

City/County Supportive Housing Commission
Cherry Court Housing Development
October 15, 2009 10:00 a.m.

Attending: Bob Berlan, Tony Perez, Rochell Williams, Suzanne Breier, Steve Mahan, Lisa Jo Marks, Paula John, Jim Tarantino, Jan Wilberg, Jim Mathy, Kenyatta Yamel, Jessica Shriver, Martha Brown

Jim Tarantino chaired the meeting in Kenyatta Yamel's absence. Kenyatta Yamel arrived a few minutes after the meeting started.

Review and Approval of July 28, 2009 Meeting Minutes. Suzanne Breier moved approval of the minutes. Bob Berlan seconded. All in favor.

Supportive Housing Project Updates: Martha Brown provided the following updates on supportive housing projects:

Johnston Center Residences – 1230 W. Grant St.

- 91 units in a renovated building (former Johnston Community Health Clinic) and a new addition.
- Closed sale on property
- Interior work underway
- Expected occupancy late 2010

Washington Park Apartments – 39th/Lisbon

- 24 units in a new building, including 10 units for families in which a parent is struggling with mental illness.
- Support services provided by United Methodist Children's Services.
- Construction ongoing.
- Expected occupancy: Early 2010
- Milwaukee County will provide shelter plus care vouchers for some of the units

Empowerment Village (1525 W. National Avenue and 525 West Lincoln)

- Possible 2009 Ground Breaking
- Secured Tax Credits
- Received funding from the Milwaukee Housing Trust Fund.
- Anticipate fall 2009 groundbreaking.

Veterans Manor (35th/Wisconsin Avenue)

- 52 units in new building.
- Tax Credits Secured.
- Environmental issues resolved.
- Possible 2009 groundbreaking
- \$550,000 CDBG stimulus grant

2500 West Fond du Lac-St. Ben's/Heartland

- 38 units new construction
- Tax Credits secured
- 12 Shelter Plus Care Units, 11 BHD consumers, 15 affordable housing units.

Tax Credits: Martha Brown provided information on the use of WHEDA tax credits for supportive housing projects. In 2010, 10% of WHEDA's tax credit allocation will be set aside for

supportive housing. In 2009, all projects that drew tax credits from the supportive housing set-aside were in the city of Milwaukee.

Point in Time Survey: Jan Wilberg discussed the Point in Time Survey, conducted by the Continuum of Care. The survey is a count of the homeless in the community, conducted every two years as required by the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development. The 2009 survey was conducted over a 24-hour period the last weekend in January. Volunteers contacted as many homeless people as could be located, both in shelters and on the streets, and administered a survey instrument. The survey counted 1,660 adults and children who were homeless on January 28, 2009. This number includes both sheltered and unsheltered individuals, and does not include people who are doubling up or living in sub-standard housing units. A summary of survey data is appended to these minutes.

10-Year Plan to End Homelessness: Jan Wilberg gave an update about the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, being developed by the Milwaukee Continuum of Care. The plan is nearly completed. There are four work groups that completed the work of developing goals. The work groups are Prevention and Emergency Services, Employment, Behavioral Health and Support Services, and Permanent Housing. The plan focused on national best practices and implementing those best practices locally. Some of the highlights on the plan are Project Homelessness Connect, creating access to employment systems and the Housing First permanent supportive housing projects. A brief description of the plan is appended to these minutes.

Discussion: Kenyatta Yamel asked if CVI was involved in the point in time. Jan Wilberg commented that CVI was involved in the point in time. Bob Berlan emphasized the need for the media to become aware of the Point In Time. Steve Mahan suggested that the plan be put in front of the Common Council and the County Board.

A discussion started about the permanent housing section of the 10 year plan and a possible shift in how the community funds projects. Steven Mahan discussed the current use of HOME dollars and Community Housing Development Organizations and how these funds could possibly do more with permanent supportive housing for the homeless. Jan stated that that the plan should be complete by the end of November. Jim Mathy also stated that the plan examines NIMBYISM and permanent supportive housing. It was also noted that a group will be presenting information about the Plan to the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.

