



**Fidelity Committee
of the
Tri-City Joint Mayors' Task Force on Homelessness
Remote Meeting Via Microsoft Teams
December 10, 2020
6:00 PM**

MAYORS

Mayor Caroline McCarley
Mayor Robert Carrier
Mayor Dana Hilliard

Rochester Members

Jeremy Hutchinson
(Chairman)

Barbara Holstein

Dover Members

Charles Reynolds

Betsey Andrews Parker

Somersworth Members

Todd Marsh
(Vice Chairman)

Dina Gagnon

Others Present: Dave Carpenter, Dover Planning. Lindsey Williams, Dover Council. Tory Jennison, Connections for Health. Ashley Desrochers, Strafford County Public Health Network. Dave Balian, new Dover Welfare Director. Julian Long, Rochester Community Development. Paige Farmer, Home for All. Susan Gaston, acting Dover Welfare Director

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Chairman Hutchinson called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM and read the following preamble:

Good Evening, as Chairperson of the Fidelity Committee, I am declaring that an emergency exists and I am invoking the provisions of RSA 91-A:2, III (b). Federal, state, and local officials have determined that gatherings of 10 or more people pose a substantial risk to our community in its continuing efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19. In concurring with their determination, I also find that this meeting is imperative to the continued operation of City government and

services, which are vital to public safety and confidence during this emergency. As such, this meeting will be conducted without a quorum of this body physically present in the same location.

At this time, I also welcome members of the public accessing this meeting remotely. Even though this meeting is being conducted in a unique manner under unusual circumstances, the usual rules of conduct and decorum apply. Any person found to be disrupting this meeting will be asked to cease the disruption. Should the disruptive behavior continue thereafter, that person will be removed from this meeting.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by Roll Call vote.

Let's start the meeting by taking a Roll Call attendance. When each member states their name also please state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to-Know law.

Cassie Givara, Deputy City Clerk of Rochester, took the roll. All members were present except for Dina Gagnon, who was absent. Additionally, Mayor McCarley was present.

2. Public Input

There were no callers on the line or written submissions from the public.

Ashley Desrochers, Strafford County Public Health Network, gave the committee an update on COVID-19. She stated there is increased concern in community spread and emphasized the avoidance of air travel and large indoor gatherings and reiterated the need for hand washing, social distancing, masking, and staying home. She indicated that medical surge in hospitals is forthcoming and urged everyone to be vigilant.

Ms. Desrochers spoke about the upcoming distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine and stated that the state is currently looking for volunteers to carry out both medical and non-medical tasks in relation to the vaccination clinics. Non-medical tasks could include registrations, paperwork, and traffic control. The clinics will be outdoors, and the volunteers will potentially have an opportunity to receive the vaccine sooner due to their assistance. She directed those looking to volunteer to go to www.nhresponds.org, register a new account, then chose COVID-19 and Strafford County.

Chairman Hutchinson stated that the Air Force may be mobilized to help with vaccine distribution and clinics.

3. Communications from the Mayors

Mayor Caroline McCarley from Rochester stated that the mayors toured the facility on Willand Road in Somersworth which is proposed to be used as an emergency cold weather

center. Mayor McCarley stated that for the first 15 days the shelter is operating, it will be open 24/7. Starting in the New Year, the shelter will open for cold weather emergencies as determined by the tri-cities and will offer its own transport van. Mayor McCarley expressed hope that the shelter will work well and stated that it is large enough to house a large amount of people while still adhering to COVID guidelines. Somersworth is scheduled to vote the following week on the change of use in regards to zoning which would be required to allow such a shelter.

Tory Jennison, said that unfortunately they do not currently have the ability to keep the shelter open 24-hours a day. It will likely be a 5:00 PM – 9:00 AM schedule opening on December 20, or slightly earlier if weather necessitates.

There was a brief discussion in the committee on the use of the term “shelter” versus “warming center.”

Chairman Hutchinson read a statement from Mayor Dana Hilliard of Somersworth. Mayor Hilliard stated that Somersworth has formed a commission to spearhead the “Mayors’ Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness.” The commission will start putting together strategies in January and will report back to the Fidelity Committee with their work. Mayor McCarley stated that she was meeting with Mayor Hilliard and Mayor Carrier to discuss making this a tri-city collaborative initiative.

Mayor Hilliard also said that the Recovery Friendly Workplace initiative is on the Somersworth council agenda for January.

4. Communications from the Chairs

Vice Chair Marsh welcomed Dave Balian, the new Dover welfare director and thanked the Dover Welfare team for the work they have been doing while short-staffed.

Vice Chair Marsh said that Rochester welfare has continued to refer clients to the Garrison Hotel shelter in Dover. He stated that the Tri-City area has started to experience an increase in requests for assistance for rent and utilities, but it is still not as high as pre-COVID levels. Mr. Marsh stated that other regions are becoming aware of the efforts of the Tri-City area and they are being looked at as a model. Vice Chair Marsh said that he was appointed to Governor’s Housing Stability Council focusing on homelessness and housing instability.

Chairman Hutchinson inquired if there were any trends in the area indicating increase in food insecurity and if there is any way the Fidelity Committee could get involved to affect change in this area. Betsey Andrews Parker said that normally her organization serves 100,000 meals per year; this year they served 280,000. She said that the food supplies, which in the past had lasted a month, were now running out in 2 weeks. She said it is extremely helpful that the school districts continue to feed children within their jurisdiction for the time being. She expressed concern regarding potential delays in federal funding to assist with food programs.

