Mayor's Blue Ribbon Panel to End Homelessness
Meeting Minutes, February 16, 2017

DRAFT

Present: Dr. Jerome Abrams; Jeanine Kleimo; Councilman Brian Lewis; Tonya Guinn; Becky Martin; Chris Cooper; Major William Farley; Cathi Kopera; Kim Brockenbrough; Mayor Robin Christiansen

Guests attending: Janet Burke, James Williams Center; John Finney, Code Purple Volunteer/Homeless Advocate; Jeff Hynson, guest at Dover Interfaith Mission.

Dr. Abrams opened the meeting by welcoming the guests. The members introduced themselves and gave an overview of what they do with the homeless situation and what their goals are.

The Meeting notes from previous organizational meeting were distributed and approved without changes.

Mayor Christiansen welcomed everyone and announced that all meetings would be open to the public and a reminder with the upcoming agenda will be posted in public venues.

There was a discussion concerning what type of programs are needed for the homeless who are on the streets, what resources are now available, and how these can be made more accessible to the public.

Tonya Guinn, reviewed the updates from Capital School District of their plan to support families within the district. They are approved for Rapid Re-Housing and are receiving help from Catholic Charities.

A new Project has been announced working with the State of Delaware.

Jeanine Kleimo gave a report on the efforts of the Interfaith to re-integrate ex-convicts into the community and success with recidivism. Interfaith Mission submitted a written report. (Report attached)

Cathi Kopera reported on a study which she conducted to identify the names of as many of our local homeless she could locate. This database is available for review by all interested parties.

Margie Cyr from the Library submitted a written report on the work in the Library to assist the homeless. (Report attached)

There was much discussion concerning expanding a day center to a 24 hour center. The discussion led to the issues of caseworkers being available and necessary resources to provide what is needed.

Councilman Lewis was asked if the City of Dover had a budget which this committee could work with. At this time, there are not any funds available through the City of Dover to help.

Councilman Lewis suggested that we work on phases of how this committee would want to structure and plan to help with the homeless situation. He also recommended that he would go back to the City and see what vacant properties might be available.

Again, the question of funding was approached. Kim Brockenbrough, Delaware State Housing, gave an overview of the funding that is generated from HUD through the Homeless Planning Council. The goal is rapid-rehousing, which at this time there are not available properties within our area.

Janet Burke, James Williams Center, gave an overview of all the resources which are available to help. Literature was handed out which described each service. She stressed the point that resources are available and the State is able to refer people to these services; but the State does not have the ability to provide caseworkers for individuals. Caseworkers are only provided by local counseling centers, such as Connections, Mind Body and Soul and Center for Mental Health.

It was suggested to ask representatives of the Homeless Planning Council, Connections, Kent County Board of Realtors and Jim Martin to attend the next meeting. Jim Martin would be able to share how he has successfully set up his template to end homelessness in the Seaford and Georgetown area. And for the Homeless Planning Council to report on their finds of the number of the homeless within our area, and describe the HUD grant that is provided each year. Kent County Board of Realtors, to provide information on affordable housing within our area.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, March 1 at 4:00 PM at the City Hall Conference Room.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 PM.

Mayor's Blue Ribbon Panel to Study Homelessness

Report to Panel from Organizations Represented on the Panel

February 8, 2017

Interfaith Mission for Housing

The Dover Interfaith Mission for Housing operates a 36-bed shelter (with a few extra cots in cases of severe weather) along with 42 beds of transitional housing. Shelter and housing are for adult men age 21 and over.

In addition, we have a daytime Resource Center that is open to all homeless adults, offering mail, laundry, and shower facilities along with assistance in registering for public benefits and applying for employment.

We collaborate with other organizations to ensure that a hot meal is available daily for the homeless.

Our 2016 annual report is attached.

Jeanine Kleimo, Chair
Dover Interfaith Mission for Housing

DOVER INTERFAITH MISSION FOR HOUSING

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2016 Annual Report

I have never been shown such kindness.

