

GOVERNANCE BOARD MEETING MINUTES



Date: 4/25/24

Time: 11:00am

Facilitator: Stephen Gruver

Location: Oak City Cares

In Attendance

John Niffenegger, David Harris, Priscilla Batts, Nicole Wilson, Stephen Gruver, Kathy Johnson, Barkley Sample, Kelsey Mosley, Johnnie Thomas, Derwin Willoughby, Wendy Clark

Absent

Nicole Stewart, Richard Averitte, Chaundra Hyacinth, Ann Oshel, Danielle Butler, Sheryl Cromedy, Eric Braun

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Johnnie Thomas to approve the minutes from our March CoC Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Kathy Johnson. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Lead Agency Discussion

Stephen Gruver led a discussion about the Lead Agency vote results. (For context, here is the motion that was before the CoC Membership: "The CoC Membership moves to elect Wake County Government as the new Lead Agency for the NC 507 CoC for the purpose of stabilizing the system, which would include the roles of Collaborative Applicant, HMIS Lead, and Coordinated Entry Lead.") The motion passed with 45 votes; a simple majority would have been met with 36 votes. Peter Morris asked what the transition would look like now that this has passed. Stephen stated that a draft MOU was sent to Duane Holder, Wake County Deputy County Manager. Duane feels good in the spirit of the MOU but they are running it through their legal team. The HUD field office has been notified that the MOU is coming. Peter reminded the board that HUD has authorized Urban Ministries to hold the HMIS Lead until September.

David Harris asked if the voting method used was from the current charter or the new charter that has not yet been adopted. Stephen Gruver said it was from the new charter as the new voting method can reach the greatest number of members and allow for the most transparency around

the vote. The new charter will be adopted in the next 30 days. David said, it is best practice to continue using the current charter until the new charter is adopted. Stephen agreed.

Stephen Gruver and Nicole Stewart drafted a letter for the CoC Board to send to Wake County sharing the result of the CoC Membership's vote to elect Wake County as the Wake CoC Lead Agency. Stephen asked the Governance Board to read through the letter and offer any comments or concerns they had. A motion was made by Johnnie Thomas to approve the letter. The motion was seconded by Barkley Sample. The motion was unanimously approved.

City of Raleigh Unsheltered Homeless Response Strategy

Stephen Gruver invites John Niffenegger with the City of Raleigh to present on the City of Raleigh's Unsheltered Homeless Response Strategy.

John states that the City is hoping to pilot a program that would provide a housing-first evidence-based intervention similar to rapid rehousing to those living unsheltered. To be successful the City would need to work with the CoC and community partners. The end goal is to move people into housing. The question is how resources will be prioritized and targeted. The City is looking to hire a consultant before the end of the fiscal year to assist in this strategy. John called for questions.

Johnnie Thomas asked what discussions the City is having with other cities and counties as people (unsheltered homeless) may want to move out of Raleigh if they are being forced to move elsewhere other than where they are set up.

John Niffenegger said that the City of Raleigh does not want people to move out of Raleigh. The strategy is to provide a pathway to permanent housing for those living unsheltered. If they choose to live outside of the City, that is their choice. Johnnie continued to share that from his personal experience, when people are forced to move, they can get a bad taste in their mouths, and it makes people want to leave. Even if the City of Raleigh is right, people can still take issue with them. Johnnie suggested that the City should be contacting surrounding municipalities. Kathy Johnson brought up the need to talk about storage in the strategy developed as many people want to bring their belongings with them but when they are housed at a hotel or temporary shelter, that is not always an option. John stated that is part of why they are looking for a consultant to investigate these issues of storage. The strategy would be to not shut down a camp until everyone has moved into housing. They are not trying to push people anywhere, just assist.

David Harris asked if there was a reason the strategy is not Rapid Rehousing (RRH), just modeled after RRH? John said that they had done research on an Unsheltered Response Strategy and had conversations with other cities, such as Cleveland, OH, where the strategy worked well.

A discussion was started on how ACORNS and Street Outreach can provide support to the camps. Johnnie Thomas brought up the point that there are people who do not want to be responsible for housing (such as paying utilities). He also brought up the point of mass communication and the transparency that needs to be had with the community so that people in camps know what the strategy is. John said that apart from ACORNS going into the community to offer connections to resources, for most living unsheltered there is not a quick pathway to permanent housing. Johnnie suggested that maybe the CoC has a mass communication strategy, and that the communication needs to be nothing technical, just honest.

