



Fidelity Committee
of the
Tri-City Joint Mayors' Task Force on Homelessness
Remote Meeting Via Microsoft Teams
February 11, 2021
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. Karen Weston, former Dover Mayor. Dave Balian, Dover Welfare Director.

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Chairman Hutchinson called the meeting to order at 6:02 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 indicated that they were present and alone in the location from which they were connecting except for Dina Gagnon who was present but not audible at the time of the roll call. Additionally, Mayor McCarley of Rochester and Mayor Carrier of Dover were present.

2. Public Input

No discussion.

3. Communications from the Mayors

Mayor Carrier reported that the 13 City Mayors of NH have been meeting monthly for a Zoom call to discuss municipal issues; there are also subcommittees to spearhead writing requests and proposals to the Governor or legislature.

Mayor McCarley stated that she felt the Governor's Council on Housing Stability is making good strides and will be important moving forward in gathering all the finances, resources, services, and data together into one place where it can be accessed and there will be a better understanding on what is and is not working.

Mayor McCarley also thanked CAP and SOS who she stated have done a phenomenal job and have stepped up during the opening of the Willand warming center and facilitated the operation of the center.

4. Communications from the Chairs

Vice Chair Marsh stated that he is a member of one of the subcommittees of the Governor's Council referenced by Mayor McCarley and expressed cautious optimism at the progress being made.

Vice chair Marsh stated that in welfare, they have started seeing an increase in requests for rental assistance. He reported that utility assistance has not become necessary for many due to the flexibility being afforded by the utility companies during COVID. Vice Chair Marsh said that although there has been a surge in requests for rental/mortgage assistance, they have not yet

experienced a larger surge due in large part to the actions of CAP and SOS and their managing of the federal housing relief funds.

5. Update: Warming Center of Strafford County

Betsey Andrews Parker reported that at the most recent activation, the center served 36 clients overnight. She spoke about the upcoming activation occurring once the volunteer and staffing ratio is finalized. Ms. Andrews Parker noted that they have seen a large number of single men in the center which speaks to the need for a men's shelter in the region. She stated that all of the clientele has been repeat visitors who are not able to yet be successful in longer term shelters or housing, some of which are dealing with disabilities and medical issues. Ms. Andrews Parker stated that some of the visitors to the center are those who have not been able to adhere to the more rigid rules and regulations at the Garrison Shelter; in these circumstances it has been beneficial to have the Willand center as overflow to accommodate these clients.

Ms. Andrews Parker reported that they are still having some issues with mask compliance within the center. They are offering single serve, individually wrapped items for clients such as cheese sticks and granola bars. She encouraged faith based organizations and churches in the communities to start offering lunches and suppers again in their halls and providing food; she stated that if the warming centers are expected to be open, COVID-safe and providing meals, then it is reasonable to assume that churches can do this as well and continue to help supply staff and volunteers at the warming center.

Chairman Hutchinson reported that he has been researching each City's codes and how they pertain to church suppers and larger scale meals which could be provided to the community. He stated that this issue seemed more complicated than originally thought and suggested requesting that each City review their codes and return to the Fidelity Committee with recommendations on how they can be amended to allow this activity.

Mayor McCarley inquired about the possibility of the county jail helping to supply individually bagged meals to the shelter and warming center as they are already doing on a large scale basis for the inmates. Ms. Andrews Parker said the issue they are experiencing ongoing issues with compliance with mask-wearing, hand sanitizing, and hand washing. When the food component is added in within an environment without individual rooms like at the Garrison, it becomes more of an issue. Due to the COVID compliance problems as well as the limited space and lack of kitchen/dining facilities at the warming center, they have been focusing on individually wrapped, single serve items for the clients. There are also budgetary concerns and the money is not unlimited to staff the facility and feed the clients. Ms. Andrews Parker said that asking for assistance from the county jail in supplying bagged meals is a possibility for the future.

Dave Balian, Dover Welfare, said that the warming center has been a great help for local welfare and the day program has been effective in facilitating people who have previously been able to get assistance for their long-term issues. He suggested that the committee should look into putting resources into developing the day program into a more permanent homeless resource center. Ms. Andrews Parker gave a brief history of the day program, which had been funded with the money originally intended for the Care Pharmacy location. The funding for the Garrison and

the day program is good for 18 months with additional plans for when this funding ends, so the program will continue.

