



TOWN COUNCIL
Committee to Assess Homelessness in Hyannis
Selectmen's Conference Room

Thursday February 25, 2016
MEETING MINUTES

I. BUSINESS

A. Roll Call:

Members present: Chair of Committee Councilor Jennifer Cullum, Councilor James Tinsley; Councilor Debra Dagwan, Deb Krau; Councilor James Crocker Jr., **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Paul MacDonald, Chief of Police; Lt. J. Challies; Sgt. J. Ellis; Representative Brian Mannal; Councilor Paul Hebert; Elizabeth Wurf bain, Main Street Business Improvement District (BID) **ABSENT:** Councilor Frederick Chirigotis, Alison O'Toole

Chair of the Committee Councilor Jennifer Cullum opened up the meeting at 5:35 with public comment. Seeing no one from the public wanting to speak Chair of the committee closed public comment. Chair of the committee asked to address one of Councilor James Crocker's concerns when he arrives from the last meeting. The Chair asked the committee for help putting together a list of actions items tonight to start to address some of the concerns going forward, she sees one of these action items being how to get the people out of the woods. The warmer weather is coming and let's face it, they are going to go back into the woods once that starts.

Councilor Dagwan said she would like to see more data regarding the social service organizations to get an idea of who they are serving now, Chair of the committee said that would be closing the gap between the services provided and who they service. Deb Krau mentioned keeping the attention and support and action of closing the Noah shelter and reopening another one under a transitional program and model.

Chief Paul MacDonald said that the outreach is very important and crucial to getting those out of the woods; Sgt. Jennifer Ellis said the only ones right now going onto the woods are the police officers, we need more outreach workers to go with us to get these people the services they need. We as police officers are not trained social workers, we only go in there now because we have done it for so long now, we are used to it, No one else has the training to go in, it takes a special kind of training to reach those people, Chief Paul MacDonald does not want anyone else going in there because it is not safe to do so, most these individuals are addicted, or mental health issues, and in some cases the persons are wanted felons. Deb Krau mentioned that there is no way to accurately measure the number of homeless, we can get a number from the NOAH shelter to say that 400 people pass by or through them counted once a year, and the police can say they have a log of 400 individuals they have come across once in a year, but what about those they have not come in contact with. The county has also tried to count as well, but we need to quantify the point in time number.

Chief Paul MacDonald said the 400 individuals he speaks of are the number of individuals the police have come across in a twelve month period that have described themselves as homeless.

Chair of the committee asked what Ms. Krau felt was a better way to quantify the number if the police and NOAH come up with the same number, how would we do this. The Main Street initiative has a way of doing this by creating a list. Chair of the committee said we should start with the people that are in the woods, we could get this number very easily. Chair of the committee asked the Chief of Police to get a solid number of those that are in the woods. The Chief said he would be able to get these numbers and bring them to the next meeting.

Chair of the committee introduced Assistant Town manager Mark Ells, to have him explain to the committee about the meetings he has had with Heidi Nelson, Chief Executive Officer of the Duffy Health Center, which is the biggest provider of health care to the homeless. He has gotten more involved in the last three years on this issue working at the county level and the regional level as well as in the Main Street Initiative. Specific with outreach he reached out to the Duffy center because they serve the homeless population. They are the biggest provider of the homeless, he went over to the Duffy center and received a tour of the facility, and it gave him a very good idea of the services they provide to the types of people they serve. He had conversations with Heidi Nelson, the Director of the Duffy Center, and told her he would be speaking to this committee after their conversation. They jumped right into the discussion after the tour regarding the homelessness, and discussed the major issues surrounding Hyannis and how to get the people out of the woods. The major areas that he and Ms. Nelson agreed on that the social service agencies need to address were: (1) POLICE AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT, (2) SHELTER, BOTH LONG TERM AND SHORT TERM AND (3) OUTREACH. Assistant Town Manager asked the Duffy Center if they had outreach workers there that could assist the police when they go into the woods to get these people out. Duffy was aware that we had a part time clinician, but it is limited in the services they provide; at first they were very hesitant, expressed concerns regarding the grant funding that was provided for the outreach workers was not designed for that type of outreach work, going into the camps and such. They expressed concerns about the workers safety when they go into the woods to do outreach work with these individuals, Assistant Town Manager assured the Duffy Center that if the grant money provided such outreach workers of this type to go out into the woods that they would always have a police escort, and that the safety of the outreach worker would be the first priority. That morphed into another conversation that if the Duffy Center had an outreach worker would they allow that outreach worker to do that type of work. Heidi Nelson answered that right now they do not have an outreach worker that could do that, and they did not have the funding for one, but that if the town was in support of more outreach workers, she would look into funding if that would be something the town would support. Assistant Town Manager Mark Ells said he did not take this as a no, but that the Duffy Center would like to discuss further. He did not take the conversation as a negative one, but took the conversation as they would like to help get the resources in place that are available to us as a town to get this started and going.