Derwin Willoughby brought up container housing in Los Angeles, CA where there are containers formed into housing with programs/services provided on site to help people stay housed/clean. Derwin asked if this is something that is feasible? Wendy Clark with ACORNS reminded everyone that they can go out and offer, but if people in camps do not want to go, they don't have to. Stephen Gruver brought up the new Street Outreach Workgroup and the discussion on the dwindling numbers of street outreach case managers. There is a huge need, and we would like to depend on Raleigh, being a rich city full of thinkers, to be utilized in helping with this strategy. The next question he raised was, "where are the encampments and who is there?" He said there needs to be a service plan for every individual in the camps. Wendy Clark said that ACORNS tries not to go in as officers, but people still do not want them there. DaQuanta Copeland referred to Derwin's point on container housing in LA and said that government should not be the first in as people do not trust the government as much as community leaders. DaQuanta said that the true first responders should be faith-based communities and community programs. She continued that there needs to be a community-led group that is paid to reach out.

Peter Morris brought up that several staff members at Urban Ministries participated in the BitFocus demonstration on street outreach data. Peter shared that they have a tool that allows you to pin the location of a tent on a map, name who's in the tent, their needs, if there are animals, etc. He echoed DaQuanta's call for street outreach needing to be community led. Stephen offered to send a training module video on this topic. David Harris called for street outreach intervention to be a top priority and deserves a lot of our efforts; specifically resources we do not have out in the community right now.

John Niffenegger continued his presentation explaining that for the strategy to be successful we will need interagency cooperation, involvement from residents, data-driven collective action, etc. (see 4.25.24 Governance Board PowerPoint for more details). He said that the City understands that every time a camp is swept, it causes tension, loses people's trust, and costs a lot of money. They do not want any of that. There are two things the City is focusing on: hiring a consultant and piloting a program that uses direct housing assistance, homeless system support and housing unit repairs. Barkley Sample asked if there is a number on how many units? John replied that it is online, but he did not have the numbers on him at that moment. John also brought up that if the pilot program is successful, the program could receive more funding since they are relying on local funds and ESG funding.

Johnnie asked if the City would partner with the NC Department of Transportation, especially with all their funding? John said they have approached them and discussed that sweeping is not the solution. DOT will be involved, and the pilot programs would be carried out on city property.

David reminded everyone that we need to care about the people in the camps and not about getting rid of the camps; that there needs to be strategic vocabulary used in this response. John said they purposely do not name it an "encampment strategy" due to negative connotation of the word "encampment" as an example of how they are strategically planning the vocabulary around the strategy. He stated, "We are trying to work towards housing the unsheltered," as their primary goal.

City of Raleigh Letter of Support

Nicole Stewart and Stephen Gruver drafted a letter of support for the Unsheltered Homelessness Response Strategy. Stephen called for feedback.

A motion to approve and send the letter to the City was made by Johnnie Thomas. The motion was seconded by Derwin Willoughby. The motion was approved with a vote of ten in favor with John Niffenegger abstaining.

Charter Changes

Stephen Gruver discussed a meeting about changes made in the draft Charter. He asked for the Board's thoughts. Stephen reminded everyone that they should be reading the charter and commenting/asking questions as they go. Stephen said that everyone should be taking a close look at the small changes made, as well as board seats and voting as both of those items have changes. Kathy also reminded everyone to look at attachments to the charter because they are attached because they are required to be reviewed annually, and so were included so that they will be reviewed annually at the same time the charter is reviewed annually.

Committee and Agency Updates

Stephen said that Homeless Emergency Response Committee (HERC) sent over recommendations (attached below) but the Board would not be voting on it today, he just wanted to draw attention to it. Stephen shared that the Coordinated Access System Committee (CAS) has put in a request for approval to HUD TA for assistance with our communities Coordinated Entry System. They are also reviewing the HART Tool which is used to determine By Name List prioritization.

Nicole Wilson asked what the most recent Coordinated Entry (CE) policies and procedures are. She said that she thought it was the 2017 policy but that may not be the case. David Harris brought up that the 2017 CE policies have been used but changes may have been made but not approved. Stephen said he would investigate this and that the CE policies and procedures need to be updated drastically as it shows a gaping hole in our community. David brought up his concern that disability is first on the list to prioritize people on the By Name List. Stephen and Kathy Johnson requested that the current procedures being used be sent to them. Johnnie Thomas asked what the By Name List is and if it is a list of individuals being entered into HMIS. Stephen replied that is correct. It is used to determine who is next for certain resources such as housing vouchers.

Stephen asked if anyone remembers the 2017 policies and procedures. Kathy said we need to look back at it but said she thinks the 2017 standards are the most recently approved by the board. She also brought up that another draft version was developed but never approved (a version dated 2020). Michelle Zechmann, Collaborative Applicant, said there is a document on the website that came over during the transfer that is from 2020. Board members said they do not remember voting on this document, and they think it may have been posted without being approved by the Board.

Johnnie said he thinks there needs to be more communication on the criteria of vouchers. Stephen asked Nicole Wilson to send him the document.

Meeting adjourned at: 12:31 PM

Next Meeting

May 23rd at 11:00am

In Person at The Salvation Army