



Tri-City Joint Mayors' Task Force on Homelessness
Rochester Community Center, Conference Room 1
150 Wakefield Street
Rochester, NH 03867
January 17, 2019
6:00 PM

MAYORS

Chairman
Jeremy Hutchinson

Mayor Caroline McCarley
Mayor Karen Weston
Mayor Dana Hilliard

Vice Chair
Marcia Gasses

Rochester Members

Kila Downum

Rev. Eliza Tweedy

Jeremy Hutchinson

Dover Members

Phyllis Woods

Betsey Andrews Parker

Andrew Howard

Marcia Gasses

Somersworth Members

Todd Marsh

Laura Hogan

Rick Michaud

Dina Gagnon

Alternate (Dover):
Lindsey Williams

Homeless Liaison
Terra Stewart

Survival Shelter Sub-Task Group	Others Present
Marcia Gasses	Randy Heller, Rochester Elks Lodge
Todd Marsh	human, Rochester resident
Andrew Howard	George Maglaras, County Commissioner
	Dave Carpenter, Dover Planning Department
	Tory Jennison, IDN
	Don McCullough, Rochester
	Paige Farmer, GSCTEH

MINUTES**1. Call to Order**

Chairman Hutchinson called the meeting to order at 6:11 PM.

2. Roll Call

Cassie Givara, Rochester Deputy City Clerk, took the roll call. The following members were present: Kila Downum, Laura Hogan, Todd Marsh, Rick Michaud, Terra Stewart. Eliza Tweedy, Phyllis Woods, Jeremy Hutchinson, Mayor Weston, and Mayor Hilliard

The Following members were excused/absent: Betsey Andrews-Parker, Dina Gagnon, Andrew Howard, Lindsey Williams, and Mayor McCarley.

Chairman Hutchinson welcomed the newest member of the Task Force, Kila Downum from Rochester. Ms. Downum is a Capacity Building Specialist at SOS Recovery as of October 1, 2018.

3. Clergy Remarks – Rev. Eliza Tweedy

Reverend Eliza Tweedy of the First Church Congregational in Rochester gave opening remarks. The Reverend inquired, after almost a year following the inception of the Task Force and working towards a solution for homelessness, how this may have changed the thought process of the members; if it brings about a greater awareness of what our homeless residents face every day in the frigid temperatures.

Terra Stewart spoke about the large amount of donations which she had received after a supply list had been distributed at the last Task Force meeting. There is currently a discussion regarding obtaining a storage unit as a central location to store overflow and where organizations needing items can go gather supplies.

There was a brief discussion regarding other locations where donations and supplies could be picked up for those in need. Mayor Weston inquired if there was a drop-off location in Somersworth. It was noted that there was a one-time event at the high school in Somersworth, but not a permanent drop-off location.

4. Update: Current Statistics on Homelessness in Strafford County

A report was given by both Todd Marsh of Rochester Welfare and Tory Jennison of the Integrated Delivery Network updating the statistics on those in the Tri-City area awaiting housing or shelter. It was noted that Cross Roads House is on overflow at this point, and those being accepted are using available floor space.

Terra Stewart inquired about the sheltering of homeless residents who own dogs. Ms. Stewart related that having a dog which is not allowed in shelters is a deterrent to accepting shelter herself. Kila Downum agreed that when she was homeless, the inability to find a service which would accept her dog was a barrier for her in accepting shelter.

Ms. Jennison stated that there are service organizations which partner with Cochecho Valley Humane Society to provide temporary shelter for pets of homeless residents while they are unable to care for them. There was a reticence expressed by some in Committee at leaving a beloved pet in the care of a shelter and having concerns that the pet could be mistakenly adopted out. Mr. Marsh stated that those is welfare hear this frequently; homeless residents who are reluctant to accept shelter or turn it down due to pet restrictions.

5. **Public Input (3-minute maximum and/or submit a statement)**

Chairman Hutchinson invited members of the public to address the Commission.

Randy Heller, Rochester Elks Lodge, spoke about the "Vouchers For Veterans" program (vouchersforveterans.org). This seasonal program provides military veterans, regardless of their housing status, with \$20 vouchers to be used at local farmer's markets on fresh produce and meats.

human, Rochester resident, thanked the Strafford County Commissioners for stepping in and opening up a shelter for the recent cold weather and snow.

6. **Approval of Minutes**

6.1 **Tri-City Mayors' Joint Task Force Meeting December 6, 2018 *consideration for approval***

Chairman Hutchinson **MOVED** to approve the minutes from the December 6, 2018 meeting of the Tri-City Mayors' Task Force. Eliza Tweedy seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous voice vote.

7. **Communications from the Mayors**

Mayor Weston spoke about the warming shelter which the County Commissioners had opened at the Strafford County Complex on January 12. Mayor Weston stated that on her visit, the shelter appeared very well-organized and well-staffed.

