



Sonoma County Homeless Coalition Board

Homeless Coalition Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 24, 2024

1:00 – 5:00 PM, Pacific Time – Meeting held via Zoom

Zoom Recording:

https://sonomacounty.zoom.us/rec/share/MLui54HIRB05ui1Pe69FzIYO9nsZI5B0JD_MI-e-7sh-aPMEmWw_ojRdQfyDsCc.8OFMzQz9Z630qTMd

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Welcome and Roll Call Introductions (00:05:00 – 00:09:14)

Jennielynn Holmes called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm and went over the Zoom rules regarding public comment and Brown Act guidelines.

The new Homelessness Services Division Director, James Alexander, was introduced by Jennielynn Holmes, and welcomed by the HC Board.

Alea Tantarelli proceeded with roll call:

Present: Dennis Pocekay, City of Petaluma | Jennielynn Holmes, Catholic Charities | Natalie Rogers, City of Santa Rosa | Ben Leroi, Santa Rosa Community Health | Sean Hamlin, proxy for Chris Coursey, Sonoma County Board of Supervisors | Margaret Sluyk, Reach For Home | Chris Cabral, Committee on the Shelterless (COTs) | Angelica Smith, Tribal Seat | Rhonda Coffman, proxy for Martha Cheever, Community Development Commission | Chessy Etheridge, Sonoma Applied Village Services (SAVS) | Stephen Zollman, proxy for Una Glass, City of Sebastopol | Jackie Elward, City of Rohnert Park | Ron Wellander, City of Sonoma | Dannielle Danforth, West County Community Services | Salvina Norris, Sonoma County Indian Health Project (SCHIP) | Aaron Mello, Leap Board

Absent: Martha Cheever, Community Development Commission / LEAP | Cheyenne McConnell, TAY Representative | Una Glass, City of Sebastopol

A quorum was present.

1 - 4. Approval of Consent Calendar (00:9:18 – 00:20:18)

- Jennielynn Holmes, CoC Board Chair, presented the consent calendar items:
 1. 7/24/24 meeting agenda
 2. 6/26/24 meeting minutes

3. Summary of Follow-ups from Previous Meetings
4. Reports for Standing Committee Updates

- Jennielynn Holmes stated that the order of agenda items will be revised so that #10, ACCESS Sonoma and IMDT Presentation, will occur after the Consent Calendar, to better accommodate DHS Director Tina Rivera's schedule.
- Supervisor Coursey requests pulling Item #3, Summary of Follow-ups from the Previous Meeting, from the Consent Calendar to allow for a follow-up discussion on the youth and shelters matter.
- **Public Comment:** None
- Jennielynn Holmes mentioned that the Funding and Evaluation (F&E) Committee has requested direction from the Homeless Coalition 9hc) Board about prioritization of funding priorities, and acknowledged that this can be a discussion for a future agenda item. Dennis Pocekay suggests it would be helpful for the F&E committed if the item could be placed on the agenda for the forthcoming August 28, 2024 HC Board Meeting.
- **Motion:** Dennis Pocekay moves to approve the Consent Calendar, with the exception of Item 3, and with the understanding that agenda Item #10 will occur directly after the discussion of Item 3.

Second: Margaret Sluyk seconds the motion.

Abstentions or Objections: None.

Motion passes.

3. Summary of Follow-ups from Previous Meetings

- Michael Gause thanks Supervisor Coursey, his Chief of Staff Sean Hamlin, and Supervisor-elect Rebecca Hermosillo of Congressman Thompson's office for facilitating contact for Michael and Sean with representatives of the Family Youth Services Bureau in Washington, DC. Their discussion concerned Runaway Homeless Youth (RHY) funding provided around the country by the Family Youth Services Bureau, particularly the grant funding for the Coffee House for youth under 18, which was the only shelter of its kind in Sonoma County

With the closure of Social Advocates for Youth (SAY), youth have been showing up at adult shelters, but cannot be admitted due to licensing regulations specifying that adult shelters may only serve age 18 and up.

The trustee and bankruptcy court for Social Advocates for Youth (SAY) still retain that contract. Should the contract be relinquished to the Family Youth Services Bureau, another organization could step up and take on the contract (about \$250,000 - \$300,000) to provide youth services, if they have a facility and the appropriate licensing.

Once information about this opportunity is disseminated to providers, Michael Gause would be happy to be the point person and work with the interested party and Supervisor Coursey's office to determine next steps. In the short-term, however, youth can only be admitted to licensed shelters, with the closest one being Larkin Street Youth Services in San Francisco.

Supervisor Coursey invites participants in this meeting to help spread the word to any potential grantees who may have an interest in assuming the contract.

- **Public Comment:** None
- **Motion:** Supervisor Coursey moves to approve the "Summary of Follow Ups from Previous Meetings." Natalie Rogers seconds.

Objections or Abstentions: None

Motion passes.

(Please note: Agenda Item #10 is moved up in order to accommodate DHS Director Tina Rivera's availability.)

