



**Fidelity Committee**  
 of the  
**Tri-City Joint Mayors' Task Force on Homelessness**  
**Somersworth Middle School, Media Room**  
**Somersworth, NH 03878**  
**February 20, 2020**  
**6:00 PM**

**MAYORS**

Mayor Caroline McCarley  
 Mayor Karen Weston  
 Mayor Dana Hilliard

**Rochester Members**

Jeremy Hutchinson  
(chairman)

Barbara Holstein

**Dover Members**

Charles Reynolds

Betsey Andrews Parker

**Somersworth Members**

Todd Marsh

Dina Gagnon

**Others Present:** Lena Nichols, Somersworth Welfare, Julian Long (Rochester Economic Development), Ashley Desrochers.

**MINUTES**

**1. Call to Order**

Chairman Hutchinson called the meeting of the Fidelity Committee to order at 6:03 PM. Rochester Deputy City Clerk Cassie Givara took a silent roll call. Mayor McCarley of Rochester was absent and Mayor Carrier and Betsey Andrews Parker of Dover were excused.

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

No Discussion.

**3. Communications from the Mayors**

Mayor Hilliard spoke to the Committee about the warming centers which have now been opening in Dover, Somersworth and Rochester during the recent cold

weather. He spoke about the need to ensure that the core group of warming center volunteers does not experience burnout and that there are adequate resources available to maintain the quality of care. Mayor Hilliard stated that when the colder weather slows down, the Cities will have an opportunity to re-examine the experiences with warming shelters and determine what worked and what can be done better.

Mayor Hilliard reported that he had a Rollinsford resident reach out to him in regards to potentially using one of her properties for a warming center or shelter. Due to the differences in town/city ordinances and the limits to the Mayor's purview, this proposal was not an item that could move forward at this time. The Mayor did feel that it demonstrated that there are more people becoming aware of the need for shelter solutions and more people wanting to help.

There was a discussion in Committee regarding churches and faith-based organizations stepping up to open warming centers and to feed and house the homeless during the cold months. The committee emphasized the need for the Cities to have an equal part and not to rely on these faith based organization to be the sole solution.

#### **4. Communications from the Chair**

Chairman Hutchinson addressed the committee in regards to the two recent proposals he had submitted before the Rochester City Council. The first proposal being a change to the City of Rochester Zoning Ordinance to allow permitting for temporary use shelters. The Rochester Council accepted the petition to change the ordinance, although it was amended and is still somewhat restrictive; the centers would only be seasonal (cold weather), would be allowed only 3 times a season and only for up to 15 days which do not have to be consecutive. There are also no provisions for type of weather. Chairman Hutchinson expressed that this zoning change will be revisited in the future, but it is a good starting point.

Vice Chair Marsh reported that the City of Rochester had opened 38 Hanson Street in Rochester as a warming center. The center is very low barrier. It is a vacant building which the City has set up with portable heaters and lights as well as portable toilets. There is currently food and water available for those residents using the warming center.

Chairman Hutchinson stated that he hoped to move the Committee in a new direction; away from warming centers and shelters and toward the original plan which was working on strategies from the Master Plan on Homelessness. He suggested the Committee focus on one strategy per meeting and try to develop actionable proposals to go before the respective Councils.

#### **5. Presentation: LEAD (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion) – John Burns**

John Burns, Director of SOS Recovery, presented to the Committee on LEAD (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion) and gave a history of the program which originally started in Seattle in 2011. SOS was able to obtain a grant in 2016 from Open Society Foundations for \$75,000. This grant was mostly for technical assistance in order to get the program up and running in Dover, NH. There are now LEAD programs in both Dover and Farmington. Mr. Burns clarified that the program is not run by SOS, but they provide case management. He emphasized that LEAD is not a recovery based program, but rather a harm reduction model.

Mr. Burns gave an overview of what the LEAD Program entails: It is a pre-arrest, pre-booking diversion which is driven by the police department at the patrolmen level. Officers in the field are able to identify situations where they believe diversion would be beneficial, reach out to LEAD and get the enrollment and assessment started. He spoke about the benefits and cost savings to both police departments, courts and prosecutors by diverting low level offenses from entering the criminal justice system.

Mr. Burns reported that the crimes eligible for diversion are non-violent, "victimless" crimes such as drug sales and possession, and crimes driven by addiction, poverty and homelessness. If there are victims involved in a non-violent crime, the program can still be offered at the victim's discretion. He also discussed the potential of "social contact referrals" where the LEAD program can be offered to individuals without the presence of an offense or charges.

Mr. Burns outlined the structure of LEAD and the oversight of the program including how the case management was handled with homeless residents. He gave data on the maximum number of cases which could be taken on per year as well as the statistics on how LEAD has benefited those involved.

Mr. Burns emphasized the need for full stakeholder buy-in prior to implementation of LEAD in a community and throughout the process. The Police Department, starting with the Chief, would all need to be on board in order for it to work effectively. He spoke about the minimal costs to the police departments participating; the only cost would be the officers involved attending the initial training and certain officials attending monthly meetings. The bulk of the cost of the program is Case Management which is covered through grants.

