



**Fidelity Committee
of the
Tri-City Joint Mayors' Task Force on Homelessness
Remote Meeting Via Microsoft Teams
June 10, 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 Balian, Dover Welfare. Julian Long, Rochester Economic Development.

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Chair Jeremy Hutchinson called the meeting to order at 6:04 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.

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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 and indicated that they were alone in the location from which they were connecting. Additionally, Mayor Carrier of Dover was present.

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

There was no written or voicemail correspondence received and there was no one on the conference line who wished to speak.

3. Communications from the Mayors

No discussion.

4. Communications from the Chairs

Chair Hutchinson opened the floor to discussion regarding resuming in-person meetings. With higher percentages receiving vaccines and most municipal meetings transitioning to an in-person format, the committee discussed the potential of starting to meet in person again. Ms. Andrews Parker suggested delaying a month or two over the summer because there may be difficulty getting a quorum with the holiday and other events scheduled. Dina Gagnon questioned whether there may be restrictions in place for larger groups and/or unvaccinated people meeting at school facilities; in the past the Fidelity Committee had met at the Somersworth Middle school, but this may not be advisable. The consensus of the committee was to skip July and meet again in August. This first in person meeting will be held at CAP on Central Avenue in Dover at 6 PM. There was a brief discussion regarding reinstating the rotating schedule of meetings through the three communities and potential locations.

Vice Chair Marsh reported that he continued to participate in the Governor's Council for Housing Stability and was looking forward to their final proposals and recommendations. He said that their plan focuses on developing affordable housing and supportive housing, both of which are in Master plan for the Fidelity Committee.

Mr. Marsh also spoke about impending House Bill 126 which would allow tenants to pay rents up to the date of an eviction court hearing, giving people more time to avoid eviction from

housing and agencies more time to try to work the situation out. It will also disallow municipalities from requiring an eviction notice in order to provide assistance.

Chairman Hutchinson spoke about the State funding from the recently passed rescue plan bill and how the money could be allocated. He suggested the Committee could start thinking about potential proposals which could be made to the tri cities, especially in the area of affordable housing, using these funds.

Ms. Andrews Parker said that part of the State plan was authorization to go to CMS (Medicaid and Medicare services) for Medicaid reimbursement for supportive housing. This passed the CMS in July which means homeless and housing issues will now become Medicaid-reimbursable events. This will increase enrollment in Medicaid and Medicare and will allow agencies to be reimbursed for some of these funds as well.

Ms. Andrews Parker spoke briefly about the meaning of “affordability.” According to HUD, the median family income in the seacoast area is \$102,000 and how it compares to the other NH and MA communities (\$83,000 in Manchester, Boston \$119,000). She gave the figures for a single person to qualify; for 30% of their adjusted income they would need to make no more than \$19,850. She spoke about a property in Rochester on Academy Street where the rent is based off the tenants making no more than 30% of the adjusted area income. This means two people living in one of these rentals they can make no more than \$24,000 combined. She said it was very difficult finding tenants who qualified using this criteria, and with upcoming projects they are going to adjust the requirements to 50% or 60% to allow more people to qualify.

Vice Chair Marsh said that in Somersworth there is a joint meeting between School Board and City Council upcoming where they will hear a presentation from the Dover Mental Health Alliance to start discussing mental health wellbeing.

4.1 Update: Planning Department(s) recommendation request

Vice Chair Marsh said that the letter which was sent to the Planning Departments in December requested that they present their findings by June 30, 2021. He said the cities do still have several more weeks, but that he would follow up directly to determine the status.

5. Update: Season’s End wrap up and future plans: Willand Warming Center and Garrison Shelter

Ms. Andrews Parker reported that while the Garrison Shelter had been a great opportunity and worked well while it was in use, after the closing of operations the owner of the hotel attempted to get them to renovate the entire wing at a charge of \$57,000 to replace bedding, mattresses, hardware and fixtures. Ms. Andrews Parker clarified that there was reasonable wear and tear from use of the rooms, but nothing significant. They were able to reduce this amount requested to \$21,000, but these were still unexpected fund which needed to be sourced. She stated there have been reports of this happening at other facilities because it becomes known that there is federal funding available so false charges at inflated prices are manufactured. Ms. Andrews Parker stated that they will not be utilizing the Garrison Hotel in the future.

She said that they would be operating a warming center next year, although the details of how it will work, where it will be located, and the logistics are still to be determined by the three cities. The start date would be at the beginning of December 2021 (earlier if the weather necessitates). The three communities agreed that CAP would run the facility at the same location and that they will be looking for a more long term solution.

6. Report from Local Welfare

Vice Chair Marsh stated that requests for assistance continue to be slower than prior to the pandemic, presumably due to the federal funds available.

Vice Chair Marsh reported that Nancy Poulin, former Somersworth Welfare officer, Director of the Homeless Center of Strafford County, and Rochester welfare social worker, had died after a long battle with cancer.

6.1 Homeless resource/service trailers

Ms. Andrews Parker opened the discussion for placement of these shower, laundry and kitchen trailers. These units were purchased during COVID and can continue to be used if a location can be determined. In order for the shower trailer to be utilized, there needs to be a location with sewer access and a water hookup. If these utilities are not available, the trailer can only be used for three showers before it needs to be unhooked for the gray water to be drained. There is also a generator which runs the trailer which is fairly loud, so it cannot be placed in a residential area. She outlined the areas which had been considered as locations, but for one reason or another cannot be used, and she asked for suggestions for other locations. Ms. Andrews Parker also spoke about the need for a qualified person to be available to move, park, and hook up these trailers.

