

Commission to End Homelessness Implementation Group #3

Thursday, April 16th, 2015
10:00am to 12:00pm

**The Village @ 17th Street
CASA Training Room
1505 E. 17th St., Ste. 100
Santa Ana, CA 92705**

Minutes

Max Gardner Implementation Group #3 Chairperson

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Meeting called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Max Gardner.

Max Gardner introduced himself as a recent member of the Commission to End Homelessness and a very recent appoint as the Chair of Implementation Group #3.

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Approve August 2014 Implementation Group #3 Minutes.

Minutes were approved.

DISCUSSION CALENDAR

- 1. Overview of current conditions – progress to date**
- 2. Review of available resources**
- 3. Strategic focus for IG #3.**

Max Gardner explains that the meeting will be conversation on:

- What is the state of housing opportunities in Orange County today in a permanent housing capacity?
- What are the needs in the County?
- What information do we need to gather to answer those questions?

Max Gardner has a sense that there is not enough permanent housing options that are available for the homeless.

Max Gardner explains that he views the homeless in four categories.

1. Chronic homeless population
2. Transitional/recently homeless – individuals that were housed effectively but lost housing (got foreclosed, lost their job and are now couch surfing). Individual has been self-sufficient and supporting in the past, have minimum barriers, but need help to get back on their feet.
 - a. Suggestion to refer to this group as situationally homeless.
3. Youth - individuals who are homeless and potentially came out of the foster care system. These individuals have minimum to no school, no skill set, or past employment history. Most likely, these individuals have never been self-sufficient but supported.
4. Domestic Violence – Individuals who are homeless due to domestic violence conditions.

Additional categories of homeless populations were suggested by attendees:

- Category between chronic homeless and situationally homeless. Individuals who when they first became homeless were situationally homeless but due to extended period of homelessness now have additional barriers to overcome. These individuals display the majority of the chronically homeless characteristics, but do not meet the federal qualification or have a disabling condition.
 - o It was noted that this is a growing population in Orange County.
- Individuals who fall in and out of homelessness as they receive treatment for alcohol and/or substance abuse.

- Individuals who are being released from prisons or jails and those who have a history of past incarceration.
- Individuals who are homeless, but not homeless enough, specifically those who are in and out of hospitals and emergency rooms.

Max Gardner asks attendees to step away from their organization's views, and think from a community standpoint. He asks attendees, "Where should we, as a Continuum of Care, focus our initial efforts?"

- Billy O'Connell suggest to focus on the people who are already doing work and doing well so we may build upon that.
- Donna Gallup suggest we focus on what others are doing nationwide – focus on the chronically homeless.
- Larry Haynes states that while our initial response is to go where there is the biggest need and highest population, HUD has it right. Help should go to the most vulnerable. He suggests this process builds social capital and would change how open spaces are used, increase city value and businesses.
- Paul stated that from that perspective and looking at HUD, who is our primary source of funding, it would be hard for us to have an impact if we go against our funding source. Paul mentions that there is a movement in California to get Medicare to help pay the housing cost of the individuals who are medically vulnerable.
- Dawn Price stated that incentives should be created for cities so they may open up for Emergency Shelter or Permanent Supportive Housing.
- Margie Wakeham stated that children and families are the most important as it is under these circumstances that you create generations of homeless people. Children are the most vulnerable and the impacts of homelessness are the most traumatic to them.

Max Gardner describes two categories of focus for permanent housing options – Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing. He states that it is not an either or process, but it is about priorities and the type of housing the individual needs. He notes that there are more opportunities to expand Rapid Rehousing by working with landlords but the most vulnerable in Orange County need Permanent Supportive Housing.

- Helen Cameron stated that historically there is not been a focus on Permanent Supportive Housing. She mentions that although the discussion about leveraging resources has revolved around HUD funding, we should not forget about the \$130 million for mental health funding that Orange County receives every year. This funding is targeted for many of the people who display the chronically homeless characteristics.
- Buddy Ray raises two issues. Firstly, we do not having enough housing to house the homeless. Secondly, we currently talk about homelessness like it is a disease, when it actually is a circumstance or condition as a result of other problems. Buddy states that we must focus on a comprehensive approach to dealing with those problems and creates a support system for the individuals who cannot deal with their problems on their own.
- Paul Cho addresses the question by stating that we should take guidance from the resources available. Current Orange County's Continuum of Care is moving towards Permanent Supportive Housing. At the same time, we should look at other HUD funding available as some has flexibility to be utilized for Rapid Rehousing. He mentions the efforts of the City of Anaheim as an example.

Max Gardner gathered from the conversation that there is a general feeling that Permanent Supportive Housing is the first priority but there should still be focus on families, not to the exclusion of Rapid Rehousing. He wondered whether converting existing housing (whether it be residential, transitional, etc.) into Permanent Supportive Housing was an option.

Dawn Price shares that the Fair Market Rent established by HUD does not match the County's Fair Market Rent. She describes the County's Fair Market Rent as being much more workable, as they are able to find units within those limits. She states that her agency is currently self-funding the difference. For example, the average gap between the Fair Market Rent establish by HUD and the actual cost on a two bedroom apartment can be as much as \$300 to \$400 a month. She states that there is a needs to let the Board of Supervisor, House Representatives, and Senators know.

