



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

Wednesday March 2, 2016
MEETING MINUTES

I. BUSINESS

A. Roll Call:

Members present: Chair of Committee Councilor Jennifer Cullum, Councilor Debra Dagwan, Deb Krau; Councilor Frederick Chirigotis, Councilor James Crocker Jr., **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Paul MacDonald, Chief of Police; Lt. J. Challies; **ABSENT:** Councilor James Tinsley, 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 discussed the creation of a letter to be sent to the Social Service Agencies and to find out the type of services they provide and what we are asking for to get everyone on the same page as far as outreach. Deb Krau asked if this letter was going to be sent to all Social Service Agencies or just those with outreach, because at the last meeting we had discussed the ones with the outreach ones. Chair of the Committee said those that have active cases and those that deal with the Salvation Army and Council of Churches etc.

Chair of the Committee introduced Mark Ells, Assistant Town manager, as far as outreach he believes there are plans and networks and committees in place to gather the information, he wanted to make sure that this Committee had a clear understanding and timeline as far as what we are doing and when we are doing it so that it can be effectively communicated to everyone we intend to inform. We need to make sure that all of our coordinated efforts are assisting the police in what they need to do to achieve the goal of removing these folks out of the woods; we need to make sure we have a plan to put these individuals somewhere when we move them. Some of the observations he shared with the committee last meeting was that most of the very good agencies around are separated from each other, so if we can bring all of them together to be successful, so once that we start to approach the camps and move these individuals that there are services set up to handle the flow and care moving forward. He has had conversations as early as today with Heidi Nelson, CEO of the Duffy Health Center with regards to outreach; she plans on coming to our next meeting to talk about possibly securing funding for outreach and case workers. All of our conversations we have had are all positive ones.

Chair of the Committee said there was also discussion regarding the scope of the problem in the woods, and we had asked Paul MacDonald, Chief of Police, and Lt. J. Challies to come and possibly give us real numbers of the people we are dealing with currently at the camps. Chief of Police Paul MacDonald said he went to the camps along Nantucket Street, and Old Colony, down behind St Francis, the one in Independence Park. These camps currently are unoccupied, so there is no one living in them right now, the number we have is very low at approximately 6-8 individuals. Those camps that the Town Council members visited there are no one in there right now, but as soon as the weather starts to warm up they come and occupy them again. It's not that they have left the camps totally, its because the weather has been cold so most are couch surfing at people homes, but once the weather becomes warmer they come into the streets and back at the camps. Chair of the Committee said then we need a plan in place to stop them from entering the camps again. Some of the camps abut peoples land in neighborhoods. She believes that we need to tackle those first. The Chief said that most of those camps

we consider priority, those that are close to neighborhoods and land that touches residents land, we clear those first. The active camps that he looked recently are Kalmus Beach, Ocean Street, and one by the Airport. The plan is to post signs in the next two weeks on the various sites used by these individuals to say there is no trespassing; he has worked with the Department of Public Works to get the signs made. The Chief said the key to success is the outreach workers; we need them on board now to get a head of the problem. We need individuals to be out there with us as we approach these individuals to hopefully get them the services they need but if we do not have the outreach workers, then we will not be successful.

Chair of the Committee asked once we get the outreach workers and case managers make contact to you and you remove these individuals, where are they going to go, what approach you are going to use to make sure that services follow these individuals and continues. The Chief answered we will use the same approach as the Main Street Initiative; we identify the individuals that are homeless and what the needs of the individual are, once that was identified they got the individual in touch with the right services for that individual and the case worker did the follow up. There were 93 individuals that we helped in this program and those 93 are no longer on the streets, so we know it works, but it is a team effort, it can't be done by the police alone.