Mayor Hilliard stated that the Mayors from the three cities had discussed with Commissioner Maglaras a plan to meet regularly with the County. It was discussed how the Cities can move forward and try to take the lead on a warming shelter and dealing with homelessness; with the support of the Commissioners, the cities hope to collaborate on a solution and other communities can follow the lead

George Maglaras, Strafford County Commissioner, reported that the shelter had gone very smoothly. There were some minor hiccups with transportation, but overall everything went very well.

Commissioner Maglaras emphasized the need for the Tri Cities to have a serious conversation about long-term solutions and opening their own shelters. He suggested that these shelters could essentially be warming centers in existing facilities which are already being heated 24/7, such as community centers. The shelters do not have to provide additional services. This

would provide an opportunity for the homeless population to receive food and warmth as a short-term solution during cold weather emergencies and without much cost to the cities. Commissioner Maglaras said that the County would be willing to assist with training of volunteers and offering wraparound services. The County would also be willing to provide support to the Municipalities if they do coordinate and develop a plan to open a temporary shelter.

7.1 Discussion: Nomination of Task Force member for vacant Rochester position.

No Discussion

8. Communications from the Task Force Chairs

Chairman Hutchinson stated that he had reached out to the Rochester City Council, Mayor and City Manager and urged that the issue of homelessness and a seasonal shelter be kept as an item of highest level of priority for this fiscal year.

The Chairman suggested that it would be helpful for citizens in all communities to reach out to their elected officials to express support for the Master Plan and the efforts the Task Force is trying to spur on in the Cities to combat homelessness. The Chairman reported that he has asked Rochester to identify at least one of their vacant City-owned properties which could be used as a temporary shelter. The proposed Salvation Army Shelter does not appear to be a viable option currently.

There was a discussion held in Committee regarding the next Task Force workshop and the draft Master Plan. The workshop meeting will take place at Community Action Partnership at 577 Central Avenue, Suite 10, Dover NH on Thursday January 31 at 6:00 PM to finish workshopping the remaining strategies and filling in the gaps.

Dave Carpenter gave an update on the progress being made on the Transportation strategy of the Master plan and the research and work being done with service agencies to fill in the gaps on this strategy.

The Chairman suggested that the next regular meeting of the Task Force be focused on planning the draft Master Plan legal review for each City and the subsequent public input, then finally the presentation which will need to be made to each City Council.

It was questioned whether or not the Draft Master plan was a public document. Chairman Hutchinson stated that the draft is not intended to represent decisions or actions of the commission and in its current form it is not a public document. It is a work in progress to stay in committee until it is in a form suitable for release. It was stated that, where needed, outside assistance can be brought in for editing and formatting.

There was a discussion in Committee on the timeline for preparing the draft master plan and getting it to the Councils for approval. The final strategies will be workshopped on January 31. Following the workshop, the final edits can be done leading up to the February 8 regular Task Force meeting. The second draft can then be sent to a legal review for 7-10 days in mid-February and then scheduled to go to the three Councils in early March for their first review. Ideally the

Master Plan can then come back to each Council for second reading and adoption in late March 2019.

Mayor Hilliard suggested that Chairman Hutchinson make a presentation to each Council and that all three Mayors appear at each meeting to show support for the presentation. There was a discussion regarding how the Master Plan could be adopted after changes had been recommended by each respective Council and how the three cities can move forward collaboratively.

Mayor Hilliard recommended that the Task Force start considering what the "post" Master Plan Commission will look like; if the Commission is asking for money, then they will need the Mayors to appoint a body to oversee the expenditures and ensure the fidelity of the Master Plan. The Mayors can consider appointing members to oversee this portion of the plan moving forward. Mayor Hilliard suggested structuring this aspect directly into the Master Plan.

Mayor Hilliard stated his intention to have a separate workshop meeting with Somersworth Councilors focusing solely on the Master Plan and to answer any questions and address concerns before it goes to a formal meeting. He suggested that the other two cities consider doing something similar.

9. Update: Strafford County Extreme Cold Weather Shelter - Tory Jennison

Ms. Jennison gave an update on the temporary cold weather shelter which had been opened on the Strafford County Complex from January 12th through January 14th.

The shelter housed 7 Rochester residents, 7 Dover residents, 2 Somersworth residents and 1 resident from Portsmouth.

Mr. Marsh reported that Rochester Welfare had two homeless residents re-engage after a lapse in service following the closing of the shelter.

The shelter was said to have been very welcoming and friendly. The temporary residents were treated with empathy and compassion and the process ran very smoothly.

Mayor Weston reported that she had shared the announcement of the Shelter opening on Facebook and her post was then shared over 20 times. There was a discussion about starting a Task Force group Facebook page as a central location for disseminating information to not only the members, but the public and City officials.