ARRA Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing: Jim Mathy, Steve Mahan and Jessica Shriver presented on HPRR funds available through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. According to Jim Mathy, Milwaukee County used its \$712,000 grant to provide security deposits, short-term rent vouchers, and case management to homeless individuals with behavioral health needs. Steve Mahan and Jessica Shriver discussed the City of Milwaukee's \$6.9 million allocation. The funds were divided into Rapid Rehousing and Homelessness Prevention. Rapid Rehousing developed into tracks that rapidly rehouse families, single individuals and young adults age 18-24. There are also funds available to help with homelessness prevention and legal services for those at risk of homelessness. There are several agencies that are involved in the collaborative effort between the City of Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Continuum of Care in developing a plan that meets the needs of the community. It's hoped that 600 people will be served with these funds. The City of West Allis also has a \$575,000 allocation of ARRA HPRR funds.

Discussion: Steve Mahan stated that the community needs to examine ways to sustain funds after the three years.

Update on 2010 County Budget: Mary Jo Marks commented on the DHHS budget. The County Executive's final 2010 budget maintained the 2009 level of funding for housing and homeless assistance and prevention. Martha Brown presented the letter written on behalf of the commission to the County Executive regarding initial reports that funding for these purposes would be cut in 2010.

MOTION: To direct Martha to draft a letter to the Milwaukee County Board, urging supervisors to vote in favor of the BHD housing funding in the budget. Suzanne Breier made the motion. Bob Berlan seconded. All in favor.

Discussion: A discussion started about the budget process. It starts in May or June. Projection is discussed. In September the committees meet and there are hearings to discuss the budget. The County Executive can also veto the budget.

Mental Health Parity Bill: Martha discussed the bill that will be introduced in both houses of the State Legislature, requiring the health insurance policies provide comparable levels of coverage for both physical and mental health services.

MOTION: To direct Martha to draft a letter in support of the parity bill to send to State legislators. Paula John made the motion; Kenyatta Yamel seconded. All in favor.

Role of Consumers in Supportive Housing Advocacy: Kenyatta Yamel discussed the need of consumers to be active in every level of developing supportive housing. It is important that consumers take an active role in meetings and the planning process of supportive housing developments. The developments should also have a peer supportive element in them. Consumers also should be encouraged to participate in all levels of advocacy from voting to talking to groups about their story of homelessness. Consumers also should be part of boards when ever possible.

Discussion: Martha Brown noted that there are two consumers on the Supportive Housing Commission Board.

Bylaws: Martha presented draft bylaws for the commission. Because several people had left the meeting by this point, Martha suggested postponing the discussion and vote until January so more commissioners were present. Suzanne Breier made the motion. Jim Tarantino seconded. All in favor.

Appreciation to Jim Hill: The Commission members asked that Martha draft a letter from the Commission to thank Jim Hill for his work while he served as Milwaukee County's director of housing.

Next meeting: The next meeting of the Commission on Supportive Housing will be at 10 am Tuesday, January 5th, at Prairie Apartments, 1218 W. Highland Ave.

Homelessness in Milwaukee: 2009

Results of the January 28, 2009, Point in Time Survey of Milwaukee's Homeless Citizens

Purpose:

1. Satisfy HUD requirement to conduct a biennial census.
2. Collect data for needs assessment, program planning, and public education.

Who was counted: HUD requires that we count both **sheltered and unsheltered homeless**. In other words, we count people living in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs (sheltered) as well as people living on the street or in places not fit for human habitation (unsheltered). Sheltered persons are reached through the Continuum of Care network of service providers. Unsheltered persons are reached by a cadre of volunteers who seek out homeless people in a variety of 'known locations'. Included in the count are homeless adults and children, however, only adults were interviewed. A total of 919 homeless adults were interviewed for the Point in Time.

How the count was conducted: Milwaukee's count meets a very **high standard**. Each adult counted as homeless is determined through interview to have NO permanent place to live and, if unsheltered, to have NOT spent the previous night in a shelter or transitional housing program. HUD requires that the Point in Time be conducted in a **single 24-hour period** during the last week of January. This Point in Time was conducted January 28, 2009. Both sheltered and unsheltered homeless are counted via face to face interview. This year, **41 organizations and 70 volunteer interviewers** participated in the Point in Time.

What questions were asked: We use an interview instrument based on the City of Denver's survey and recommended by HUD as a **best practice**. Questions include basic demographics, reasons for homelessness, length and frequency of homelessness, education and employment status, disability status, government benefits utilization, and unmet needs. The survey instrument is completed in a face to face interview with the interview reading the questions and recording answers. This year, one open-ended question was included: "What do you think is the ONE THING that could end homelessness in Milwaukee?"

