



**Fidelity Committee
of the
Tri-City Joint Mayors' Task Force on Homelessness
Remote Meeting Via Zoom
August 13, 2020
5:00 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: Crystal Paradis, Somersworth Council. Susan Gaston, Dover Welfare. Dave Carpenter, Dover Planning. Lindsey Williams, Dover Council. Tory Jennison, IDN. Julian Long, Rochester Economic Development.

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Chairman Hutchinson called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM. Cassie Givara, Deputy City Clerk of Rochester, took a visual roll call of members all of whom were present. Additionally, Mayor Carrier, Mayor Hilliard, and Mayor McCarley were all present.

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

No Discussion.

3. Communications from the Mayors

Mayor Hilliard spoke about the recent brush fires which had occurred in Somersworth in the area of a homeless encampment. He spoke about how the issue was handled by the Fire Department with education of the homeless community to try to prevent similar incidents and to avoid the need for relocation or involving the police. He spoke about the potential issues faced when these encampments are broken up and the residents are moved into other areas.

3.1 Update: Location for Permanent Shelter

Mayor Hilliard reported that he had a meeting scheduled with the CEO of Frisbee Hospital on August 27th to discuss potential locations for a permanent shelter and will report back to the Committee in September. He anticipates this will be the first of several meetings to get the discussion started. Mayor Hilliard stated that he was excited about the potential of such a shelter being possibly located in Somersworth, although Dover and Rochester had some prospects as well.

Mayor McCarley spoke about the upcoming meeting with the Frisbee CEO and stated that although the potential for using County land for a permanent shelter has slipped further down the list, it is still being considered and discussed and has not yet been discounted.

Mayor Carrier reported that he has been regularly attending City meetings with social service agencies, city staff and business owners and he has been advocating for the Fidelity Committee's mission and soliciting for assistance with sourcing a location for a homeless shelter. Mayor Carrier addressed the volunteer-driven warming centers from the previous winter and stated that some of those regular volunteers may not be willing or able to assist this year due to COVID; the cities and social services organizations will need to find other viable options.

Vice Chair Marsh thanked the Mayors for their continued work in trying to secure a permanent shelter space, but acknowledged that with winter fast approaching, it is best to look at alternate sheltering options rather than focusing all efforts on the permanent shelter which is likely not going to be resolved this season.

4. Communications from the Chairs

Vice Chair Marsh spoke about his experience as the Rochester Welfare Director. He reported that they have started to see an increase in requests for assistance, but it is not yet at the level which was anticipated when COVID began.

Mr. Marsh spoke about the regular weekly meetings which have continued to have with local resource agencies where the organizations collaborate and discuss changes and coordination of efforts. He reported that there has been an increase in single people without dependents experiencing homeless, some of whom have never owned a home or rented in the area, but find themselves homeless here in part to the peer support and available resources.

There was a brief discussion regarding school reopening and the criteria going into these decisions as well as the need for local welfare and social services agencies to monitor these decisions. Mr. Marsh spoke about the potential unintended consequences this may cause with parents needing to stay home with their children and the financial, economic and mental consequences which may follow.

Chair Hutchinson addressed the potential sun setting of the Fidelity Committee (item 6 on the agenda). He acknowledged that operations have been difficult with the remote meetings during COVID and that it has been difficult to maintain the same momentum. Chair Hutchinson lauded the Committee for their work in executing the Master Plan on Homelessness, but acknowledged more work needs to be done in developing action items and proposals from the strategies within the Master Plan to be presented and adopted by the tri Cities.

The complicated nature and enormous scale of many of the strategies was discussed. Items such as “Affordable Housing,” while not insurmountable, are not simple fixes and involve moving parts within the municipalities and local industries, ordinance and zoning change, as well as cultural change.

Chair Hutchinson clarified that there was no timeline put in place on the work contained with the Master Plan; there was no expectation that there would be immediate solutions and rather it was a groundwork set in place to be built on over time.

