



Board Meeting February 7, 2024

**Board Members Present**: Tab Robertson, Sarah Quarantotto, Arnold Corneal, Bryon Meade, April Watson, Mickey Paige, Pat Young, Stephanie Andrews, Shawne Farmer, Paul Robertson, Jeremy White, Sarah Fuentes (ad hoc)

**Visitor**: Melissa Foster, Melva Walker, Madelyn Pemberton (in place of Mary Mayrose)

1. **Welcome and Introductions:** Tab Robertson called the meeting to order at 1:03pm to begin introductions.
2. **Approval of November & December Board Minutes:** Tab noted an error in the November meeting minutes that left an item in parenthesis to be followed up on. That note will be removed from the minutes. Mickey Paige made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Sarah Quarantotto. All in favor. No opposition.
3. **Monitoring and Evaluation Committee Report on CoC DHCD Funded Projects**: Melva Walker shared that the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee of the CoC scheduled visits with all agencies administering homeless response program funded through the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. The first page of each visit is included in the minutes below. Unfortunately, the visit to Interfaith Outreach had to be rescheduled due to COVID-19. Melva then opened the floor to questions, but no Board members had any. Tab will distribute the full reports to the Board, along with the report on Interfaith Outreach, once it’s completed.
4. **RESET Closure Discussion**: The Shelter at RESET is scheduled to close on June 30, 2024. The CoC Board received notification of this decision on January 30th. Tab initiated discussion on the closure of the Shelter at RESET. Bryon provided context, explaining that the Board of Roads to Recovery (R2R) made this decision due to financial strain of shelter operations and its diversion of resources from R2R’s core mission. R2R exhausted the $103,000 awarded by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) within the first 7 months and is using other funding to continue operations.

Discussion highlights:

* Melissa Foster inquired about the number of beds and expressed appreciation for R2R’s efforts. Bryon noted there are 16 beds but 14 are occupied due to construction.
* Sarah Quarantotto raised the possibility of reconsideration if additional funding was secured. Bryon shared that the Board did explore that option, but it remains true that the efforts required to secure funding take away from the mission of R2R.
* Pat Young inquired about plans for the shelter space and the status of the detox facility. Bryon outlined plans for housing and recovery services in the vacated space.
* Jeremy queried about the budget for a full year of operations – R2R’s estimation is $300,000.
* Sarah discussed potential collaborations with The Ramp Church and Lynchburg Community Action Group.
* Pat suggested strategies for sustainable funding and highlighted the importance of community engagement to fill the gap, as our community has already experienced what it would be like without a low-barrier shelter.
* Sarah Quarantotto shared an update on a partnership with the City of Lynchburg, which includes a potential opportunity for funding for warming center operations. This indicates a more favorable landscape compared to the last time the community was within a low-barrier shelter.

1. **City Council Presentation, Warming Center, and CDBG:** Sarah Quarantotto provided an overview of the recent presentation to the City of Lynchburg Councilmembers, which focused on the need for additional shelter beds within the community. She explained that this presentation was just a warm-up to asking for an investment from the City of Lynchburg for more shelter capacity.

The City of Lynchburg is dedicated to providing a Warming Center for the rest of this season while exploring options for investment opportunities through the Community Development Block Grant to provide funds for the CoC to release a Request for Proposal for providers to operate a warming center.

Jeremy inquired about the prioritization between warming shelter and year-round shelter. Sarah clarified that, before last week, warming center funding had been the primary focus. The RFP will be for the warming center functions, but could be combined with the primary emergency shelter operation funds for the main provider to expand capacity during cold weather.

1. **DHCD VHSP Funding**: Sarah Fuentes presented an overview of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) funds available through the Virginia Homeless Solutions Program (VHSP). The total funding awarded last year was $347,195 excluding HOPWA and $430,394 including HOPWA. The previous competition year, in 2022, allocated funds for various program types, including Coordinated Entry, Targeted Prevention, Street Outreach, Rapid Rehousing, HOPWA, and CoC Planning.