This is among the remarks made by our shelter guests over the holiday season in response to the gifts and festivities provided. Our thanks go to all who make such statements possible here, through your provision of meals, contributions, and assistance.

During 2016, the Dover Interfaith Mission for Housing (DIMH) provided shelter, meals, and assistance to 312 homeless men—more than ever before. The high number assisted was due, in part, to the more rapid rate of success achieved by those coming into the shelter: a record 70% of shelter residents secured employment, and our average shelter stay declined to just 53 days. Factors in this success include our dedicated and effective staff, an improving local employment picture, and an increase in the acceptance by employers and landlords of those who have experienced challenges and even incarceration in their past.

Surprisingly, the most successful group within the shelter are those who come from prison: of the 254 ex-offenders housed in 2016, 196 or 77% were working by the end of the year. We find that these men recognize that they have done something wrong in the past and are motivated not to repeat their mistakes. Most are accepting of the guidance and assistance available to them.

Walt Bagley Hall continues to operate as a source of affordable transitional housing for up to 30 men, along with 12 additional beds in three different houses scattered around Dover. Some of the Walt Bagley Hall residents have already been able to move on to housing in the private market.

DIMH collaborated with a network of local organizations, faith communities, and businesses this year with the objective of providing the unsheltered homeless at least one hot meal each day. In part, this complements the meal service provided by the Salvation Army. Becky Martin of Code Purple prepares a monthly calendar for electronic distribution. Pastor Jeff Dyer of Deepwater Church collects food donations from Wawa which result in lunches at DIMH two days a week and on Sunday at the Dover Public Library. DIMH personnel collect food donations weekly from eight local restaurants. This food is repackaged and shared with those in need. In total, DIMH was able to provide an estimated 2,500 meals this past year in addition to those served without our shelter and housing.

In addition, several church groups have assembled “brown bags” with nonperishable food items. These are distributed to those who come to DIMH for meals, making it possible for those most in need to consume one hot meal here in the shelter dining hall and to take a second meal “to go.” This is a

wonderful ministry for youth groups. Bags can be dropped at DIMH any time; and we commit to making them available to those who still live on the street.

Success Stories *(names have been changed to protect individual privacy.)*

Over the years, we lose track of many of the men who have come through DIMH. One exception is "JD," who continues to operate a successful automobile repair business. Among the work he does is rebuild cars acquired at auction. In a few cases, he has been able to provide an affordable vehicle to someone moving on from the shelter. He also keeps the small number of well-used DIMH vehicles roadworthy. His work includes repairing heavy equipment and maintaining equipment for snow plows, which will provide additional short-term, temporary work for shelter residents.

Ed had IT skills when he arrived in the shelter. Family problems led to his homelessness, as he was out of work and no one was able to take him in. Ed pursued on-line applications diligently and found interest at Vanguard Securities near Philadelphia. After five interviews that required bus travel along with an extensive background check, he was successful in obtaining a position as an IT Specialist with a starting salary of $70,000.

Mark was among those who were successful in Amazon's search for holiday-season employees. He had to travel to Middletown DE by bus to begin his shift at 6:00PM. Working until 4:30AM meant problems getting back to Dover on Sunday, when no bus service was available. Initially, Herb Konowitz picked him up, with others taking over as the weeks went by. His $13.75 starting wage eventually increased to $16 as he became a supervisor. This job required him to walk up to 27 miles during his ten-hour shift; but he built up his strength and did what was required of him. Mark grew up an orphan and has struggled with PTSD; but local mental health resources and the supportive environment of the shelter is making it possible for him to move on with his life. He plans to move to Walt Bagley Hall soon.

Nick's criminal record seemed like a formidable obstacle to his employment and success; but he persevered, beginning with volunteering with DIMH personnel at the downtown farmers' market last summer. After many attempts, he was hired as a dishwasher at Dover Downs. His work ethic and skills led to rapid promotion to the position of Chef, where he has prepared food in various restaurants there.

