Mayor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Homelessness

February 2, 2017

Meeting Notes

Present: Margie Cyr, Bill Farley, Jerry Abrams, Cathi Kopera, Jeanine Kleimo, Elmer Davis, Rebecca Martin, Allan Angel, Shameka Johnson, Dan Shelton, Gregg Bunkley, Chris Cooper, Carla Benson-Green, Mayor Christiansen

Guest Attending: Jeff Brown, Dover Post

Dr. Jerry Abrams opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. The members of the group introduced themselves by name, their affiliation, and their experience with the homelessness issue.

Mayor Christiansen welcomed and thanked everyone for attending and stepping to the plate to do what needs to be done.

Dr. Abrams explained that today's meeting is an organizational meeting at which we will get to know one another and plan for the next meetings.

The Mayor's goals for the Panel are to have the work completed within sixty (60) days and have a report ready for the City Council by that time.

- Ending homelessness
- Identify who the homeless are and where they came from
- What is being done for the homeless in the City of Dover and what needs to be done
- Opportunities for collaboration
- Identify the barriers for the homeless: institutional, community, homeless people themselves
- Raise awareness

Today's focus for the meeting will be to discuss our mission and what should be worked on. Members of the Panel voiced these concerns:

- Is it possible to EFFECTIVELY end homelessness by the end of the year?
- A key part of the success of the Veterans' homelessness solution is not available to most homeless people
- Veterans' homelessness is different from general homelessness
- The State receives $7 million to help with homelessness but Kent County only receives $500,000 of that money. Where is the rest of it going?
- Other players need to be brought to this table, the governor's office?
- There appears to be a breakdown in communication about what resources are available
- A barrier is that some of the homeless themselves do not wish to partake in free services that are available
- Some of the homeless are sheltered
- Homelessness can be divided into four (4) categories
    - Top 25% easy to assist
    - Next 25% some barriers to assistance (incarceration, bad credit, employment, etc.)
    - Next 25% more serious challenges such as an inability to be employed
    - Bottom 24% can't help them
- Some people want to do things their own way and won't take help to change
- Don't know how we can take inventory of the homeless by name
- Need to make intake consistent and information with each other

- Duplication of services can be good; but the system creates gaps but we don't know what they are; we need to think systemically
- Bring everyone together so all the skill sets are working together

As a panel, what do we want to see?

- Should we gather information from other states?
- We need a homeless person on the panel to find out what will work for the homeless
- All churches should have public information when they gather
- HUD's vision is not realistic and has requirements that don't match what people have
- Need to categorize the needs of the homeless
- It may not be possible to educate the general public because they are not interested

There was a review of the work done by the Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran's Homelessness. This panel convened in 2015. Case managers were assigned by Veteran's organizations to assist each homeless Vet with available services. There is more public support for the homeless Veterans.

Homeless children were discussed. There is state rental assistance up to two (2) years. Challenges are lack of availability of affordable rental properties, transportation and costs. There are competing definitions of homelessness. In the Capital School District, there are 400-500 children annually living with relatives. These children grow up surrounded by the issues of the homeless (addiction, poverty, illiteracy). This creates cycles of issues. How to break the cycles?

A representative of the Williams Service Center will be invited to attend the next meeting to share with this panel what services they provide.

Representatives of Delaware Housing Authority and Dover Housing Authority will be invited to join the panel. Margie Cyr will reach out to these organizations. Code Purple and Interfaith Mission will search for homeless representatives to join the panel.

The consensus was that HUD should not be asked to join the panel now.

The members of the panel discussed how often meetings should be held and when. A member of the panel does not get off work until 4:00 PM. Several members commute a distance; and a couple of the members have young children at home to care for; many of the members already have several evening meetings in a month. It was proposed that early afternoon meetings be alternated with late afternoon meetings as a compromise for the needs of the panel members.

For the next meeting, writing assignments for each panel member:

- What does your organization do?
- What needs does your organization address?
- Who is the focus of your efforts?
- What more could your organization be doing?
- What gaps do you see in the efforts of the various agencies in the community who serve the homeless (what needs are not being addressed)?

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, February 16, 4:00-5:30 PM, at the Dover Public Library.