

DRAFT -- DRAFT
Milwaukee City/County Commission on Supportive Housing
Hillside Family Resource Center
May 18, 2010 – 10:00 a.m.

Attending: Robert Berlan, Suzanne Breier, Martha Brown, Lynne DeBruin, Paula N. John, Kari Lerch, James Mathy, Tony Perez, Ken Schmidt, James Tarantino, and Sandra White (for Rochelle Williams).

Call to order: Jim Tarantino chaired the meeting, and called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

Action Item: Review and approval of the April 27, 2010 meeting minutes. Paula John moved that the minutes of the April 27, 2010 meeting be approved. Sue Breier seconded the motion. All in favor.

Discussion Item: Role of Commission in advising the Commissioner of City Development regarding service plans for proposed supportive housing facilities.

Martha Brown began by stating the purpose of this special meeting of the commission, and provided a handout with some background information on the City of Milwaukee zoning ordinance as it relates to Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). Changes have been proposed for two design standards that have been problematic for PSH – density and parking. The proposed change would establish PSH as a ‘use’ within the zoning ordinance, which would include its own set of design standards, allowing for greater density and fewer parking spaces.

Currently, supportive housing projects that seek a variance from the density and parking standards in the zoning ordinance must have a hearing before the Board of Zoning Appeals. If the zoning change is adopted, the revised standards would be permitted as a matter of right, as long as the proposed building met the definition of Permanent Supportive Housing. There would no longer be a BOZA public hearing process.

Along with zoning changes, the City/County Commission on Supportive Housing is being asked to consider a new advisory role. When a new PSH development is proposed, the Commission would provide advice to the Commissioner of the Department of City Development (DCD) regarding the quality of on-site services for residents. The Commission would review the service arrangements for the proposed building, and send a letter to the DCD Commissioner with its recommendation. The Commissioner makes the final decision on whether or not a project meets the requirements.

As part of the zoning changes, several definitions are being revised or newly proposed, including that for Permanent Supportive Housing, which must be approved by the city attorney before the proposal can be presented to the Common Council: ***Permanent Supportive Housing means an unlicensed multi-family dwelling that provides on-site services that assist tenants who are disabled or at risk of homelessness to live independently.***

There will be several other zoning changes recommended to support the development of housing that serves individuals who are disabled and at risk of homelessness. All will be the subject of public hearings before the City Plan Commission and Zoning Neighborhoods and Development Committee of the Common Council later this year.

Commission members noted their preference that PSH developers be required to hold some kind of community meeting early on to inform neighbors of the plans for their development.

Discussion:

Lynne DeBruin asked what oversight would be in place to ensure continuation of quality supportive services. The commission agreed this was not their role; rather, to advise the Commissioner of City Development on appropriate service plan packages, and provide letters of recommendation on permanent supportive housing facilities. Tony commented that it is a city/county issue. Currently there is no oversight mechanism in place.

Jim Tarantino commented that the commission's role is to ensure industry standards are defined. Jim Mathy added that he will work with Martha's group on best practices.

The discussion then moved to the process for new standards. Jim Mathy suggested that language in current County contracts with service providers and Shelter Plus Care contracts would be a good resource to define quality services. Ken advised reviewing the housing regulations through the CoC.

The commission discussed tax credits and WHEDA oversight over the quality of service model and income requirements. Jim Tarantino noted that if services aren't appropriate it leads to other compliance issues. Paula pointed out the importance of including quality medical services in the model. Ken Schmidt commented that funding for support services is an issue for all providers, and the services are generally supported by a combination of government grants and fundraising. He and other members noted the importance of fundraising, which helps ensure quality services. He also noted the current statewide initiative to have the state include support services for PSH in its budget.

Lastly, the discussion moved to the proposed review process, and whether it would require more meeting time to conduct the reviews. After input from members, Jim Mathy stated that it probably would not, given that it would be hard to fund more than two projects per year through the tax credit process. As a follow-up from the previous meeting, Martha stated she talked with the city attorney about using email for time sensitive issues requiring Commission approval, and was informed it would not be acceptable.

Lynne DeBruin moved that the City/County Commission on Supportive Housing adopt the role of advising the Commissioner of City Development regarding service plans for proposed permanent supportive housing facilities. Bob Berlan seconded the motion. All in favor.

Jim Tarantino stated that the next meeting of the commission, July 20, 2010, will focus on industry standards, the process for conducting reviews and draft letters of recommendation. Baseline information and standards for services for each of the major funding programs will be used to start the discussion, and Jim Mathy will send additional website information to members before the next meeting.

Adjournment. At this time, Jim Tarantino entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sue Breier made the motion. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Meeting minutes taken by Donna Martin.