Chair Hutchinson asked, as the summer draws to an end and the potential of a permanent shelter become more likely to be revisited in the following year, that the Committee shift their focus from less urgent items within the Master Plan to sheltering solutions for cold weather.

Chair Hutchinson spoke about the loss of eviction protections and the uncertain nature if there will be legislation to put those protections back in place. With strategies in the Master Plan dealing directly with landlord outreach and eviction prevention.

5. Continued Review of Master Plan

No discussion.

5.1 Master Plan proposals under the purview of “Municipal roles”

The Committee had a brief discussion regarding the importance and involvement of city staff and policy makers such as Councilors and Mayors at the Fidelity meetings. It was stated that although the experience and expertise of social service organizations and support services is invaluable in developing the policies and carrying out the actions contained within the Master plan, it is important to have attendees presents who will be able to directly present to the governing bodies once the policies have been developed.

There was a discussion about certain actions and strategies within the plan which may involve City departments such as planning, zoning and economic development in order to effect change and to ensure that actions are carried out properly and within guidelines and ordinances. It was discussed that there may be a need to reach out to city employees to solicit attendance at meetings or to discuss proposals for buy-in.

5.2 Follow up of Recovery Friendly Workplace proposal

Chairman Hutchinson asked for a brief synopsis of the Recovery Friendly Workplace which had been presented at the prior meeting. The Committee discussed the Recovery Friendly Workplace and what is entailed in establishing the program within departments of a municipality or private organizations. John Burns and Mary Boisse from SOS Recovery were mentioned as resources for those wanting to receive more information or needing assistance to establish the program.

Barbara Holstein gave details on organizations and business in the tri-city area which have already established the Recovery Friendly Workplace.

There was a discussion in Committee about the possibility of a proposal being presented to all three Councils in regard to the Recovery Friendly workplace. Mayor Hilliard addressed the resources available in Somersworth which would allow for such a presentation to be filmed and then distributed for presentation at each of the respective city Council meetings. He suggested a resolution to be presented to each Council which would a recommendation to review and examine the implementation of a Recovery Friendly workplace within each City. The committee discussed the logistics of developing the presentation and the recommendation to the Councils. It was determined that it would be discussed at the next meeting.

6. Discussion: Fidelity Committee's Future - determining course of action

Betsey Andrews Parker emphasized the ways in which the Committee has been successful; including homeless-specific changes or additions to the cities' Master Plans and CDBG. Ms. Andrews Parker said that it was in large part to the Master Plan that she was able to obtain \$500,000 in emergency housing money. She also spoke about the additional outreach workers she was able to submit for through a grant which may not have been plausible without the work of the Master Plan. She stated that CAP has been able to use \$142,000 of CARES funds for emergency housing assistance within the last 3 weeks. She emphasized that there are many successes which have resulted from the Master Plan and the Fidelity Committee and that the work has been valuable.

Ms. Andrews Parker reiterated the need for an executive summary or a status report, whether it be through the municipalities or social service agencies, to detail the work which has already been done and accomplished by the Committee as well as the work which is ongoing. This summary could also outline the next steps and the gaps which still need to be filled. It was

discussed that the executive summary would be added or discussion to upcoming agendas and there would need to be a determination of who could undertake this project.

7. Other

Barbara Holstein reported that the Strafford Regional Planning Commission has received grants from Tufts in relation to organizations and their need for COVID-related assistance and relief. She stated that SRPC wants to get more involved with homeless relief and assistance efforts and this grant money may very well be able to be utilized. Ms. Holstein said that SRPC may also be able to help with supplying data for the committee and for an executive summary when it is developed.

The next meeting of the Fidelity Committee will be held on September 10th at 6:00 PM via Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

8. Closing Public Input

No Discussion.

9. Adjournment

Chairman Hutchinson **ADJOURNED** the meeting at 6:50 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara
Deputy City Clerk, Rochester