

Homeless Issues Committee
Minutes of the 3-25-14 Meeting

Members Present: Michael Basford, Sup. Nick Zweifel, Ronnie Barbett, Sup. Heidi Wegleitner, Ald. Larry Palm, Sue Kozubek, Ald. Marsha Rummel, Sup. Leland Pan, Ulysses Williams

Others: Lynn Green, Cheryl Elkinton, Steven Dougherty, Brenda Konkel, David Peters, Amber Thompson, Erik Femrite, Elizabeth Altizer

Chair Basford called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m.

Approval of Minutes from 2-11-14: Motion by Palm, seconded by Zweifel, to approve the minutes of 2-11-14 with a technical edit that Alderman Joseph Strasser should be Alderman John Strasser under Proposed Joint City-County Homeless Issues Committee. Approved as amended 7-0.

Chair Report: None

Introductions: Members introduced themselves to the new member of the Committee, Sue Kozubek.

Public Comment: Steven Dougherty expressed concerns regarding inmates being released without a place to live.

Cheryl Elkinton described the 24 hour shelter that she is working on and expressed concern that there is no transportation to and from the storage facility at the Social Justice Center.

Brenda Konkel informed members that the bracelet program for released inmates requires an address and a phone and that she had a long list of issues for the PP&J Committee. She also noted that people who have "Obama phones" need to make at least one call per month and can't if they are incarcerated.

Annual Limits & Extension Policies for Shelter Providers: Dave Peters indicated that the current system doesn't work and expressed a desire to have the minimum no ban temperature raised from 20 to 32 degrees, extend the number of days, and have more providers.

Amber Thompson noted that she is a case manager at the YWCA. She strongly advocated for extending the limits beyond 90 days and changing the lifetime limit of two stays. She felt that the current rules force families out of Dane County.

Erik Femrite addressed issues with the shelter bans and Safe Haven. He indicated that he knows of no one, however, who has filed a grievance with these providers.

Elizabeth Altizer expressed concerns about the Salvation Army – women and families are being turned away, staff are not doing anything about abuse between residents,

there are rumors that they are selling their building, the food is terrible, etc. She noted that shelters for people with special needs are needed.

Cheryl Elkinton expressed concerns that the staff at the shelters are not competent, the lottery system at the Salvation Army is “crazy”, and there are problems with the new storage facility at the Social Justice Center.

Wegleitner moved, Rummel seconded, a motion to support a 120 day limit as requested by the family shelter providers. Palm expressed concern for capacity issues and the need for additional capacity. Motion passed 9-0.

Kozubek noted that there is more room for cots at the Salvation Army and that the no ban temperature limit needs to be raised above 20 degrees. Zweifel reminded everyone about fire codes. Zweifel moved, Palm seconded, a motion that if shelter beds are available that vacant space should be filled on a first come, first served basis. Motion passed 9-0.

Williams indicated that the no ban temperature limit should be 40 degrees according to the National Coalition for the Homeless. Williams moved, Palm seconded, a motion that both the men and women overnight shelter stays be increased to 120 days. After discussion, the motion was withdrawn by the authors.

Wegleitner noted that before this action was taken she felt the Committee needed more details of the contractual language and needed to hear from the providers what the impact of the change would mean to their services.

Barbett express support for raising the no ban temperature limit above 20 degrees.

Wegleitner recommended that a future meeting be held at one of the shelters.

Palm moved, Wegleitner seconded, a motion that staff produce a mini-report of how providers feel about a 120 day stay limit and a no ban temperature change including the cost impact. Motion carried 9-0.

Such Other Business as Allowed by Law: Chair Basford asked Lynn Green what the current status of the Day Resource Center is. Green informed that Committee that the County continues to actively negotiate with Porchlight to purchase the current Hospitality House site on Martin Street. Basford expressed an interest in the Committee being involved in the Hospitality House negotiations. Williams questioned if the Porchlight van was going to the new Day Resource Center when it opens. Rummel inquired as to why the MARC East location was no longer being pursued. The Committee expressed an interest in having Dane County DOA and Real Estate staff at the next meeting to talk about the Day Resource Center siting.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:20 p.m.

Recorded by Lynn Green

Note: These minutes are the notes of the recorder and are subject to change at a subsequent meeting of the committee.