

Minutes of the Meeting  
Supportive Housing Commission  
2 p.m. Tuesday, January 15, 2008

**Attended:** Suzanne Breier, Corey Hose, Paula John, Joan Lawrence, Jim Marks, Anne McDevitt, Tony Perez, Martha Rasmus, Jeff Seider, James Tarantino, Rochell Williams, Keyatta Yamel, Martha Brown, Jim Hill, Jim Mathy, Steve Falek, Jessica Shriver

Martha Brown gave an introduction of the City County Supportive Housing Commission and introduced Mayor Tom Barrett and County Executive Scott Walker.

Mayor Tom Barrett noted the leadership of Martha Brown and Jill Hill in the Supportive Housing Commission. The task of the group needs to continue to keep city and county policy makers focused on special housing needs.

County Executive Scott Walker gave a welcome to the group. He discussed the specific challenges that were noted in the series of articles in the Journal Sentinel relating to housing, and noted that he and Mayor Barrett are making the long term commitment to housing. He thanked the group for their good work.

Jim Hill stated to be delighted to be part of this group for the last couple of year and wished to continue the progress of special needs housing in the community.

Martha Brown stated that the legislation that established the commission also established the make-up of the body. The legislation requires that the membership include representatives of the City Council, County Board, advocacy agencies, Continuum of Care, business, citizens, philanthropic community and city and county staff all need to be represented.

The group started introductions. Jim Marks of the Greater Milwaukee Committee stated that the philanthropic community has a strong interest in housing and commended the actions that have already been taken.

Rochelle Williams from SDC commented on the need for improved housing for those experiencing AODA issues or have a mental illness. Supportive services need to be funded along with the housing.

Kenyatta Yamel from Our Space talked about his experience in being homeless with a mental illness and the need for continued support for this population and their housing needs.

Paula John talked about the mentally ill populations and the continued need for more appropriate, supportive housing.

Suzanne Breier gave her experience in housing as a member of the Milwaukee Common Council. She discussed the lack of housing and neighborhood problems.

Martha Rasmus from Mental Health American (formerly the Mental Health Association) discussed the 77-year history of the organization and its involvement with housing for those experiencing a mental illness. The organization also has a special interest in supporting parents in the community that are living with a mental illness.

Tony Perez from the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee discussed the current strategies for improving housing and the difficulties that some advocates face. He discussed the necessary finances needed for improved housing and also stated an appreciation of the lessons that the community has learned so far.

Sharon Robinson of the City of Milwaukee applauded the Mayor and County Executive and the Special Needs Housing Action Team.

Cory Hoze, Milwaukee County, discussed the programs available in the community and the need for continued collaboration from all entities.

Anne Devitt, consumer volunteer, discussed landlords and abusive police personnel and the need for links to services to stabilize those with a mental illness.

Joan Lawrence, Our Space, discussed her 20-year experience in mental health services and the collaborative between Our Space and Red Cross with the Empowerment Village.

Jeff Seider, Continuum of Care representative, discussed the CoC as a planning body to end homelessness. The CoC is in the process of developing a ten year plan to end homelessness. Jeff stated he was excited to be part of the group.

Jim Tarantino, Senior Housing Real Estate Developer, discussed the role of the developer in special needs housing. He described his firm's involvement in developing supportive housing and emergency housing.

Martha Brown thanked everyone.

The next item was the selection of a Chair and Vice Chair. Kenyatta Yamel volunteered for the Chair position. Jim Marks made the motion; Martha Rasmus seconded the motion. No one opposed. Motion passes.

James Tarantino was nominated for Vice Chair. Tony Perez made motion. Martha Rasmus seconded the motion. Motion passes, no one opposed.

Martha Brown discussed the Special Needs Housing Action Team Report. She pointed out the sections of the report that relate to the goals and mission of the Supportive Housing Commission. Jim Marks moved approval of the principles and goals for the

Commission as described in the report. Kenyatta Yamel seconded. No one opposed. Motion passes.

Martha Brown and Jim Hill gave a progress report regarding the work of the City/County Special Needs Housing Action Team and activities that have occurred since the SNHAT delivered its report to the Mayor and County Executive in summer 2007. Among the highlights:

- Milwaukee County has established an improved quality control system for special needs housing referrals.
- The City of Milwaukee has established a Housing Trust Fund that will provide some resources for special needs housing.
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- Four supportive housing projects are either under construction or proposed in Milwaukee:
  - United House, developed by Cardinal Capital with United Christian Church, is now under construction at 25<sup>th</sup>/Center, and expected to open in August 2008.
  - The Guest House, in partnership with Heartland Housing Alliance, will break ground in spring 2008 on a 24-unit supportive housing apartment building at 12<sup>th</sup>/Highland.
  - Mercy Housing Lakefront is seeking Low Income Housing Tax Credits to convert the former Johnston Community Health Center into supportive housing.
  - Cardinal Capital has proposed to construct Empowerment Village on a site at 6<sup>th</sup>/Rosedale. This project would be a partnership with Our Space and the American Red Cross Safe Haven program.

The group discussed a possible funding opportunity from the Mac Arthur Foundation relating to affordable housing, and encouraged the City and County to pursue it for a supportive housing project involving the Berryland veterans housing development.

The group established its next meeting date: **8:30 am Tuesday, April 22, 2008.**

Minutes taken by Jessica Shriver