



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

Monday January 23, 2017
MEETING MINUTES

I. BUSINESS

A. Roll Call:

Members present: Chair of Committee Councilor Jennifer Cullum, Vice President of the Council, James Crocker Jr.; Councilor Frederick Chirigotis; Councilor Debra Dagwan, Member at Large, Deb Krau. **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Homeless Not Hopeless representatives:** Mr. Dick Murphy (Treasurer, and ex Chaplin to the jail) Jonathan Ahnquist (Retired Pastor) Dr. Richard LeJava (Board of Directors) Chief Paul MacDonald; LT. J. Challies; SGT. J. Ellis, Barnstable Police; Mark S. Ells, Town Manager; Ruth Weil, Town Attorney, **ABSENT:** Councilor James Tinsley

Chair of the Committee Councilor Jennifer Cullum opened up the meeting at 6:05 with public comment, seeing none the Chair of the Committee closed Public comment; Chair of the Committee Councilor Jennifer Cullum welcomed Homeless Not Hopeless to the meeting.

Chair of Committee Councilor Jennifer Cullum thanked them for coming Where Hyannis is going with services and all things related to homelessness in and around the Hyannis area. This Committee has had several invited guests come to talk to us about what they provide the homeless population and the programs that are offered to these individuals. We are asking for open dialogue with all the Social Service agencies and give us an idea of what it is you do and the background of Homeless Not Hopeless.

Mr. Murphy explained that the Homeless Not Hopeless was started in 2007, removing 6 people off the street and housing them in our first home on Winter Street; we currently have 4 homes in operation and house 50 homeless individuals, and are looking to expand this operation and remove even more homeless on the streets and into homes. We try very hard to educate people and give them life skills and treat them with respect, it is a simple program with curriculum to make sure that people learn the life skills needed to better their lives and to one day reintroduce themselves into society. We engage with individuals and give them self-worth and show them we care about them and their lives and that they matter. Our homes are all run on volunteer hours of individuals, we have only 1 staff member that is a paid position, all other are volunteer and contributions from local business men and women as well as local residential individuals. All of our residents are what make the homes run, they all have chores to complete, and if they are not actively working somewhere they volunteer at other social services agencies. There is a percentage of their income that is kept for them, and a small portion of their benefits is collected as rent for all our homes. The individuals do all their own shopping and cooking of the meals and all maintain the outside of our homes with gardens and mowed lawns. Our homes are all staffed 24 hours a day with a house manager and during the day hours there are case managers that make the appointments and also make sure the individuals get to them. We do not take any federal tax dollars, all is donated by local individuals and the staff is all volunteer staff that put in countless hours to help us succeed. We have taken 50 people that were not in very good condition and turned them around to where they can feel good about themselves. Mr. Murphy stated they have about a 50% success rate, which may not seem very good, but in the homeless world that is a very good rate, can it be higher, absolutely it can, because that is what we tell everyone that comes to us, it is possible to do better and once they see the progress, the individuals start to feel better about themselves and eventually do move out and move on. The individuals that live in our homes realize that where they live is where there money makes it work, and the house managers volunteer their time to make it work and to let individuals aware they care.

When he was a Chaplin at the jail, he began to realize that the issue that landed them in jail is not the real reason for them to commit the crime to begin with, there are underlying reasons to why these individuals landed in jail and there are underlying reasons why an individual is homeless or becomes homeless, and we try and get to that reason; once you do that you have broken the barrier and can start to treat the reason and once that is done the progress goes on from there. We like to give our residents when they first come in a 30 day period of adjustment before beginning to get them into the program we have. This is because the individual is just coming in from the streets and we need to assess them as much as they assess us. It is a little while before they trust and realize that we are here to help, most of the house managers were once homeless themselves, so they already have the understanding of where these folks are when they first come to live with us, that is huge when it comes to the trust factor, we again tell them over and over we are here to help not hurt. If you do not get to the root of their problem, then you will never gain ground and help them, we respect first and get them to love themselves first, then others next.