Chair of the Committee discussed the calendar that was going to be kept at the Police Station for the outreach workers coordination of when they were going and to where. It was an effort on her part to alleviate the stress to the police department having to play the role of case worker, outreach worker and police officer, so she would like to take any criticism regarding this from the police officers. Chief MacDonald said he needs to be the one in charge of the schedule, he does not want anyone going into these camps without an officer present; so it only makes sense that they coordinate this with the outreach workers and the case managers and the services the individuals receive. Councilor Chirigotis mentioned that this is exactly what we have been trying to accomplish is the triage of the individuals and once we have all that in place and we know what services the person needs how do we coordinate the services together. There are social service agencies that may not have the outreach workers or the case managers to handle the service needs, so we need to see if there is a way to get some of the agencies these types of workers so that we have enough that can handle the individuals; another issue that Councilor Chirigotis mentioned is a lot of the camps are currently unoccupied, but if they become occupied we are going to have to be dealing with a whole lot of other issues to remove them once they have staked claim and have their personnel belongings there on the piece of land. How do we prevent the type of camping that happens in this land where we all know where these camps are? Chief MacDonald answered that April 1, 2016 he is going to have additional officers on the ground to handle these individuals as they start to show up at these camps, along with the signs being posted. When the signs are posted it gives us a little more leverage to move them. Councilor Chirigotis asked what the town can do to help the police coordinate the efforts to keep them out of these camps. Councilor Chirigotis said that he is aware that funding is going to be an issue, if we need fencing, signs, and more officers. Mark Ells, Assistant Town Manager said that he believes that once there is activity or movement in the area that is not unseen activity, if it's an area is open, then there is no cover in the area, camps do not happen. Most of the camps are in low lying areas, or heavy brush areas because they are hidden, so we need to get creative in possibly clearing the most popular camps out and opening them up to be seen once they are cleaned out. We need to change the use of the property. If it is remote and wooded then you can't see it. It is difficult to move people once they are using the land for passive use. There are lots of resources out there for us to use, again we need to coordinate all of those agencies, and bring them all to the table to talk about how we all do this together. This committee needs to come up with the When, Where, and how first before bringing them to a meeting so that we have a plan that we can execute to all of them and they follow it. Chair of the Committee said that the idea of using the land that is currently occupied for these camps for different uses is a great idea, but we need a plan that will work now as a stop gap solution so that once the camps are cleared they do not try and build it back. Chair of the Committee would like to send out a letter or a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to all the service agencies currently actively

servicing these individuals to let them know that this effort is going to happen and to find out what type of services are being offered, whether it is feeding them or giving them clothing, but we need to understand what each one does and provides and if it is broken, there may be a lot of agencies out there to help, but they are not delivering the services correctly or following up, it's a big puzzle and the pieces are scattered everywhere. The police need to remove themselves from the Social Service delivery and focus more on the enforcement of keeping them out. The Chair mentioned also that she will support funding for fences and signs and such, but will not spend another tax payer dime to these agencies that are not doing their part to end this problem. The Social Services agencies need to step up and do their part, and until she sees this happening there will be no funding from taxpayer monies to these agencies in town. Deb Krau said that the thing we need to keep in mind that putting a group of social services in a room that, however they are all competing for the same federal funding; what is key is someone is in charge, and someone maintains the list of who is the lead outreach worker for this person then when the outreach workers believe they have a chance to get them into social services, it does not mean that the individuals are ready for these services, but when they are ready to receive the services they have to be able to be turned over to a case manager who will coordinate the rest of the care, and it is truly in that coordination who will get the success, you can have a whole lot of case managers and outreach workers, but unless the efforts are coordinated it will not be successful. Chair of the Committee said we are 80% there but we need to close the gap, so maybe we can create a list of who will be involved and get that list for our next meeting, we can try and find a spot for them to meet regularly, find a leader, keep a list of who is in charge of who, and then when there are individuals ready and that the right services are being offered for them. Deb Krau said that once that individual makes that first step forward you have to keep with that person through the whole process from the start to the finish, this is the job of the coordinated case manager, otherwise they go back, it is easier to go back for these people then it is for them to go forward if you do not keep on them. This is how the Main Street Initiative did this, the last time this committee met there was 12 agencies that we listed, one of those agencies lost their contract, and the contract is with one of the ones already on our list, so that is good for us. Maybe we can just contact those we listed at our last meeting and have them detail what they expect the lead outreach worker and case manager and also to ask them for a list of case managers they have based on the grant funding and turn them over to a case manager and pull the outreach worker and the case manager is now responsible for that person going forward. SGT. J. Challies mentioned she feels we have to be careful in bringing these agencies to the table, it just does not stop with the case managers, there has to be resources after this to be able to offer these individuals. What happens is you have all these individuals being treated by the case managers, but where are you going to put these individuals after they are out of the woods and receiving care. There has to be somewhere these folks go, and the county and other communities have to be involved, whether there are vouchers available go for housing, when this happened before we had 93 individuals that were placed in homes in Yarmouth, so we were able to get all 93 homeless housed, and they have not returned to the streets since that. That is what made it work, was there were coordinated efforts with other communities that helped. Deb Krau mentioned she had heard that were vouchers available to them currently from HAC and Duffy, but there was a shortage of landlords, so is there some way we could educate the landlord's and see if we could expand this area, there was also going to be more vouchers coming from the state as well, but there are not enough houses for the vouchers. SGT. J. Challies said that when that happens you need a wraparound service with the case managers to make sure that when these individuals are placed in a home that they do not destroy it, or damage it, so that also is a portion of the case managers to follow up with these individuals once they are placed in homes. You can work to get a building or a facility that will house many then it would be easier to case manage and make that landlord more comfortable. Councilor Chirigotis said that it also affects the young individuals here as well, we do not have housing enough here on the town that can't afford to live here, so if there was a way that we could also service those as well, we have a lot of people here that are young professionals here that can't afford to live here or stay here, so the affordable housing issue is a real problem town wide.