Young Sam got into trouble early in his life and also went to prison. He came out without a supportive family to turn to, and those of us at DIMH became his family. He was always willing to volunteer when help was needed and promises to return to volunteer once he moves on. He has had a long road to get back on track and to improve his core academic credentials; but success is on the horizon: Sam is attending classes at DelTech and working in a local restaurant as a busboy, where we are certain that his diligence will pay off in the long run.

The Less-Successful Stories

Something DIMH has experienced this past year to a greater extent than before is what we might bluntly call the "dumping" of very challenging cases into our shelter. At times, it appears that no other agency wants to follow up on an individual, or that he simply "falls through the cracks" of the available assistance programs. One example is William, who had stayed at DIMH a few years back and then moved from one shelter or mental health facility to another, finally ending up back at DIMH. William has no skills, a low level of education, significant mental health issues, and no capacity to secure a job or to hold on to one. DIMH staff worked diligently to try to find a suitable place for William. No one

seemed to care about him, and he was often difficult for us to manage with his incessant talking and lack of ability to be of much help around the shelter. Following many months of effort, staff were able to place him in a rare opening in a home operated by NAMI (the National Alliance on Mental Illness.) DIMH obtained the furniture and other items William needed and moved him in, where he appears to be content and stable.

Such cases take a tremendous amount of time and energy. With a small staff and high demand for shelter beds, scarce resources that might be utilized to move ten or fifteen men into productive lives are spent, instead, on such challenging cases; but who else will do it? Our meetings with and memos to senior officials have not resulted in any changes. It is apparent that there is a lack of resources to assist the most vulnerable members of our community.

Resource Center

The daytime resource center continues to be a busy place. We regretted the departure and retirement of Breeta Littlefield, who launched this effort and served as its heart and motivating force for its initial year and a half. Breeta moved to sunny Florida and is missed; but we are grateful for the great team of volunteers who continue to keep it running. Some staffing changes now result in expanded hours under the coordination of Rose Murphy, whose calm and encouraging personality has already proven valuable as a front-desk person and site supervisor. Staff report that between 400 and 500 unique individuals are assisted in the resource center annually. Perhaps this is the best estimate of the number of adults who experience homelessness in our community each year.

Case Management

Charlotte Boone and Corey Clampitt are our case managers, and it is worth describing what they do. *Each* must maintain a caseload of 35 individuals as a condition of grant funding; so it's clear that they assist more than those who reside in the DIMH shelter at any given time. Charlotte's focus is on shelter residents, and her office is in the shelter so that she is most accessible to them. Her efforts have contributed much to the high rate of employment and success among shelter guests this past year. Corey is located mainly in the Resource Center, with some hours in the shelter to reach those available only during the evening and some at Walt Bagley Hall to assist those in transitional housing. Among the most difficult and remarkable cases of his assistance are those who are still homeless and who come to the Resource Center for help. Not everyone is eligible for case management: DIMH insists that these resources be utilized for those who are most motivated and, therefore, likely to achieve success in their quest for employment, housing, and stability. Both Charlotte and Corey continue to take advantage of training opportunities to increase their own skills and capacity to address the challenges of the population we serve. DIMH is proud of them!

Management

We are fortunate to have Lisa Davis as our executive director and job developer, as she oversees all operations on a daily basis. Herb Konowitz (vice chair) and Jeanine Kleimo (chair) continue to be involved on a daily basis, with board member and treasurer Kathy Lessard keeping the books. All worked together to improve financial operations this year and to undergo an audit of 2015. This is available electronically by request to interfaithdover@verizon.net.

Our Staff

In addition to those mentioned above, we have additional personnel who work in our shelter and transitional housing:

- Ivey Wilson—a former shelter guest—currently manages Walt Bagley Hall.
- Jason Carboni and Paul Adamson—also former shelter guests—reside in the apartment above the shelter and serve as evening or overnight supervisors in the shelter. Both are available to assist with a wide range of tasks, including picking up donations of food and other items and helping in the kitchen. Jason is pursuing a degree in human services at DelTech.
- Adam Degnan is long-time overnight supervisor in the shelter.
- AnnMarie Rash volunteered in the Resource Center and now serves as part-time office manager. She will begin classes at DelTech in March.
- Nona McNatt continues to be our "Tuesday and Friday" lady at the front desk. Her nursing skills are put to good use taking blood pressure and diabetes tests along with arranging for medical care needed by shelter residents and users of the Resource Center.