Chairman Hutchinson inquired if there could be budgetary requests made by each City welfare department in order to support this day program. He referenced a line item in the Rochester welfare budget for homeless and sheltering services. Ms. Andrews Parker stated that she was tasked with determining the actual budget for the warming center, Garrison and day center so the Cities can make an informed decision on funding moving forward. This information will be supplied to the cities once the data is reviewed at the end of February. Mayor McCarley spoke about the information and data which is being gathered by CAP and other agencies to show what has occurred at the shelter, day program and warming center, the money expended, and the clients which have come through. She stated that this data can be brought to the State for consideration for funding and assistance. Vice Chair Marsh said that in the proposed welfare budget, there is a line item for homeless services. He stated that the amount in the budget is being maintained at the same level this year as last due to the previous year's funds not being fully expended and the need for more data from the shelters and warming centers to justify the additional funding.

Ms. Andrews Parker spoke briefly in regards to the mobile high risk vaccine clinic which had been held at three local homeless centers which was able to vaccinate 71 people with their first dose.

6. Regional data/statistics

No discussion.

7. Update: Tri-City joint housing rights resolution

Chairman Hutchinson stated that he has been working with Mayor Hilliard on this item, but there are no updates currently.

8. Update: Planning Department(s) recommendation request

Vice Chair Marsh referenced the letter or request with the Fidelity Committee had sent in December to the Tri-City Mayors to distribute to their respective Planning Boards and Planning Departments. He reported that he had heard back from Somersworth Planning Director Michelle Mears who had requested that a member of the Fidelity Committee appear before the Somersworth Planning Board to clarify the intent of the request. He surmised that there might be some concerns in regards to the wording of the Master Plan which states the intent to "create affordable housing for all." Where neither the Chair nor Vice chair were available to attend this Planning Board meeting, Chairman Hutchinson suggested that the Fidelity Committee could either invite Planning Department staff to the next Fidelity Meeting to answer questions, or they could allow the Planning Departments to submit questions to the committee for review. Chairman Hutchinson stated that he would reach out to Mayor Hilliard in regards to having a Somersworth Planning Board representative meet with the committee to have questions answered, and if needed, can request members of the Committee appear before the full Planning Board.

9. Continued Review of Master Plan

Charlie Reynolds referenced a conversation which had taken place at a previous Committee meeting regarding the annulments of criminal records. He stated that he had contacted a local attorney who was willing to commit his time and assist the committee with holding a workshop to develop a process for clearing these criminal records. Ms. Andrews Parker stated that the intent here is to “help the helpers,” such as local welfare staff and social service agencies. This will help pass on the knowledge in regards to how to navigate the annulments, the eligibility and criteria, so when it comes up in practice they will be able to assist in the process.

Chairman Hutchinson asked if there would be a possibility that this attorney would be willing to meet with the Fidelity Committee to give an overview of the process. Mr. Reynolds stated that the attorney has expressed a willingness to meet with the committee after some preliminary work has been done to discuss the annulments of criminal records and developing training.

10. Other

Lindsey Williams, Dover City Council, reported that she has had conversations with other Councilors in regards to the portion of the Master Plan which covers community engagement and education and the steps to take to facilitate this. She suggested that maybe in the future when things settle slightly, the committee could look at this portion of the master plan to determine more ways to be a resource to stem misinformation and educate the community on the work being done.

Dave Carpenter, Dover Planning, reported that the Dover Planning Department has put together a list of things that they have done previously in regards to workforce and/or affordable housing as well as a list of items which they are proposing or items which are already in progress. They will be submitting this document to the Fidelity Committee within the next couple months. Vice Chair Marsh asked if he could connect Somersworth Planning with Mr. Carpenter to review the Fidelity request from a more knowledgeable perspective of the terminology and process. Mr. Carpenter said he would be happy to review with Somersworth.

11. Closing Public Input

No Discussion.

12. Adjournment

Chairman Hutchinson **ADJOURNED** the Fidelity Committee meeting at 7:02 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara
Deputy City Clerk, Rochester