Barbara Holstein asked about the potential of Charles Street in Rochester, the empty parking lot and building owned by the Housing Authority. She said that this is on the edge of a residential area and this would likely be an issue. Mayor Carrier suggested the C&J lot as a possibility. Chairman Hutchinson asked if the Foley Community Center in Rochester had been ruled out. Ms. Andrews Parker stated it was a possibility. Dave Balian, Dover Welfare, said there have been a number of conversations with Rochester regarding using the Charles Street lot, the Community Center, or potentially the Salvation Army. Mr. Balian said that although Rochester had given the go-ahead for the Salvation Army location, they would still need permission from the regional office of the SA, and then additional site work would need to be done to allow sewer and water access to the location. Mr. Balian said that one of the possibilities they had explored was the site of the Willand Warming Center, but it has not been determined if there is sewer access.

Dina Gagnon asked if the Somersworth Armory had been considered as a location. It was determined that it is currently still owned by the government; and while the plan is to turn it over

to the city, this has not occurred yet. Ms. Andrews Parker said that the Lilac Mall could also be considered as a location.

Chairman Hutchinson stated that he would go back to the Rochester Council with the request of using the Community Center because a definitive answer had never been given. Even if it is just used as a temporary option, it may be a good location to start. Vice Chair Marsh clarified that the Community Center had been the location of Rochester's previous showers.

Mayor Carrier asked if there was a reason why the Willand facility could not be used. Ms. Andrews Parker cautioned that there had been a compromise made with the three communities and that facility to be used as a winter shelter. She wanted to be careful going back on the terms of the agreement and trying to add additional conditions, potentially harming the agreement already in place and affecting future use.

7. Discussion: Tenant screening and selection - recommendations for improvement

Julian Long, Rochester Economic Development, gave a brief overview of the topic. He referenced a report, which was based out of Minneapolis. The City of Minneapolis passed an ordinance which would require that landlords provide tenants with the basis of their denial if they were not granted residency. He said that based on the tenant screening report, there are two categories; mandates and incentives. In the Seacoast area, a good example of incentives is the Home 4 All affordable housing incentives program which provides damage loss mitigation funds, sign on bonuses, and several other incentive programs for landlords. Mr. Long said he would provide the report to the Committee for their review.

Barbara Holstein stated that there is a new director for Home 4 All and suggested that the Committee reach out to them to see if they can give an update on how this incentive program has been going over the past several months.

8. Regional data/statistics

No discussion.

9. Other

Charlie Reynolds asked if there was any reason why the Cities can't write into their ordinances that if a development is of a certain size, a certain portion needs to be designated for affordable housing. There was a brief discussion about this type of activity happening in Dover and Rochester. Vice Chair Marsh suggested the Committee look into whether or not this is already in the City codes as well as determining what is considered "affordable" in these circumstances. Mr. Reynolds felt that if there is nothing but continued talk on the issue of affordable housing with no action, that several years down the road the cities would be in the same situation of opening warming centers and shelters as well as a lack of adequate affordable housing.

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Mr. Reynolds spoke about his work with Ms. Andrews Parker to work towards a criminal records annulment program or clinic. He said they have made progress, but have had to reconfigure parts of the process and continue work on this until it can come back to the Committee. Ms. Andrews Parker said the catch is that the documentation required is sent to an applicants' home address, which is an issue if the person is transient or unsheltered. They are working to determine if these documents can be sent to a service agency, city welfare, or similar services. There is also an issue of three separate records being required at a cost of approximately \$100 each. Mr. Reynolds and Ms. Andrews Parker are trying to source a test case to work with to help work through the setbacks.

Chairman Hutchinson referenced LEAD, which the Committee had discussed in the past but had tabled due to the pandemic and other more pressing projects. He felt that they should look into the program again in the near future and do some research on potentially starting it up in more communities. Ms. Holstein reported the LEAD is not currently working out in the area and suggested that Chairman Hutchinson reach out to John Burns of SOS to discuss the program and what had happened recently.

Mr. Balian spoke about mail services for the homeless population and the different organizations which allow mail to be delivered on others behalf, but the lack of a central area which will allow this. Ms. Holstein spoke about a waiver which has been used by clients to authorize mail delivery to certain service agencies while freeing the agency of any liability if there is mail missing. The waiver also requires the client to come into the agency directly to pick up their deliveries and this helps to keep them engaged and to offer services and programs while they are present. Ms. Andrews Parker stated that for formal programs, they need to carry additional D&O insurance to offer this service.

There was a brief discussion about post offices receiving "general delivery" for homeless residents.

Ms. Andrews Parker stated that CAP is continuing to look for case managers and has open positions.

10. Closing Public Input

No discussion.

11. Adjournment

The next meeting will be held at CAP, 577 Central Avenue, Dover, NH, at 6 PM on August 12th.

Chairman Hutchinson **ADJOURNED** the Fidelity Committee meeting at 7:43 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara, Deputy City Clerk, Rochester