Councilor Jennifer Cullum said she admires the work being done it is very noble of you and your staff, and in no way am I telling you that your work is not good, we have had conversations in the past when I was a business owner on Sea Street and you wanted to open a home in that area, and I came to you with those concerns and we talked back then; what has me concerned is another home located in Hyannis, my concern is the saturation that the tax payers are taking on when you buy another house and remove it from our tax role because your nonexempt and nonprofit, so therefore do not have to pay taxes, my concern is you want to expand and take another house in Hyannis off the tax roll and again the Hyannis residents are going to have to bear that cost yet again. Chair of Committee asked Mr. Murphy about why all the homes are located in the village of Hyannis and not elsewhere on the Cape or in other villages besides the village of Hyannis; Mr. Murphy answered "services". The services that service the homeless are all located in Hyannis, the transportation is here, because most homeless do not have cars, so they have to live in an area that they can access the services they need, and they happen to be in Hyannis. Our homes do not have vehicles large enough to transport individuals from outer areas into Hyannis for appointments, the other reason is sewer, if our homes house 5-6 individual or more we have to have town septic, because in the outer areas you have to have your own septic.

Mr. LeJava spoke about the house on Baxter Ave, where the residents of our homes and neighbors get along, we have a neighbor across the street that mows our lawn in the spring and summer to help, and if you drive down Baxter Ave and look at our house, it is the nicest on the street. When we have the homeless walk in the spring, and we gather all of our residents in each of our homes and we walk for those individuals, we have our own Police Chief directing traffic and standing up there with us. We have to my knowledge not been a problem to the local police or caused any more business to our fire department, because we have moved these individuals off the street and to the Duffy Center for all their medical needs, in my opinion we are doing a great service to the Town in getting these individuals in a home and letting them know that someone cares, and that is all that they need, someone that cares. We are often invited by local businesses to luncheons and dinners. We have a dinner next week at Sam Diego's in Hyannis that was donated to us by the owner of that restaurant. We make sure that are individuals are respected and that they respect themselves and their community.

Mr. Murphy asked the Chair of the Committee about the concerns she has and the articles he has read in the local paper, and he sees the concern as the number of homes in Hyannis, but he sees it as we have taken 50 individuals off the streets of Hyannis and put them into homes and made their lives better, that is a win, win, for the town, the police are not getting calls, the fire department is not getting calls and our residents that were once sleeping in alleys and in the woods have a place to sleep in a home, and that equates to a saving of dollars. One ambulance ride is 12, 000, we are slowly but surely solving the problem.

Deb Krau mentioned again regarding the homes they acquire, once you take a home off the tax roll, the burden is placed on the rest of the Hyannis tax rate payer, I believe you are doing a good thing, but also has concerns regarding the challenges that are also placed on these individuals, if you house these individuals with other individuals with the same challenges, that has also shown to be not a healthy atmosphere either. Mr. Murphy stated that he understands that there are some that would like to

shut us down, Ms. Krau interrupted and stated no, I am not shutting you down or even suggesting that, she knows that the work they have done is great work, however the problem is all the homes are in Hyannis, why can't you look at other towns on the Cape, what is going to happen to Hyannis when we are so overloaded and saturated that we can't manage the problem anymore. The more homes that are created in Hyannis the more homeless will come over the bridge and become residents here, and eventually we are going to be full and unmanageable, and the concern is more and more homes are coming off the tax roll and that is the concern, not your program and the help you provide.

Mr. Murphy stated this is very concerning to him that the village of Hyannis doesn't want any more homes of this type, we are an organization that helps the village of Hyannis by removing the homeless off the streets of Hyannis, how is that not viewed as a help to the village, but viewed as a hinder. If I move homes to other areas other than Hyannis, I have to now get a car or a van that now has to transport these individuals back into Hyannis for all the appointments that they need. The other issue is septic, if I obtain a home in Chatham or Wellfleet then the septic is now an issue and it will cost me more for a home there than it does in Hyannis; all my cost rise, and again we receive no state or federal monies.