Tory Jennison said that Connections for Health is coordinating investments in food providers, both volunteer and social service partners, and working on network development. UNH Cooperative Extension has developed a food resource map which can be utilized. She said there is not currently an infrastructure to collect non-food donations and distribute them. She recommended those wanting to assist identify a particular organization to support and to give their donations. Ms. Jennison suggested the Fidelity Committee could look at city policies which make it difficult for social service partners and faith-based organization to serve meals without first making large investments in upgrading their kitchen facilities to restaurant-level. The committee could suggest changes in code requirements and permitting to make feeding efforts less prohibitive financially and logistically; and barring these changes to codes, perhaps the cities could make investments in supporting these organizations financially to make these upgrades.

Charlie Reynolds advised that codes can be changed and exceptions made to allow this type of activity. He suggested the committee develop an outline of the codes which would need to be amended to allow the serving of food; this proposal can then be presented to the respective councils. Chairman Hutchinson noted that he would be meeting with Councilor Paradis from Somersworth on a different item, but they would review the Somersworth and Rochester ordinances to identify areas which could be amended for this purpose and would reach out to Dover councilors as well. Chairman Hutchinson hoped to have an update on the proposal by the next meeting, but acknowledged the process sometimes takes longer while filtering through committees and coming back to Council. He said it will be initiated immediately with suggestions being made to the committee in the next couple months, but the completed proposal would likely come back to the Councils in the spring for action.

Ms. Desrochers said that a recent study showed that those infected with COVID-19 noted an increase in housing insecurity, employment insecurity, and food access issues.

5. Update: Seasonal Shelter/Warming Center

Ms. Andrews Parker clarified that the Garrison Hotel shelter is not for long-term usage, but rather the first stop in the continuum of sheltering. The Willand Pond facility is an emergency stopgap measure for the extreme cold when all other options are full. It is meant to be overnight for the short-term. The intent has always been to address the needs identified over the past 3 winters.

Ms. Andrews Parker addressed the committee regarding the misinformation and rumors in regards to clients being turned away from the shelters when in reality they were referred but did not show up for intake. She encouraged anyone who hears this type of discussion to reach out to CAP so they can ensure the proper channels are followed and the correct assistance is provided.

6. Discussion: Regional data/statistics

Ms. Andrews Parkers reported that the cost to her organization for a single person to stay at the Garrison shelter is \$50 per day; a couple is \$83 per day. A 7-day stay is \$350 for singles and \$581 for a couple, which includes 2 meals per day, the bed, two bus tickets per day, and the day program services. The total intakes to date of unduplicated clients is currently 123 people. 52 have been men, 47 women, 22 have been couples and 1 family with children. They have identified two veterans during this period whom were referred to Easter Seals and Harbor Homes for a more appropriate intake as one as one homeless runaway youth who was referred to a more appropriate program. 32 people were referred to other area shelters. 5 people were placed in substance use treatment. 2 people were placed in the Dube center in Laconia after testing positive for COVID. 11 people have been moved to permanent housing supportive programs. 1 person was placed in mental health treatment and 6 were referred to DHHS for services.

Ms. Andrews Parker reported that 28 people have been temporarily barred from the shelter for non-compliance of rules, substance use, or destructive behavior. These people will be able to seek shelter in the Willand Pond facility if needed. As of December 8th, there were 34 people staying at the Garrison Shelter. Of these people, 11 were from Dover, 13 from Rochester, 5 from Somersworth, 2 from Portsmouth, 2 from Rollinsford, and 1 from Manchester.

7. Discussion: Tri-City joint housing rights resolution

Chairman Hutchinson reiterated that he had an upcoming meeting with Councilor Paradis of Somersworth to discuss this resolution. He stated that they would report back to the Fidelity Committee in the upcoming months. The chairman stated that due to his impending mobilization to assist with vaccine distribution, Vice Chair Marsh would likely be heading the next several meetings while he connects by email periodically.

8. Continued Review of Master Plan

8.1 Strategy 3, Item #6 - Promote criminal record "clearing clinic" and expungements to reduce barriers for housing

Chairman Hutchinson briefly discussed the potential conflicts of the City attorneys assisting with this initiative. He suggested potentially putting out a call through the media and seeing if the committee could source pro bono legal assistance and chose a day post-COVID to hold such an event. Charlie Reynolds advised that it is not necessarily difficult to have records cleared for those eligible, but there is just a particular process which needs to be followed. He spoke about the committee's possible role in determining eligibility and potentially waiving the fee for those unable to afford the process. He stated the committee would need to decide whether they want to move forward, to whom they would open the process, and how the word would be distributed. Chairman Hutchinson discussed the potential of inviting the Rochester City attorney to speak to the committee about the process involved. Mr. Reynolds reported that he had a connection to a lawyer who may be interested in speaking to the Committee. Chairman

Hutchinson suggested discussing this initiative in February for an implementation in late summer or fall.

8.2 Strategy #2 Proposal – Tri-City Planning & Zoning Review

Vice Chair Marsh gave an overview of his proposed initiative. He referred to Strategy 2 of the Master Plan which recommends reviewing zoning and planning policies to increase availability and accessibility of affordable, safe/stable housing and to commit to review barriers and opportunities in zoning and planning to allow this. Vice Chair Marsh recommended the tri-cities' planning departments review the Master Plan strategy 2, collaborate where necessary, and report back to the Fidelity Committee by June 2021 with their findings. Chairman Hutchinson suggested that upon directive from the Mayors' to the planning departments, the planning departments' findings and recommendations could be developed into policy suggestions from the Fidelity Committee to the three city councils.

Dave Carpenter, Dover Planning, recommended that tweaking some of the language so that the intention is clearer for the planners being asked to work on the proposal due to each City having different protocols and practices. Mr. Carpenter stated that he would be willing to assist with the wording.

9. Other

No discussion.

10. Closing Public Input

No discussion.

11. Adjournment

Chairman Hutchinson **ADJOURNED** the Fidelity Committee meeting at 7:13 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara
Deputy City Clerk, Rochester