Our Funding

Our program budget comes from several sources. During 2016, we operated with the following funds:

- $100,000 from the Office of Community Services, DE Department of Health & Human Services
- $97,900 from the Delaware Criminal Justice Council
- $91,298 from First State Community Action Agency/Community Services Block Grant
- $22,000 from the City of Dover's Community Development Block Grant
- $15,000 from State of Delaware's Grant-In-Aid program
- $6,000 from the Delaware State Housing Authority

Total grant funds of $332,198 were supplemented by local donations and in-kind contributions for which we are most grateful.

Funds spent on the shelter alone mean that the average cost of enabling a homeless man to regain a productive life is $905, or a cost of $20 per man for each 24-hour period he is in the shelter. Those in transitional housing pay rent that is designed to cover lease or debt service and other operating costs.

Our Impact

Beyond the numbers noted earlier in this report, it is worth pointing out that those who are employed are no longer homeless, but are contributing members of our economy. They are now earning approximately $3.5 million and are paying taxes on it, more than replenishing the public funds spent to operate the shelter. Their earnings are primarily spent locally, generating additional spending and employment as well.

Our Appreciation

As they say, *it takes a village.* We are blessed to have the engagement of many faith communities and organizations as we endeavor to feed and shelter the homeless each year. We would not be able to assist so many to achieve so much success without your help. THANK YOU to all who have served a meal, spent hours in the Resource Center, brought in donations, and contributed in so many ways to making it possible for the Dover Interfaith Mission for Housing to have this impact.

Our Board of Directors

Jeanine Kleimo, Chair (Christ Episcopal Church)
Herb Konowitz, Vice Chair (Congregation Beth Sholom)
Kathy Lessard, Treasurer (Holy Cross)
Dot Kashner, Secretary (Trinity Wesleyan Church)

Dr. Jerome Abrams
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Jessie Green, Star Hill AME Church
Bishop Nelson Lewis, Mt. Carmel Church
Rev. Ellis Louden, Mt. Zion AME Church
Michael McCann, MBA
Mohamed Sami Essoulh, Islamic Society of Central DE
Jeff Shockley, St. Andrew's Lutheran Church
Rev. Ellen Witko, People's Church of Dover

In Memoriam

Anthony Hines—a former guest and long-time night supervisor—passed away this year. We also lost Perry Bratcher, who served as Wesley United Methodist Church's representative on our board, and Rev. Richard Avant, who represented Calvary Baptist and the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance and who was the board's founding Vice Chair. We mourn the loss of these wonderful men who applied their concerns and talents to help the homeless.

It is our hope that we continue to engage the community to improve the lives of those in need.

At the end of the year, I hope that each of us is able to say *I have never been shown such kindness.*

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Dover Public Library

The Dover Public Library serves people of all ages, regardless of gender, age or station in life. In short, the Library serves everyone.

In addition to the traditional library service such as readers' advisory, reference, preschool storytimes, and cultural enrichment programs, the Library offers non-traditional services such as:

- Job Center walk-in assistance for employment, Mondays and Wednesdays weekly
- APEX Pardons & Expungements counseling, Mondays weekly
- Re-entry counseling and intake with the Rick VanStory center monthly
- Financial coaching and counseling with Stand by Me monthly
- Weekly classes on budgeting, financing and saving
- Computer classes weekly for a variety of software packages and basic computer and internet skills
- Seeking Safety Support Group offered twice monthly
- COPE Health Screening and services van from the Brandywine Counseling and Community Services Center monthly
- Diabetes Education quarterly from the Delaware Diabetes Self-Management Program
- Resource Guide for Kent County and state-wide assistance for those in need
- Information and registration for the Affordable Care Act weekly

All our programs are always free of charge.