Deb Krau said it was her understanding that Housing Assistance Corporation (HAC) has funding for an outreach worker. Rick Presbrey from HAC answered from the public that they did receive funding for one, and have hired interviewed recently for this position and are hiring someone very soon for the position who will start shortly to do this type of outreach work. Chair of the committee said this is great news, I think we can all agree on that, great news. The Chair of the Committee said she understands the problem is huge, but if you look at the local police department and what they are taxed with everyday and reallocating money in different ways to address this problem, that really should not be the sole burden of the police department, if the problem itself allowed the police department to find a grant to get their own outreach worker, and then we just heard that HAC also received funding for this type of individual then why can't our healthcare provider of the homeless to the same we need to get them to step up to the plate and do the same. They care for these people, so they should also be part of the solution and not wait for the rest of us to solve the problem. If it requires a letter of support to the Duffy Center from the Town Council, I am sure we could get one for them to get the support for the funding mechanism they need, to have them turn a blind eye to helping us in the solution, she can't accept.

Councilor Dagwan asked if the Duffy Center deals with the homeless right now; the answer was yes; that is all they serve, it's their mission statement. Councilor Dagwan asked do they know how many they serve. If this is all the clientele they serve then they should know who and how many. Assistant Town Manager said he could probably get those numbers from Heidi Nelson and report back at another meeting. Chair of the Committee asked if the Assistant Town Manager had a good dialogue going forward with Heidi, he answered yes, the Chair said then maybe you could tell her that we would like to get a letter of support together for the facility in support of getting funding for an outreach worker.

Assistant Town manager said he would tell her in conversation when he had one with her. The Duffy Center can be given high fives for servicing the homeless population, but what are they doing to stop it from moving forward or joining in the movement to end it all together; they should be helping with this issue.

Deb Krau mentioned that there used to be a lot more outreach in prior years but one of the challenges we always faced was the coordination of these outreach workers, it is great to have all these service agencies get the outreach workers needed to service these people; but if you do not have a central location for the coordination of the outreach worker, the services are not provided correctly because no one knows when the others are going out, or who they have serviced, or what services were provided. We need a central location for these outreach workers to be given a schedule of when to go, where to go, and what has been done so far.

Mr. Presbrey stated that his outreach worker when they are hired(which has not been yet) will be working with the police. He has been told that even the outreach worker when they service these people are limited in what they can do in a legal way, so that is when that outreach worker would have to be with a police officer so that the police have a different jurisdiction and rights that we would have to use in conjunction with the outreach worker, so as far as he was concerned his outreach worker is going to be tied to an officer. He will take his direction from the police. Chair of the committee mentioned that also the police are down to one officer know in the field that deals with the homeless, Chief MacDonald said yes that is correct right now, but soon it will be up to 4 officers, and also looking into a summer program for officers that would like to do this in the summer along Main Street.

Chair of the Committee asked the Barnstable Police if they were comfortable in coordinating the outreach workers if they were assigned to them. Sgt. Challies said she would like to see a central location for these services, it is the only way for this to work, a place for the homeless to go if they just needed a pair of socks, or something else; so if there was an area that was centrally located you could coordinate the efforts out of it because they homeless go to that one location if they know they can get supplies there, right now the supplies are so spread out that you would not be able to coordinate an outreach worker to go to all the areas that supply the homeless, it is too spread out; and they go everywhere to get what they need. Right now the only areas we can count on is the local coffee houses they all go there, and we can gather them, but if there was another area designated as well it would help us out a lot. Sgt. Challies asked if there was space at HAC. Mr. Presbrey said he may have space in the West Main Street office; however that location is not assessable to most because it is so far away from Main Street, they can't get there, but he is willing to have a conversation regarding this with the police.

Representative Brian Mannal mentioned that the needle exchange program may be another area to approach since they serve a major population here in Hyannis, they would like to take a more proactive approach and get a better relationship with the town, so we may be able to enlist their help as well. They may be able to lend some staff for help as well. Cape Cod Healthcare recently replaced Cheryl Bartlett with someone; we may be able to work with them as well with some of their outreach workers to assist the police when they go into the camps to get them to move out. Chair of the Committee asked the Barnstable Police to look into locations they believe would be a central location and let the Committee now where this might be. Lt. J. Challies said if this could all be centrally located at Duffy since they serve the people. Assistant Town Manager Mark Ells said he sees the first step is getting all the heads of the service agencies together so that they are all on the same page as us, and then the coordination of those services can begin. He would like to get a committee together to address just that and then report back to this committee the findings that they came up with.

Councilor James Crocker said he could not agree more with the Assistant Town Manager more we have a problem trying to identify an actual kick off date, and also identifying the players in this problem, so we need to identify all those that have a role in this, and then after that happens we can come up with a plan on how to move forward and deal with it. He believes this committee needs to meet more often to get the matrix in order to get this kicked off in a timely manner. The Chair of the

Committee would like everyone to list those services right now out there working with the homeless in an outreach capacity.

