing.

- Many people are one paycheck away from homelessness. Oregon has become the number two destination in the US. Each year more than 45,000 people move to the state, yet affordable housing represents less than 10 percent of all housing built. Wal-Mart will bring 200 to 300 employees to the area, which has a less than 0.07% rental capacity. It will have a devastating effect on moving people into permanent housing.

Other.

- Some of the people experiencing homelessness are anti-social and will not participate in any program. Many of the people who visit the Warming Center have been in and out of HH or will not go there or to Clatsop Community Action for services.

7. Solutions. Though not on the agenda, it's difficult to talk about the challenges without offering solutions.

- Mobile shower/washer/dryer van to provide personal hygiene. The Warming Center provides showers on open nights, but is no longer open for showers on Wednesdays because it was beyond the scope of the agreement with the City.
- More blue rooms throughout the City.
- Churches take turns being open day and night one week at a time year-round. Provide map and calendar of when and where.
- High-barrier homeless shelter, like HH, where people can compete to stay clean and sober.
- Extra garbage cans. Pay attention to events that draw transients and provide even more cans and blue rooms at those times.
- More mental health treatment. Outreach to Warming Center, unsheltered population.
- Beat cop, perhaps only a couple random hours per day.
- Tiny homes.
- A prioritized voucher system for stable housing.
- More housing of all types.

8. Next steps:

- Who are we trying to help? Some solutions will invite more challenges.
- What needs addressing first?
- Data.

Meeting adjourned 12:10pm

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Price

January 17, 2019

Attending:

From the Task Force:

Amy Baker
Sarah LaCoste-Brown
Angela Cosby
Alan Evans
Sean Fitzpatrick
Mary Docherty Geil
Sarah Lu Heath
Jennifer Holen
Jarrod Kamofski
Arline Lamear
Tom Leiner
Cindy Price
Geoff Spalding
Bill VanNostran

Guests:

Rick Bowers, Common Ground Interspiritual
Ardi Chapman, Helping Hands
Sarah Dailey, Exec Dir, Seaside Downtown Assoc
Mitch Eckhardt, Thrivent Financial
Richard Elfering, NAMI Clatsop
Richard Garner, 1st Presbyterian Church
Kris Haefker, Housing Provider
David Ham, Seaside Chief of Police
Bryan Kidder, Clatsop County Democratic Party
Ron Maxted, Astoria Warming Center
Nelle Moffett, Citizen
Rick Newton, Warrenton City Commissioner
Pyper Powell, Clinical Director, Clatsop Behavior Health Care
Icek Warneke, Local Student