Chair of the Committee Councilor Cullum mentioned that it sounds like from what you're saying about location and being able to do it depends on the supportive care and supportive services and being able to get these individuals to those services, but what if those services open up down cape or in other areas other than Barnstable and the village of Hyannis, that would make it easier and helpful to you and your organization. Mr. Murphy said yes, when all the services are in Hyannis, no matter where I buy a house other than Hyannis, I have to transport them to the services which will add to my costs to operate. The services are all right here in Hyannis and so is the major transportation to get anywhere else on the Cape, with the bus station and the train station right down the street. Chair of the Committee stated it's not that we in Hyannis do not want to help or help others it's just that we are overburdened, Ms. Krau stated it's not just your homes, there is a lot of other of these types of Homes, and your strategic plan includes expansion, and so does the CHAMP Homes, Friends of Prisoners, and it's not just those there are other types of prisoner release homes; so if all these programs want to expand here in Hyannis, and the homes come off the tax roll each time, it becomes the burden of the Hyannis rate payers, and it is only going to go up each time one of these homes that are acquired by a non-profit organization. We are asking that you spread your homes throughout other areas and not concentrate just in Hyannis.

Vice President James Crocker Jr. thanked Mr. Murphy for coming and his presentation, and said you are doing great work out there, so thank you for that. Vice President Crocker asked about the comment made by Mr. Murphy about growth, when do you decide that another home is needed, is there someone that contacts you or are you on a state wide list; Mr. Murphy answered that he is notified by the Duffy Center or the St. Joseph's House, or word of mouth from our residents who live in the homes. We do not advertise in anyway. Vice President Crocker asked if any of the individuals are from the prisoner release program; Mr. Murphy stated he has had one from there but has since moved on, he does not get a lot from there, and they have their own program. Vice President Crocker asked how many of the homes they currently operate do they own. Mr. Murphy stated we own 3 and rent 1 of the homes. Vice President James Crocker Jr. asked about how the homes operate. Mr. Murphy stated there are some resident who go to work, and other have chores to do if they can't for some reason work; we also have individuals that after the chores are done they go and volunteer at other social service places in town. None of the residents are allowed to sit around all day and do nothing, there is a lot to be done between the homes we have. Vice President Crocker asked about the individuals that have jobs, how do you match their skills and get them employed. Mr. Murphy answered we bring them to the Career Center in Hyannis and someone works with them there to match them to a job. Mr. Murphy stated we also do a lot of our own life skill training in our homes; we do a lot of it before they get to the Career Center so that they understand the basic idea of how to apply for a job. Vice President James Crocker Jr. asked where Mr. Murphy saw his organization going and asked about his objectives. Mr. Murphy stated that he would like to get individuals out of the woods and the camps and off the streets and back to sobriety so that these individuals can accomplish what they all once had which is a sense of self pride.

Vice President James Crocker Jr. asked about the longest resident and the length of stay, Mr. Murphy said three years, we do not force anyone to leave, we encourage and help but do not demand a time frame or put anyone on one. Mr. Murphy said he had a 50% percent success rate. Mr. Murphy said he has a lot of different personalities and problems, Vice President James Crocker asked about what most individuals are abusing, does he see it as an alcohol problem or a drug problem, Mr. Murphy stated it is a self-worth problem, Mr. Murphy stated he himself is an alcoholic, but the underlying reason is what we try and get at, the real reason for the substance abuse.

Mr. Murphy stated the articles that came out in the paper that classified these individuals as junkies and worthless really impacted our homes. We day in and day out are trying to build the confidence of our residents, and then articles like these come out and it hit really hard and came out in a very negative way, but when we are dealing with individuals who already are down on themselves and these individuals are demoralized the way they are in some articles, we have to come together a community to fix this or at least find a way to come to an agreement in this community to look at these individuals in a more humane way. Chair of the Committee wanted to address the comments Mr. Murphy made about articles in the paper and derogatory remarks, Councilor Cullum stated this Committee has had a very positive impact on our Community. We have dealt with the horrible conditions that these individuals lived in in the woods, we have treated these individuals with humanity and kindness and tried our very best to get them shelter, so we as a Committee are not trying to shut the good work your program does or any of the other programs that are servicing these individuals or diminish in anyway the work you do, we are asking that you spread out the homes in other areas on the Cape, why should Hyannis be the only site for these homes, why should the residents of Hyannis be the only ones that have to shoulder this problem.