There was discussion in Committee regarding the process of establishing LEAD in a new Community and what the process would entail. It was decided that this program would be an ongoing agenda item and will be explored further in the future.

## **6. Discussion: "No-Fee ID" Initiative**

Chairman Hutchinson spoke of the other item which has been proposed to the Rochester City Council; the "Lilac City No-Fee ID." It was clarified that this is not a picture ID being issued by the City, but rather a process for homeless Rochester residents to follow in order to obtain their vital records from the City Clerk's Office for the purpose of receiving state ID, housing and other services which require such

records. The Chairman reported that there had been very little resistance to the proposal and it seemed to be met favorably by City officials.

Todd Marsh, Rochester Welfare Director, and Cassie Givara, Rochester Deputy City Clerk, gave a brief overview of how the proposed program would work for their respective departments. Mr. Marsh stated that he wanted to ensure that funding for this program was separate from "general assistance" money which is an obligation by state RSA. This was solved by the funding coming out of the "homeless services" line item of the welfare budget.

Ms. Givara stated that from the City Clerk's office perspective, the process of issuing a vital records was no different within this proposal as it is with any other request; there are still statutory obligations which will need to be fulfilled to verify an applicant's identification. The only difference will be how the money for the process is received. The behind the scenes financial portion of the process would be arranged through the City's Finance department, but she stated that the City Clerk's office does not see any reason why this program can't be implemented without issue.

Mr. Marsh stated that he felt the program had to be relatively low barrier due to the difficulty in verifying or confirming homelessness. He stated that if a client presents as homeless and the welfare department feels it is reasonable to assume the resident is experiencing homelessness in Rochester, then the client can then be referred to the City Clerk's Office without further verification. Mr. Marsh expressed some concern that some homeless residents from other communities may claim homelessness in Rochester in order to obtain their vital records; although this may be alleviated once other communities start implementing similar programs.

Chairman Hutchinson reported that the Rochester City Manager is currently drafting a policy and procedure for the no-fee ID policy which will then come to the City Council for a vote. This will hopefully serve as a model for other communities who would like to implement similar programs.

## **7. Update: Warming Centers**

The Committee discussed temperature triggers for warming center openings. It was stated that private organizations and faith-based communities do not have to adhere to particular guidelines for temperature limits, but rather can open whenever they deem appropriate. Because there is no federally established temperature or weather criteria for warming center openings, every community is tasked with determining their own criteria if they choose to open a warming center with City involvement. The Chairman emphasized the need for some level of predictability and consistency for center openings as far as temperature and weather is concerned; following the end of the winter, the Committee should look into contacting policy experts and developing criteria.

There was a discussion in Committee about warming center volunteers and ensuring there are enough within all three communities to fulfill the need, especially when there is the potential of multiple communities opening warming centers

simultaneously. Mayor Hilliard suggested that once the weather warms up and there is a less pressing need for warming centers, there can be a plan developed ahead of time and the communities can map out a calendar of center openings so the center openings can rotate through the communities on a set schedule.

Mr. Burns noted that there has been more engagement within the homeless community since the regular openings of the warming shelters. Mr. Marsh and representatives from CAPS concurred and stated that they felt it was helpful that there is passive assistance being offered, with help available but nothing being forced.

Chairman Hutchinson suggested the possibility of reaching out to area schools to see if there was any interest in the 18-year old students becoming warming center volunteers. Mayor Hilliard cautioned against approaching high school students due to restrictions, but encouraged the possibility of engaging UNH students. The Committee discussed reaching out to appropriate contacts at UNH and coordinating training with IDN.

The Committee discussed the challenges of getting the word out when warming centers were being opened and how to effectively alert the public and volunteers that the warming centers will be available. It was stated that communication within the homeless community is very effective and spreads throughout the area quickly to the residents. Getting word out to potential volunteers and the rest of the community could use some improvement. There was a discussion on use of social media and government websites for announcements.

## **8. Review of Master Plan Subcommittee Meeting – Betsey Andrews Parker**

It was decided that the discussion of the subcommittee report would be TABLED until the next Fidelity Committee meeting due to Ms. Andrews Parker's absence.

## **9. Other**

Mayor Hilliard reported that Tori Jennison, IDN, would be appearing on an episode of his Somersworth government channel "The Echo" to discuss warming shelters and training. This episode will re-air Citywide and those residents to watch will be able to volunteer for the warming centers thereafter.

The next meeting of the Fidelity Committee will be Thursday March 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM at Somersworth Middle School. The inclement weather reschedule date will be Thursday March 19<sup>th</sup> at the same time and place.

Chairman Hutchinson suggested that Committee members (and contributors) bring ideas on one item from the Master Plan on which policy can be written and brought to the City Councils.

## **10. Closing Public Input**

No Discussion.

## **11. Adjournment**

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Fidelity Committee TCMTF  
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Chairman Hutchinson **ADJOURNED** the meeting of the Fidelity Committee at 7:54 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Cassie Givara, Deputy City Clerk, Rochester