Mayor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Homelessness

March 30, 2017

Minutes

APPROVED

Attending: Yvonne Biddle Heisler; Theresa Wolham (RVCC-PATH); Kevin Gaines (RVRC-PATH); Sue Harris; Aaron Appling; Mark Harmon; Dr. Jerry Abrams; Bill Farley; Rebecca Martin; Robert Appling; Sandra Appling; Katrina Stubbs; Elizabeth Jones; Priscilla Kelbaugh; Jeanine Kleimo; Cathi Kopera; Kim Brockenbrough; Jeffrey Hynson; Brian Lewis; Will Garfinkel; Gregg Bunkley; Margie Cyr

Becky Martin moved approval of the minutes. Bill Farley seconds. All were in favor.

Theresa Wolham and Kevin Gaines from the Rick VanStory – PATH program were introduced.

Cathi Kopera and Sue Harris gave an overview of the Tiny Homes Project. It is planned to be an affordable village supported by shared resources, self-governed, self-managed and cooperatively run. It will cost $12,000-$18,000 per unit to build. The group is seeking a donation of land. Supportive services such as social, medial and counseling services are planned. It will be a LEED design and environmentally sensitive. The group doesn't believe that large projects/group buildings work and are reminiscent of city "projects." The residents will be required to help. The desire is to have little reliance on government assistance. Residents will participate in the infrastructure support; the basic utilities and fees will be paid by the residents.

Kent County has rewritten the Code for campgrounds. The site is being worked on. There will be a public hearing for the neighbors.

The cabins will be 200 square foot and will house one person. It is planned to start with 15-20 cabins. It will be governed by a board (Port Hope Delaware). The community will be a blend of people who can't move on and others who can be helped to move forward. They are seeking donations and grants.

Kevin Gaines and Theresa Wolham gave an overview of the Rick VanStory Center. They provide mental health services in the homeless population. They assist with ID's, food stamps, SSI. They work with the local governments. They offer a re-entry program for the recently incarcerated.

The Beamen Safe Space is a sleeping facility for males located in New Castle County. There is a day program which opens at 7:00 AM. Substance abuse and medication problems are dealt with before people are homed. There is a walk-in center in Dover which is open Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM.

Theresa is the case manager and she goes to meet with people wherever they are. There are three case managers in Kent County and four in New Castle County. They respond twenty-four hours a day.

Mental health issues: PTSD, sexual traumas, depression are the most common that they see, Sometimes it is a matter of getting back to the correct medications. 15% of the population is severely mentally ill. It takes time to build trust. They interface with Mobile Crisis, Home of the

Brave, Connections and other service agencies. All the workers are peers of those they serve. All it takes for them to respond is a referral and directions of where to go.

Jeanine Kleimo, Becky Martin and Chris Cooper have drafted a proposal for housing the homeless. The proposal addresses:

- A path is needed for people to move on to the next step
- There needs to be access to shelter, case management and supportive services on site: physical and health services
- Employment assistance
- Food
- Shelter for families
- Transitional, longer-term housing, continued services, linkages with the greater community services
- Affordable community living and assistance getting to the next step

The ideal site would be a single site large enough for fifty beds for immediate and safe housing; and another fifty beds for transitional residents. It is unknown who would manage. A separate entity would serve as the leadership board. This would most likely need to be a non-profit entity.

The DHSS grant is very complicated and demanding. Twenty-four grants will be given nationwide. Would need to have a lot of collaborations which we don't have yet. The deadline is too close to apply.

All proposals for housing the homeless will compete for the same grant money. The other option is to raise taxes to fund it.

Jeanine's proposal depends on the financial commitments of all participants. The outline doesn't have a cost estimate but that is the next step. It doesn't need full occupancy to survive.

There is a need to approach the homeless situation for a couple of different paths: to compete for the same funds and to be critical of other paths doesn't benefit anyone.

The City of Dover Code needs to be looked at to help make it easier for this type of housing. Sometimes it is a matter of obtaining a variance.

The next meeting will be a discussion of the proposals presented. Jeanine, Brian and Becky will meet to flesh it out and they will send the complete proposal to the members of the Panel.

The next meeting will be 4:00 on Thursday, April 20 at the Dover Public Library.