Deb Krau would like to see the County do some landlord education. That would cover most of the issue, and it is in line with the mission statement of the Regional Council to Prevent Homelessness. Councilor Chirigotis mentioned that he remembers when there was one District Attorney that handled the Cape and Islands so he believes this is a significant group of people that are not Cape residents, how do we reach out to our borders , it's not just a Cape problem, it a regional problem.

Chair of Committee asked for public comment from anyone that may have a comment. Peter Cross from Hyannis spoke about the camp that is directly behind his hose and abuts his property. He is retired Middle school teacher and what he learned over the years was when he used to give out homework to bring home to do, but if the student does not understand the concept of the work, how can I expect them to complete the work. It is the same thing with these individuals in the woods, they need life skills in order to come out of the woods and live on their own, and these folks do not know how to live day to day in normal conditions which is why the camps look as they do. When you put these folks in an apartment they do not know what to do, they don't have the skills to get to an appointment they have, and they do not have the skills to buy food, so we need to expand our thinking and process.

Chair of the Committee said that she is aware that the new transitional program designed for the new Transitional living center has just that type of program built in to teach these folks life skills that will address some of your concerns. There is a retraining program designed. The Chair of the Committee said that absolutely that has to happen, but the focus right now for this committee is to make sure the individuals do not go back into the woods when the weather gets warm, and how we are going to do this.

Mark Ells asked the Chief about his boots on the ground how do you approach this, and where are the gaps; what do you need before the spring in order for this to work and not just go in a circle. The Chief said that that happens a lot, but he has looked into several programs that are going to allow more officers to patrol the areas they know that are popular with the camps, and keep moving them along each and every time we see some sort of activity there. Mark Ells asked the Chief if there was a specific agency that he knows of that would coordinate this effort so we can measure success, he is not familiar with everyone that would make this successful, what support we can lend to you to measure success. Chief MacDonald said that it is the coordinated efforts of the outreach workers and case managers we need.

Councilor Dagwan said she had a conversation with Lt. J. Challies regarding a woman she helped get housing and in a few months she was right back on the streets again. Councilor Dagwan said we also need some sort of assessment of these folks to identify the needs of these folks and what services they need, you as police officers deal with these folks every day, what are you seeing as the type of services these folks are going to need. Lt. J. Challies said ideally it would be a case worker or an outreach worker going out to access these individuals to identify the needs and services, but after that happens you need to be able to offer these folks services and housing and counseling or whatever else has been identified in that initial triage process. Some reconnect with families, some you can get them back in the shelter, but if that is the end of the road for them, they end up back on the streets. Councilor Dagwan asked if these folks need medical attention as well should we have an individual go in with a medical background as well to accompany the outreach worker to decide this. Lt. J. Challies said absolutely some need medical, but that is when Duffy Health Center helps with that.