How surveys were analyzed: Completed surveys were scanned by the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research at UWM; data analysis was conducted by CUIR researcher Scott Davis in collaboration with the Continuum of Care staff. Frequency distributions and cross-tabulations were conducted; a chi-square test was performed to examine associations between variables. Results were compiled in the report, "Homelessness in Milwaukee 2009."

2009 Results and Comparison to 2007 Five Key Findings

1. **Increase in homelessness:** A total of 1,660 homeless adults and children were counted in 2009 compared to 1,470 in 2007, an increase of 13% in two years. Homeless respondents tended to be homeless fewer times in the past three years but for longer

- periods. This year, 9 out of 10 homeless for more than a month; over a third homeless for over a year.
2. **Change in demographics:** This year, homeless adults were more likely to be older (41-60), male, and single with no children than in 2007. There was no change in race/ethnic origin or veteran status. As in 2007, the incidence of homelessness drops significantly at age 61+. Most had high school diplomas; few were employed.
 3. **Employment-related causes:** Unemployment and low wages were cited by nearly half of respondents as the reason for their homelessness, followed by health/mental health, family/relationship issues, housing-related problems, and finally institution-related, e.g. foster care, jail/prison.
 4. **Prevalence of disabilities:** Most respondents indicated they had or had been told they had one or more disabilities, i.e. mental illness, physical disability, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, developmental/learning disability, HIV/AIDS or other. Incidence of mental illness and developmental disability/learning disability increased between 2007 and 2009.
 5. **Getting help:** Most respondents were receiving some kind of government benefit; top benefits: food stamps, GAMP/BadgerCare Plus, SSI/SSDI, and Medicaid. Biggest unmet needs: help finding work and housing.

At a Glance Important Comparisons

Sheltered and Unsheltered (81%/19%)

1. The sheltered population is significantly younger than the unsheltered; unsheltered homeless tend to be older, single with no children, male, and to have been homeless 5+ times in past 3 years.
2. Unsheltered adults were significantly more likely to cite employment issues as cause for their homelessness and much less likely to cite other common reasons.
3. This population had a much lower rate of government benefit utilization and was more likely to indicate unmet needs in a variety of key areas, i.e. work, permanent housing, shelter, food.

Female and Male (40%/60%)

1. Women tended to be younger, African American, single parents with children, and in shelter.
2. Women were more likely to cite family breakup, abuse/violence, having been asked to leave where they were staying, eviction, high housing and utility costs, and lost benefits as the reasons for homelessness. Men were more likely to cite employment issues.
3. Benefit utilization was greater among homeless women compared to men but two-thirds of both groups identified service gaps although specifics varied.

Disabled and Non-Disabled (74%/26%)

(Note: Definition included respondents who self-identified as having or having been told they had: mental illness, physical disability, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, developmental disability/learning disability, HIV/AIDS, or other or indicated they were receiving SSI/SSDI.)

1. Disabled homeless adults were significantly older than non-disabled adults, more likely to be veterans, more likely to be Caucasian, single with no children and sheltered.
2. Disabled homeless adults were homeless more often and for longer periods of time; 40% had a current episode of homelessness lasting one year or more compared to 24% of non-disabled adults.
3. Benefit utilization was greater among disabled adults but the same proportion reported service gaps.

Veterans and Non-Veterans (18%/82%)

1. Nearly all homeless veterans were age 41 or older compared to half of homeless non-veterans.
2. Veterans were much more likely to cite unemployment, foreclosure and substance abuse as the reasons for homelessness; relative to substance abuse, veterans were 2.5 times more likely to cite this reason compared to non-veterans.
3. Homeless veterans significantly better educated – their high school graduate rate was much higher as was the incidence of post-high school education and training.

ONE THING: *Understanding of people in poverty, education and training programs provided to everyone who wants it, people coming together to make more jobs and low-income housing, more opportunities for felons, large influx of money and major cultural changes towards homeless people, a better spiritual understanding, stop landlords from evicting families especially with children, help people with benefits (SSI) get places to stay, more jobs, if people would have a better understanding of homelessness and what we deal with daily.*

For more information about the Point in Time Survey, contact Janice Wilberg, Ph.D., Wilberg Community Planning, LLC, at jwilberg@wi.rr.com.

For more information about the Milwaukee Continuum of Care, contact Jessica Shriver, CoC Coordinator, at jessicas@communityadvocates.net.