Deb Krau stated the Social Service agencies now have to coordinate the services they provide, such as the Main Street Initiative, when this was done, it worked great because all the agencies were speaking with each other and coordinating their efforts to service these individuals. We can work together instead of against each other. Mr. Murphy stated as long as there are homeless individuals, he will be seeking homes that are in the area of the Social Service Agencies to get these individuals better. Vice President James Crocker Jr. stated that it sounds like if we could solve the transportation problem if you had homes outside of Hyannis, you are not opposed to. Mr. Murphy said no not at all, transportation is a huge problem.

Councilor Chirigotis said as long as the services are located here in Hyannis, they are going to keep coming, and they are put on buses and sent here for services. It's a cycle that keeps going, if we could find a way to service only those that are from the Cape, we may see the numbers go down, but the minute someone comes here, they all say they are from the Cape and they really are not, you're not going to be able to really find that out. The question was asked to the Police Chief if he thought the battle with the homeless population was winning, he said no we are not winning the battle, but we are able to maintain so far what we have. We may have some come out of homelessness, but there are others filling in that spot as one leaves, so the 400 homeless is a number we are maintaining but not winning.

Mr. Murphy has invited the Committee members as well as the Town Manager to come and see anyone of his homes and meet the residents who run his homes. The Committee members thanked all of them and said they will absolutely call and come and take the tour of his homes. Mr. Murphy also wanted to mention that if the village of Hyannis should look at the number of liquor licenses that are handed out if they really want to help with this problem of homelessness. Chair of the Committee stated she truly appreciates all the work that Homeless Not Hopeless does, you do incredible work and have helped a number of individuals and we really appreciate it, so thank you.

SGT. J Ellis gave an update on the meeting she had with Sheriff Cummings and others, the house they are looking at in Hyannis has 16-20 beds but are currently having an issues with HUD and the monies that was used to purchase the home, so once this is looked at and sorted out they will be looking to house individuals there which is currently the Pilot House. The home would not be affiliated with CHAMP Homes; the Sheriff department will run the house and manage the house. The Police Chief stated right now until they get the HUD questions answered, SGT Ellis was able to have the Sheriff's department agree to release the prisoners after they have served their time to the Duffy Center instead

of just releasing them to the streets, so SGT. Ellis was at least able to secure them going to the St. Josephs House first.

Councilor Chirigotis asked how long the St. Joseph's House will keep these individuals, SGT Ellis stated 6 months is the drop dead time frame according to Catholic Social Services, and by then they have them working and at least working towards a goal. The next meeting was scheduled at the conclusion of that meeting, so we are at the table with these discussions with the other agencies, so that is a very good thing because before we were not.

Chair of the Committee thanked SGT Ellis for her report and asked the Town Manager if he would reach out to the Cape Cod Health Care facilities and ask about their expansion down Cape and report back at our next meeting on February 13, 2017. Chair of the Committee would like to ask Mr. Tom Cahir from Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority to come to our next meeting.

Chair of the Committee asked for a motion to postpone the acceptance of the meeting minutes of January 9, 2017 until our next meeting. Councilor Fred Chirigotis made the motion to postpone the meeting minutes of January 9, 2017 until our next meeting, all members present voted in favor. Chair of the Committee asked for a motion to adjourn, Vice President James Crocker Jr. made the motion to Adjourn; this was seconded by Councilor Fred Chirigotis, all members voted in favor.

ADJOURN: 7:11pm

NEXT MEETING: February 13, 2017, 2016 at 6pm Selectmen's Conference Room