- 1) Vin Fin
- 2) Elliott Group (State contract)
- 3) Salvation Army
- 4) Housing Assistance Corporation (HAC)
- 5) NOAH
- 6) Duffy Health Center
- 7) Barnstable Police Department (BPD)
- 8) Cape Cod Health Care
- 9) Department of Children and Family Services (DCF)
- 10) Council of Churches
- 11) Veterans Affairs
- 12) Department of Mental Health (DMH)

Chair of the Committee would like to choose a closer date to get some objectives that we have out there in place so that we can invite some of these folks here to discuss the first steps. Councilor Crocker said the next meeting should be creating a document to send to these folks that explains the reason they have been contacted to attend such a meeting, then they can have the letter ahead of time so that they can at least send someone to represent them. Chair of the Committee said the first objective is to get those people out of the woods and keep them out of the woods and not allow others in. Deb Krau said again who is going to coordinate this. The town has said forever that they can't be the one to get involved in being the facilitator of this. Councilor Crocker asked if the Town has a liaison to such an issue. Assistant Town Manager Mark Ells said he is the liaison from the town to these agencies. He will be responsible in bringing these agencies together for a discussion. He will come back to this committee with the recommendations. Assistant mark Ells said that we need to look at all the agencies involved, and also our legal purview of the town and what we can do legally. Representative Mannal said what about the fire departments, should they be involved as well, they all handle these calls as well, so they need to be at the table. Sgt. Challies mentioned again that the schedule is great to have, with all those outreach workers on it, but if no one is coordinating the efforts, then we are spinning our wheels and wasting time. There needs to be a central location and centralizing of the schedule and someone to make sure the schedule is adhered to.

The Chair of the Committee said out of the list above the only ones that actually out on the street doing outreach work is 7 out of the ones listed. So we will start with those that are actually out there. Deb Krau also mentioned that you should have some out there that need to be out there so they learn the skills needed to talk to these individuals when they come in for their meals, some of the people that hand out the food to the homeless do not even talk to them because they do not know how, it would help to train some of these individuals to engage in a conversation so that we can gain their trust to be able to help them. Councilor James Crocker said we should not leave anyone out, they all need to be in the conversation.

Assistant Town Manager asked if there was an objective and a timeline set forth that we can all follow after we leave here tonight. Assistant Town Manager mentioned as well the plan after we get the individuals out of the woods, then what, we need to think about this as well, where are we going to put them after we remove them from their camps. Councilor Crocker said March 20, 2016 we should have a plan in place to be able to address the individuals that are in the woods. Chair of the Committee said exactly, we need a plan for that as well. Assistant Town Manager mentioned that his meetings he has had with people at the regional level as well, and working with those communities that this impacts on a regional level might be able to come up with funding or ideas as a whole to handle the housing issue as well. Representative Mannal asked if there were other communities we should be involving on this discussion, possibly the Yarmouth Police as well, as I am sure the population of homeless crosses over the town line into Yarmouth as well.

Deb Krau said she thinks it wonderful when the Main Street Initiative first started, there were many, many agencies that dealt with the population, but it was the coordinated Case Management where there was one person responsible for the clients they serviced. This does not work unless there is a coordinated effort of outreach workers and a plan on place for follow up and care. It was one Agency in charge of the entire program. The Chair said that this committee should be the ones to suggest the policy to coordinate this effort, Councilor Crocker said and also the follow up as well. Deb Krau said this also has to be put into a data base and a record needs to be kept of everyone that these outreach workers service.

Chair of the Main Street Initiative spoke to the Committee about the unique person it takes to talk to the individuals in the woods, and she will bring documents to the next meeting for the Committee to look at that have to do with the studies they conducted regarding the homeless. Councilor James Crocker said another place they need to address is the housing. The Committee needs to find out what type of housing these individuals will need once they are out of the woods and the camps they have built. We need to know this ahead of time as well.

Chair of the Committee listed the first item of action for this Committee was:

- (1.) Get the people out of the woods
- (2.) By March 20, 2016 we need someone that will coordinate with the police for the patrol process so we do not get the influx of people into the woods.

Chief of Police said that he would be the one to coordinate the outreach workers that go into the woods to talk too these people. He does not want anyone going in there without a police officer anyway, so if the outreach worker is going in the woods it will be with us.

- (3.) Letter of support for the Duffy Center for funding mechanism or grants for an outreach worker

Councilor Crocker said by March 20, we should have the letter done and sent to the individuals that are doing the outreach now, and be able to bring those people to the table to let them know what we plan going forward.

More specifics on this and we need to make sure the tools are in place for the police that once they move the people. Councilor Crocker said we need to also touch base with our legal department to find out our legal rights when we start moving these folks. Are there signs posted where these camps are located so that we have the right to move them, we need to make sure that we have done everything we can legally in this town correctly before we just start moving folks. We need to know what we can do right before we do something wrong.

Chair of the Committee asked for any more comments before they adjourn, Representative Mannal wanted to make sure he told the committee about a commitment from a piece of legislation on the floor right now at the State House, he has already had conversations at the Senate Ways and Means and they are proposing 250,000 for the re location of the NOAH shelter. Representative Mannal will keep the Committee informed as soon as it passes. Chair of the Committee said that is great news.

Chair of the Committee asked for a motion to adjourn; Councilor James Crocker Jr. made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Debra Dagwan, all members voted in favor of adjournment.

ADJOURNED: 6:55PM

NEXT MEETING: March 2, 2016 5:30pm
March 9, 2016 5:30pm