10. Access Sonoma and IMDT Presentation (00:20:23 – 02:03:35)

- DHS Director Tina Rivera presented a comprehensive slide tutorial illuminating the background, history, function, collaboration and governance of the Accessing Coordinated Care and Empowering Self Sufficiency (ACCESS) Sonoma initiative, and corresponding Interdepartmental Multidisciplinary Team (IMDT).

As highlighted in the presentation, a feature of ACCESS Sonoma includes employing IBM Watson Care Manager integrated data collection and reporting hub systems to enhance case management, information-sharing, and coordination across County departments in an effort to strengthen the safety net and improve access to overall services and support for clients.

Cohorts were created across departments to address specific client issues held in common, forming the IMDT, with the intention of lessening silos, strengthening the safety net, and integrating care management to improve access to overall support services and optimize outcomes for clients.

Working in concert, impending needs can be identified and triaged amongst the cohorts, allowing for planning and budgeting for future appeals to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, or to State and Federal agencies for resolution.

Director Rivera also described the Project Homekey Cohort, which provides support to all Homekey projects across the county, as approved by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. This cohort, funded by the Measure O tax measure, is comprised of four positions within the Homelessness Division – two Alcohol & Other Drugs II (AODS II) counselors, and two Senior Client Support Specialist (SCSS) positions.

Director Rivera also referenced a recently hired Program Planning and Evaluation Analyst (PPEA) within the Department of Health Services who is assigned to the Project Homekey cohort but can support all of the cohorts with data needs. A Senior Client Support Specialist is also available to provide support for encampment coordination.

Additional information about ACCESS, the IMDT, and Project Homekey may be found within the meeting materials packet.

Board discussions subsequent to the presentation included:

- The role of the HEART Team in the subregional approach.
- Providers' request for use of the ACCESS data hub, which is fed by the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Director Rivera indicated that this access will be forthcoming, with assistance from Ken Tasseff, DHS Privacy and Security Officer, and Carolyn Staats, County Information System Division Director, for releases and permissions needed for accessing client information.
- A request for a presentation that provides a list of contact information for individuals within the cohorts, and description of the issues addressed by each cohort.
- Additional conversation about background checks that are required for admission to interim shelter sites, but are not allowable by HUD standards for funding.
- A suggestion to perhaps combine IMDT weekly conference meetings and the By-Names List subregional meetings for shared connections and communication – a possible discussion for a future meeting.
- A suggestion was made that subregional outreach teams and local case managers be informed of the number of referrals that could be handled by the County teams in each subregion. Providers could then determine within their internal meetings

which referrals should be sent to the County, and send only the neediest cases who would benefit most, rather than sending unlimited referrals to the County.

- A request for contact information for the Senior Client Support Specialist mentioned who can provide support for encampment coordination.
- **Public Comment:** Teddie Pierce, Amy Appleton, Gregory Fearon, Hunter Scott, Adrienne Lauby, Gerry La Londe-Berg

(Please note: Item #9, the 10-minute break, will be taken out of agenda order given the length of the previous item.)

9. 10-Minute Break: 3:00 pm – 3:10 pm (02:03:54 – 02:15:33)

5. Racial Equity Workgroup Presentation: (02:15:35 – 02:46:22)

- Araceli Rivera provided insight into her personal journey with racial equity work over the past 16 years or so, generously sharing her experiences and circumstances with the HC Board, then proceeded with a presentation describing the work of the Racial Equity Workgroup. Charts were shown depicting race and ethnicity demographics in Sonoma County, and indicating that tribal nations and African-American communities are overrepresented in groups who are experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County. Individuals of those two groups are also those most encountered on the street by outreach workers.

A survey was conducted that revealed that the biggest barriers faced by people of color as they strive to find stable housing are racism, followed by a lack of resources, and immigration/legal status.

Araceli highly recommends a book entitled Belonging – A Culture of Place, by Bell Hooks which presents the concept of “beloved communities” - welcoming and inclusive spaces where all feel included.

The Racial Equity (RE) Workgroup holds closed, not public, meetings to allow for a safe environment for sharing, The membership currently stands at fourteen (14), with applications being accepted year-round. The Workgroup is not a component of the Homeless Coalition Board; however, recommendations and reports from the group will be brought forward to the HC Board.

Also presented was a list of the agencies and community partners that currently comprise the Racial Equity Workgroup, and a history of the development of the Racial Equity Workgroup. Next steps include providing racial equity trainings for the Homeless Coalition Board, reviewing findings of a recent survey, and identifying key areas of focus.

- Supervisor Coursey commended Araceli on her efforts in leading the Racial Equity Workgroup, and on her thoughtful presentation to the HC Board.
- **Public Comment:** Gerry La Londe-Berg, Rebekah Sammet, Adrienne Lauby, Teddie Pierce

7. Systemic and Institutional Discrimination in the System of Care: (02:46:26 – 00:07:23, recording #2)

- Jennielynn Holmes opened a discussion with considerations identified to forge a starting place for working toward attaining greater racial equity, resolving issues, and improving access and outcomes for people of color, who are overrepresented amongst the incidence of homelessness in Sonoma County.
- Six considerations were presented, as had been outlined by Jennielynn Holmes, HC Chair, and Una Glass, HC Vice Chair, in a letter which was mailed to HC Board members, and which can also be found within the agenda packet.
 1. Create a Racial Equity Training program for all HC Board members, committee members, and funded agencies.
 2. Create a process for reporting potential discrimination.
 3. Elevate and accelerate the work of the Racial Equity Workgroup
 4. Continue with the Coordinated Entry Assessment and Prioritization Redesign update.
 5. Homeless Coalition Board Charter Update (currently in process with Ad-hoc)
 6. Anti-Racist Results Based Accountability