10. Review: Draft Master Plan

10.1 Additional Strategy for Master Plan: "Engaging the Community to End Homelessness" *consideration for approval*

Chairman Hutchinson **MOVED** to adopt the additional strategy to be added to the Master Plan "Engaging the Community to End Homelessness." Mayor Hilliard seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous voice vote.

There was a brief discussion regarding ways to engage the community to get more people involved. The emergency cold weather shelter which was opened in Rochester last winter was due in large part to community involvement; volunteers, donations, supplies.

This additional strategy will be workshopped and filled out more at the January 31 workshop meeting at CAP in Dover.

The Committee discussed potential ways to engage the community, such as community events downtown and family events.

Ms. Jennison pointed out that the addition Strategy will contain the multiple definitions of "community." The housing experts are a community, the residents themselves are a community, etc. There will be a couple recommendations workshopped on how to convene and engage the different types of communities.

11. Report from Cold Weather Shelter subcommittee – Meeting January 10, 2019.

Todd Marsh reported that the Cold Weather subcommittee had met on January 10. There were staff members from SOS Recovery, Tri-City Co-Op, My Friend's Place, and City of Rochester Community Development. Discussed at this meeting was a tentative general plan for a seasonal low-barrier shelter primarily for homeless single individuals. The sub-committee discussed a potential collaboration with the County to provide the facility for such a shelter, but to be managed and overseen financially and operationally by an existing organization or shelter.

The County Commissioners office indicated they would be receptive to discussing the prospect of such a shelter.

Mr. Marsh stated that providing a shelter for homeless single residents would free up needed space in existing shelters for families who are often housed at motels at the cost to the municipalities.

Mr. Marsh said that initially, the Tri Cities would be the primary funding source for this proposed shelter, but not the sole funders. The shelter could serve as a model for other shelters, but not a long term solution. Due to the municipal budget timelines and potential appropriations, the shelter plan would need to move forward quickly.

Mr. Marsh indicated that the next meeting of the cold weather shelter sub-committee would be Wednesday January 24, 2019 at Tri-City Co-Op.

Mr. Marsh stated that as the Rochester Welfare director, he has proposed to the Rochester City Manager and Council the approval for \$20,000 in the welfare budget for shelter operations and encouraged other municipalities to do the same.

12. Affordable Housing Strategy

Terra Stewart expressed that what she felt is missing in the area are dorm-like boarding houses for those who can't afford other types of housing. There could be room and board in

exchange for maintenance and cleaning of the boarding house for those who do not have any other income.

Commissioner Maglaras addressed the idea of boarding houses as someone with experience on planning boards and with experience in housing for many years, The Commissioner stated that the municipalities have zoned themselves out of allowing boarding house type establishments over time. To address this and to allow for more affordable housing, there would need to be adjustments/amendments to current ordinances. The Commissioner spoke about the cities potentially developing into their master plans a stipulation that a percentage of their housing stock would be affordable and define what affordable means. The Commissioner also expanded upon Section 8 and supportive Housing and how the definition of affordability has evolved over the past 30 years.

Paige Farmer, Greater Seacoast Coalition to End Homelessness, addressed the difference between affordable housing for those with low income and "deeply affordable" housing for those with little to no income.

13. Other

No Discussion

14. Closing Public Input

The floor was re-opened for the commission to accept public comment.

Terra Stewart inquired when the Strafford County Complex would reopen their shelter. The forecast is calling for a significant amount of snow and very cold temperatures in the upcoming week. Ms. Jennison stated that the County Commissioners were planning to meet the following day to determine if and when they would re-open the shelter at the County Complex.

A resident inquired if it would be possible for the attorneys of all 3 municipalities to work on the Master Plan legal review together to expedite the process.

human, Rochester resident, suggested that the draft Master Plan be released to the public prior to its first appearance at each City's Council meeting to allow time for review and comment while there was still adequate time for amendments to be made prior to the presentation to the Councils. He also expressed concern that 3 separate legal reviews with different methods may cause confusions when the Master Plan goes to the Councils. If the attorneys were able to work on the legal review together it would be ideal.

Don McCullough, Rochester, thanked Commissioner Maglaras and Ms. Jennison for the work they did opening the shelter on the County Complex. Mr. McCullough also asked the Task Force to stay mindful of the need for shelter and think of the homeless residents in the extreme cold.

Mr. Jennison announced that the County Commissioners would be hosting a Training on Wednesday January 23, 2019 from 6:00 – 8:30 PM for anyone interested in working as shelter

staff. This training is not on the basics and logistics of running a shelter, but rather a conversation on how to work with vulnerable populations requiring a little more TLC during a time of need.

The next regular meeting of the Tri-City Mayors' Task Force will take place on Friday February 8, 2019 and 6:00 PM in the Somersworth Middle School Media Room. This will be an abbreviated meeting lasting one hour.

15. Adjournment

The meeting was **ADJOURNED** at 8:05 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara,
Deputy City Clerk
Rochester