Sarah announced the commencement of the application process for the 2024**-**2026 competition, with plans to establish a local competition for applicants. Community applications were scheduled to be due at the beginning of April. This process underscores the pivotal role of the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee in the CoC, tasked with providing the CoC Board with a comprehensive report on the performance of existing projects.

1. **Committee Reports:**
   1. **CoC/HMIS Lead: Sarah Quarantotto & Sarah Fuentes**
      1. **2023 Recap:** Sarah Fuentes provided a summary of the state of homelessness in central Virginia. The summary encompassed data on various aspects of homelessness, including the number of families with children, veterans, chronically homeless individuals, and unsheltered individuals. Additionally, it noted a significant increase in unsheltered homelessness since 2019, despite an overall decrease in homelessness since 2017. The summary also underscored the prevalence of disability among the homeless population and reported a 10% increase in calls to the homeless information line in 2023 compared to 2022. For the full summary, view the graphic below.
      2. **HUD CoC Funding Awards**: Sarah Fuentes delivered exciting news regarding the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) CoC Competition Program award amounts for the last competition. The Central Virginia CoC was granted a total $489,981 in funding from HUD, maintaining level funding across all program categories except for a notable increase to $50,000 for CoC Planning. These funds support re-housing and permanent supportive housing programs administered by Miriam’s House and the Lynchburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority, playing a crucial role in providing housing stability and support services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness in our community. It’s important to note that this competition does not allocate funding for emergency shelter operations.
      3. **CoC Strategic Planning Process:** Sarah Fuentes provided an update on the planning process for the new CoC strategic plan aimed at preventing and ending homelessness. She reminded members that the previous plan ended in July 2023 and invited all Board members to participate in guiding the planning process by being part of the advisory committee to the plan. The process includes establishing an advisory committee, with an initial meeting scheduled in the coming weeks, followed by ongoing meetings to review survey results and feedback from input sessions. Members were encouraged to reach out to Sarah if interested in participating in the advisory committee.
   2. **Community Case Review**: Chronic Case Conferencing convenes every first and third Wednesday of the month at 10am at Lynchburg Human Services, with 8 chronically homeless individuals currently on the list. The group has been focused on collaborating with jail and hospital systems to maintain housing plans while individuals are incarcerated and hospitalized.

Veteran Huddle meets every other Wednesday at noon at the Salvation Army. Currently, there are 10 veterans experiencing homelessness in the central Virginia community.

Family & Youth Case Conferencing meets on the second and last Wednesday of every month at 9am at the United Way. Every family experiencing homelessness has been connected to rapid rehousing for financial assistance and case management support to get back into housing.

* 1. **Community Commitment Committee**: Stephanie Andrews reported that the committee decided to move meetings to quarterly. The next meeting will be scheduled for March.
  2. **Data & Performance:** Sarah Fuentes reported that the Committee is meeting next week on Thursday, February 15th at 10am at Miriam’s House. This meeting is important to review data quality for the System Performance Measures, Point-in-Time Count, and the Housing Inventory reports.
  3. **Homeless and Housing Services:** Sarah Quarantotto shared that the committee just met last Wednesday. Leslie Loucks, Homeless System Specialist at Miriam’s House, shared an overview of the last CoC Strategic Plan to the group and shared about the upcoming planning process and how direct service staff can get involved. The committee meets the last Wednesday of every other month at 10am at the United Way.

1. **New Business** – no new business.
2. **Closing Announcements:** Sarah Quarantotto reminded the group to provide suggestions for emergency shelter providers.

Meeting adjourned at 2:13pm

*Meeting minutes submitted by Sarah Fuentes, Director of Homeless System Coordination at Miriam’s House.*

*Next meeting: March 6, 2024 at 1:00pm in-person at Miriam’s House*