These considerations are in alignment with the HC Strategic Plan as follows:

- Strategy 3.7: Eliminate Disparities in Access, Service Provision, and Outcomes in the Homeless System of Care
- ACTION: 3.7e: Ensure that the CoC Board's and the system of care's racial and ethnic representation reflects the population of Sonoma County's homeless community. Consider updating the Charter to include designated seats for BIPOC members.

- Subsequent related conversation included discussion of:
 - confidentiality issues in reports of discrimination
 - possible investigations and associated costs in reporting instances of discrimination
 - requiring standardized training for HC Board and committee members, as well as funded organizations.
 - Racial Equity Training costs and the value of training vs. policing
 - reticence among persons of color to come forward with reporting discrimination,
 - developing clients' trust
 - learning from those with lived experience
 - providers conceivably joining forces to research possible training resources independent of the lead agency/public funding
 - acting now to initiate a process for improving equity for all, but taking incremental steps, adjusting the path as needed along the way
 - requesting that the Racial Equity Workgroup research available free trainings from the CA Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), and other sources, and provide feedback and recommendations about those options to the HC Board
 - a possible future presentation from groups involved in Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability work
 - consulting with the Racial Equity Workgroup about developing a reporting process for discriminatory acts, similar to a grievance process
 - encouraging increased participation by members of the Racial Equity Workgroup on HC committees and in policy making
- **Public Comment:** Teddie Pierce, Gregory Fearon, Adrienne Lauby
- Jennielynn Holmes provided direction for the Board to move forward with tentative first steps, below.
 - Identify standardized Racial Equity Training to provide to the HC Board, committee members, and all funded organizations
 - Seek a presentation to the HC Board from those involved with the County's Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability work

- Request that the Racial Equity Workgroup explore a grievance process with emphasis on confidentiality for eventual presentation to the HC Board
 - Encourage increased participation on HC Board committees by members of the Racial Equity Workgroup.
- No formal action is taken at this time.

7. Service Provider Roundtable: (00:08:25 – 00:09:41)

- Margaret Sluyk explained that the Service Provider Roundtable did not meet this month; they are reconvening and looking for co-leaders.
- **Public Comment:** None

8: Word from the LEAP Board: (00:09:46 –00:21:09)

- Rebekah Sammet provided “Word from the Street,” to report that while the hope was that Sonoma County would not align with the “Grants Pass” ruling, police sweeps are actually occurring daily, with people feeling “hunted.”

A central location where street outreach and potential clients can meet on a regular basis is desired.

Cooling centers are difficult to access, and notification of cooling center operations is not timely. People are afraid to leave their possessions, including pets, to move to the cooling centers lest they be stolen. Bringing mobile cooling centers to people on the street has been a successful practice across the nation, and would be optimal to implement here.

The LEAP Board will next focus on emergency winter warming shelters.

Rebekah Sammet requested information about the total number of people who utilized the Emergency Shelter Site and how many were housed from there. Chair Holmes indicated that the question may be posed to Homelessness Services Division Director James Alexander, for inclusion in the follow-ups for the August 28, 2024 meeting.

- **Public Comment:** Gregory Fearon, Teddie Pierce, Rebekah Sammet

(Note: Items #9 and #10 occurred earlier in the meeting.)

11. Dashboard Update: The Dashboard Update will be postponed until the August 28, 2024 meeting, but information can also currently be found within the meeting materials packet.

12: Review Agenda for August Coalition Board Meeting: (00:21:13 – 00:25:57)

- Jennielynn Holmes presented the draft agenda and invited additions for the August 28, 2024 meeting. Identified agenda items are as shown below:
 - Housing Inventory Count
 - MOU Between SCHC and Lead Agency
 - Coordinated Entry Update
 - Dashboard Update
 - A request was made to potentially add a report on HEART Team activities as a standing agenda item. This would be subject to the availability of James Alexander, Division Director.
 - Discussion of funding priorities.
- **Public Comment:** Adrienne Lauby, Gregory Fearon

13. Board Member Questions & Comments: (00:26:02 – 00:30:14)

- Ron Wellander: - Santa Rosa and Petaluma have both complied with State requirements to report complaints about facilities as required by the State. They were two of only five cities in the State that have submitted their reports. Michael Gause confirms that every city should be reporting on qualified shelters, but this is not within the jurisdiction of the HC Board.
- Chris Cabral: A new Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding opportunity is available this year called “CoC Builds,” which Michael Gause is reviewing.
- **Public Comment:** None

14. Public Comment on Items not on the Agenda: (0030:18 – 00:30:36)

- None.

Adjournment: (00:30:37 – 00:31:02)

- Jennielynn Holmes adjourned the meeting at 5:20 pm.