- Max sees potential in lobbying and advocating for a higher Fair Market Rent. He also sees potential in working with funding sources to fill the gap between HUD's Fair Market Rent and the actual cost. He notes that increasing the Fair Market Rent would reduce the number of clients that are served, but would house them more effectively.
- Larry Haynes describes situations in which clients are housed in the private market with the current Fair Market Rent and the next year what was once considered affordable is no longer affordable. This means that there is a need to self-fund or relocate.
- John Hambuch provided additional insight regarding the Fair Market Rent in Orange County. He mentioned that in October 2014, Orange County experienced a decrease from the 50th percentile to the 40th percentile of Fair Market Rent because the County was not moving enough households within the voucher program from a high poverty city to a low poverty city.

- It is important to recognize that the Fair Market Rent is set at the 40th percentile nationwide as it is federal policy. The voucher program is intended to be non-luxury housing.
- Solutions and alternatives to address the effects of the Fair Market Rent were discussed.
 - Kerrin Cardwell suggest that housing with stable rents is created. These rent would be affordable to the voucher program and would only increase marginally upon receiving approval.
 - Larry Haynes suggest the alternative of working with the private sector and developing a housing preservation fund that would allow individuals financial assistance if their current housing no longer met the Fair Market Rent as opposed to having them reallocate.
 - It is suggested that in cases where the rent is just beyond 30% of the individual's income, the individual may be given the option to pay the difference out of pocket. This is a particularly good solution for those that are looking to reside in a particular neighborhood.
 - Max Gardner suggests that chronically homeless individuals may be housed utilizing a voucher and providing them with wrap around services to address their needs.
 - Kerrin Cardwell described how the City of Anaheim is currently utilizing HOMEs money, as a short-term, 24 month period solution by tying the money to a service providers.
 - Helen Cameron described how Jamboree Housing has established partnerships with cities to develop housing programs with supportive services and have high degree of retention.
- Scott Larson highlights the importance of understanding how many individuals are being affected by the Fair Market Rent gap, what is the financial gap between the Fair Market Rent and the actual cost, and what problems are being encountered by agencies.

Max Gardner states that we must explore the ability to utilize vouchers along with other fund in the community and find effective ways to utilize vouchers.

Billy O'Connell suggests that education of landlords is key in the process as it increases their willingness to work alongside us thus increasing housing opportunities. There is agreement among attendees that education of landlords is important as well as developing lasting relationships. Attendees shares past positive experiences with landlords helping them house previously homeless individuals.

Billy O'Connell reasons that we must understand the problem to be able to fix it and quantifying it to a cost can help.

- Kerrin Cardwell explains how some efforts to quantify the cost are already occurring in the City of Anaheim as a result of organizations like City Net and Coast to Coast. The data that they are collecting pertains to police calls, medical services, family reunifications, etc.

Max Gardner mentions the needs to understand what mental health services and funding are available and how to access them.

Scott Larson mentions the possibility of an overlap with Kim Goll's Implementation Group #4 in terms of getting a grasp on the need. He explains that if he know the need, and identify trends then efforts can target a gap where the private sector or housing stock has to go.

An attendee shares an additional challenge – housing the individual in the city they want to live in. Doing so leads to higher success rates. It was suggested that a model similar to Los Angeles County website <http://housing.lacounty.gov/> where vacancies are listed by private sector, and public sector housing. The website is managed by the County and a great place to reference when individuals can no longer afford to reside in Orange County and are looking elsewhere. The website allows searches to be filtered by city, zip code, rent limit, housing type, etc.

An attendee shared that she believes that some cities do not see homelessness as their problem and this could potentially be an issue due to little education and lack of ownership of the issue. She suggest that the County Supervisors pressure, empower, incentivize, and/or encourage the cities to participate in these efforts.

- Max Gardner stated that the Commission should lay the foundation and provide examples of what has been done to help others be more receptive. He suggest that the group look at putting together some general talking points and information that would be helpful in educating the Cities.

Juanita Preciado shared a report on NPR, Los Angeles is looking at requiring new developments to be part of their Coordinated Entry System. Currently developments have their own waiting lists and ways of selecting individuals for their

affordable housing units. She suggest Orange County could do something along those lines and adopt new requirements to engage developments in Coordinated Entry.

There was discussion regarding shifting Transitional Housing to be Permanent Housing or Permanent Supportive Housing.

- Paul Cho states that the biggest funding source for affordable housing is Section 8. He suggest some Section 8 vouchers be carved out specifically for the chronically homeless. At the same time, he acknowledges that the Section 8 program is an entitlement program that is broken with a ten year waiting list.
- Dawn price shares her agency's experience through this conversation process and states that there should be additional funding resources helping with the transitions as it is a costly and time consuming process.
- Max Gardner clarified that he does not suggest that transitional housing should be eliminated but instead must have a balance.

There was discussion of who else should be attending Implementation Group #3.

- Faith based organizations, cities, Anaheim and Fullerton homeless collaborative, homeless liaisons officers and housing developments (for profit and nonprofit) were suggested.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Larry Smitty questioned what definition of "chronically homeless" was being utilized by the providers, cities, county, and funders like as it appears to him that everyone has different standards to define it. It is clarified that the HUD established definition for chronically homeless is the one being followed as they have to comply with set guidelines to continue receiving funding.

Marques Reynolds shared his frustration with Coordinated Entry and other efforts as it appears to him that we are trying to drink water from the bottom of the glass first. He believes that the systems that were discussed will not be effective because the people on the streets have already tried everything they could to no avail. He believes that there is limited understanding of what the people on the streets need.

Allison Davenport suggests that Implementation Group #3 revise its agenda and align its efforts in support of Coordinated Entry implementation. She notes that other Implementations Groups are doing so already.

MEMBER COMMENTS

ADJOURNED

Meeting adjourned at 11:53 a.m.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, June 16th, 2015

10:00am to 12:00pm

CASA Training Room at The Village

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Santa Ana, CA, 92705