Councilor Crocker said that we need to talk to the Assistant Town Manager regarding clearing these camp out now, this is an immediate problem, and he knows that there is a group of individuals that will do this work because I am the liaison the Public Works Commission, so he is aware of the individuals as well as the equipment that we have that can do this clearing of the camps. We could set aside some of the work orders that are not pressing work to assemble a crew to dismantle these camps now, so Mr. Assistant Manager when is this going to happen. We need to do this now, as in tomorrow or yesterday, if we wait they will all be back in there again and it is a whole other set off rules if we allow them to move back in with their belongings. Right now the camp are vacant, get them out of there, we have to make the move, get the horse power and move on this. Assistant Town Manager Mark Ells sated he will speak to the Chief tomorrow morning to coordinate this.

Peter Cross spoke again regarding the fencing, he pleads with them to put a fence up and signs or whatever it takes to keep these folk out. The individuals are looking for covered areas that are hidden , so if we open up these areas so that they are brushed and the trees are cut down so they are not hidden spots they will not build there because they can be seen.

Chair of the Committee asked about the possibility of putting up fences on town property, are we allowed to do this. Attorney Ruth Weil said that universal lawyer answer is it depends on how the land was acquired if it is municipal land there is no reason why you can't fence it because it is town owned, however if the land is conservation or land bank land there are certain laws that pertain to those parcels, so it would depend on the way the town acquired the land. Councilor Chirigotis asked how do we identify the property and how we acquired it, and how do we post signs on the property are we allowed to. Attorney Ruth Weil said she researched this and again it is fact specific; we have to be very careful one of the issues that comes into play is whether we criminalize the behavior by arresting people on the current camping regulations on Town property, she has had conversations with the police chief regarding this. She believes we need to work with a smaller group to decide what is enforceable and what is not. There is a way to craft it so it is constitutionally correct. Chair of the committee said that it is a good idea to get a small group together to discuss this. Ruth said that a member from this group would like to be involved in this. Councilor James Crocker said he would like to meet with Ruth to go over this.

The Chair of the Committee asked for a motion regarding the Department of Public Works (DPW) and clearing the camps.

Councilor James Crocker Jr. made a motion that we ask the Assistant Town Manager and the Director of the Department of Public Works, as well as the Police Chief to get a crew together from the DPW to enter the woods and remove debris at various locations that are considered camps. This motion was seconded by Councilor Frederick Chirigotis, all members present voted in favor of this motion.

The Chair of the Committee asked for a motion for a letter of Support for the Duffy Health Center.

Councilor Frederick Chirigotis made the motion of recommending to the full Council a letter of support to the Duffy Health Center supporting them in asking for funding for outreach workers or case managers. This motion was seconded by Councilor James Crocker Jr. All members present voted in favor of this motion.

Councilor James Crocker Jr. made a motion to ask the Assistant Town Manager to ask the Town Manager about all viable funding sources available for 1-2 outreach workers and case worker from the Town of Barnstable in April, in the event the Social Service areas do not have the outreach worker available so that we are not strangling the police with this task of being a Social Service Agency. This motion was seconded by Councilor Chirigotis. All members present voted in favor of this motion.

Deb Krau made a suggestion to ask the current day program to see if they have any classes they could provide for these individuals for life skills. Young people can take a course in the mortgage world, so we could provide this class of life skills, and if you graduate from this you will have a voucher available at the end for you. Deb Krau said she would take the idea back to the Day Center Steering Committee.

Councilor Crocker said if we want to make a difference we need to set up final dates, so that by a certain date this is going to start or happen.

The Chair of the Committee asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Councilor Chirigotis made a motion to accept the meeting minutes of January 20, 2016, this motion was seconded by Councilor James Crocker Jr. all members present voted in favor of accepting the meeting minutes of January 20, 2016.

The Chair of the Committee asked for a motion to approve the minutes of February 25, 2016. Deb Krau had some corrections on these meeting minutes, they will be forwarded to the Administrator to incorporate and the meeting minutes of February 25, 2016 will be at the next meeting for approval on March 9, 2016.

The Chair of the Committee asked for a motion to adjourn: A motion was made by Councilor James Crocker Jr. to adjourn; this motion was seconded by Councilor Chirigotis, all committee members present voted in favor of adjournment

ADJOURNED: 6:55PM

NEXT MEETING: March 9, 2016 5:30pm