

**CITY OF NEW HAVEN  
HOMELESS ADVISORY COMMISSION  
SEPTEMBER 11, 2008  
MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** D. Ecton, J. Goldblum, N. Hogan, W. Johnston, K. Lum, G. Spinner,  
V. Wilson

**EXCUSED:** None

**ABSENT:** R. Plattus

**EX-OFFICIO:** N. Torres-LCI for A. Rizzo (Absent), R. Manning-CSA (Present)

**STAFF:** J. Huettner

**INVITED GUESTS PRESENT:** Kellyann Day, NHHR, Kara Capone, NHHR

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Wesley Thorpe, BJ Thomas, Shelter Management Services;  
Alison Cunningham, Becca Allen, Malynda Mallory,  
Benjamin Evans, Columbus House; Jacqui Pheanious, Kim  
Whitley, Life Haven; Beth Reisfeld, Eliza Schafler, YHHAP;  
Michelle Caron, NHHR; Edward Mattison, SCBHN; Duffy  
Acevedo, Self; Betsy Yagla, New Haven Advocate

Meeting called for 6:00 P.M.

Meeting called to order at 6:05 P.M.

G. Spinner called the meeting to order, and after introductions, requested a motion to approve the July 10, 2008 Meeting Minutes, with D. Ecton making the motion and K. Lum seconding. The motion passed: YES-7: D. Ecton, J. Goldblum, N. Hogan, W. Johnston, K. Lum, G. Spinner, V. Wilson. NO-0.

Next, G. Spinner introduced the discussion on proposed shelter policy changes, developed to deal with the reality of recent budget cuts to all city-funded emergency homeless shelters, and, in particular, the result in having to cease funding of the Overflow Shelter, for FY 2008-09. Specifically, he voiced concern regarding the introduction of a residency requirement to help address the reduction in available shelter beds with an increased demand on those beds, which he felt impacted on other shelters and was open to abuse.

A lengthy discussion centered on the following points: (1) K. Capone (via CCEH stats) suggested that New Haven residents also occupy shelter beds in other Connecticut areas,

in numbers that would cancel out any benefits that a residency requirement would, in lowering the demand on limited New Haven shelter beds. She added that the same stats (CCEH database) suggest that 20% of individuals using New Haven shelters come from outside the City. (2) The establishment/documentation of residency. W. Thorpe indicated that with flexibility, when they tried it, it worked fairly well, as it was not tied to one form of ID. (3) A. Cunningham stressed the need to focus on creating more shelter beds, given the expected seasonal demand. She questioned what happens to those that are not admitted to any shelter, due to reduced shelter beds. (4) B. Johnston stated that this is a statewide problem, and that out-of-town communities should pay for services for their residents, similar to a mechanism that existed under the old welfare system. He added that the regional Council of Governments bears a responsibility in helping to subsidize services for out-of-town residents utilizing New Haven shelters. (5) E. Mattison questioned the legality of the policies and threatened a law suit based on “right to travel” and receive services” grounds, and would seek a restraining order. (6) DSS does not allow residency requirements for programs it funds (although, Immanuel does not receive DSS funds, as DSS primary focus is family shelters). (7) BJ Thomas stated that Immanuel was also cut and sought guidance from the City on how to deal with reduced funding and increased demand resulting from the reality of the Overflow Shelter not opening. The discussions were open and comprehensive with the intent to figure out options to a desperate situation. The discussions centered on what can we try, with flexibility and that nothing was forced on Immanuel by the City. She added that she hoped that this discussion would result in some concrete, short-term solutions on how to deal with this situation, given that the client demand would increase with fewer beds and that the winter was forthcoming.

(8) J. Pheanious questioned the status of discharge planning among state agencies, particularly DOC, which has been a long, on-going discussion. DOC has resources, but no housing or policy that would change their current “dumping” practices. R. Manning indicated that talks between the DOC Commissioner and the CSA Administrator are on-going with the possibilities of some short-term agreements that deal with some of these issues. E. Mattison added that the State Legislature in the last session passed legislation that would provide \$80,000 per bed to any town willing to house sex offenders.

G. Spinner explained that there are a couple of options, none of which add shelter beds or prevent turn aways. Options include, do we recommend a residency requirement? Do we recommend restrictions on clients from the DOC? Do we recommend restrictions on referrals from state agencies? What about hospitals? Or yes, you do have to be a New Haven resident with some sort of residency requirement. He added that none of these things are a positive solution to anything. He added that defining residency is tricky. There are no easy answers.

Further discussion reaffirmed the lack of leadership from the Governor on these issues. N. Hogan suggested that we also need to start thinking about next year, as the prospects are bleaker for the economy next year.

G. Spinner recapped the discussion and after further comment, recommended that a group from the Commission, CSA and other interested parties, meet and draft some recommendations for the Commission, at its' next meeting, acknowledging that we are not going to solve this, given a shortage of beds. A sign-up sheet was distributed. There was consensus among members to proceed with the recommendation.

Next, K. Day and K. Capone were recognized to discuss the Beyond Shelter and Rapid Exit Programs for Families. A summary was distributed which explains the program and NHHR' s effort to expand the program to all New Haven families who are homeless, but not those with mental health and/or substance abuse issues. This program streamlines past processes that slowed a return to permanent housing, added with increased skill and income outcomes. This program will help families move out of shelters quickly, decreasing their shelter length of stays. Also, the 2008 Point-In-Time Homeless Count recorded an increase in homeless families, in New Haven, which makes this program more necessary. The goal is to serve 25 families who are homeless a year.

G. Spinner updated the 10 Year Plan Implementation, by indicating the hiring of staff (Fred Morrison) from DSS resources. A Steering Committee will meet to prioritize activities.

R. Manning suggested that K. Matos join the next meeting to help provide the framework of activities at different levels, regarding efforts to help restore funds, cut through the budget process.

The 2008 Point-In-Time Homeless Count agenda item was postponed until the next meeting, due to time constraints and the fact that it will be a lengthy discussion.

J. Huettner reported that Bill Johnston has been approved as a new Commission member, and that Beth Riesfeld is in the BOA approval process.

J. Goldblum reported that through the efforts of the Homeless Children's Collaborative, Life Haven has received 10 new school-readiness slots.

E. Mattison announced that a petition will be circulated to urge restoration of funds to open the Overflow, following a meeting of a concerned group (Minutes circulated).

With no further business, G. Spinner entertained and received a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 P.M. (Motion passed unanimously).