

Coordinating Committee to End Homelessness (CCEH) Meeting Minutes



December 17, 2009
First United Methodist Church

Facilitated by: Jean DeMaster and Marc Jolin

Prepared by: Dove Hotz

Reviewed by: Steering Committee

Present: Lynne Walker, Liv Jensen, Marc Jolin, EV Armitage, Caren Baumgart, Molli Mitchell, Larry Turner, Jean DeMaster, Kari Brenk, Renata Wilson, Natasha Roe, Eileen Devine, Rachel Post, Leo Rhodes, Rob Rankin, Sanjeev Balajee, Ashley Egeland, Richelle Wilhite, Jane Netboy, Melissa Crocker, Mike Davis, Rick Stoller, Mary Anne Plumb, Ian Slingerland, Brendan Phillips, Steve Robinson, Shannon Singleton, Ryan Deibert, Sally Erickson

Action Items/Next Steps:

- Take the pledge to support Measures 66 and 67. <http://www.VoteYesForOregon.org>. OCPP has lots of data on its web site. <http://ocpp.org> as well as the Legislative Fiscal Office, <http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/lfo/home.htm>.
- Learn about the January 20 WRAP rally in San Francisco. <http://www.wraphome.org>.
- If you have a client who could be a match for a census job, contact Marc Jolin (mjolin@joinpdx.org) or Sanjeev Balajee (sanjeev.balajee@co.multnomah.or.us).
- Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 20, 2010, 3-5 p.m., FUMC Room 202.

Introductions / New agencies, Approval of November minutes

Ms. DeMaster facilitated a round of introductions and recognition of new participants. November minutes were approved without dissent.

Updates

Department of Veterans Affairs – VASH voucher program update (Eileen Devine)

98 of the 105 VASH vouchers have been issued and 76 folks have been housed. Due to the high volume of referrals already in the queue, they are no longer accepting referrals.

Severe Weather Planning and Response (PHB/211info/Providers)

The Red Cross shelter opened in December during seven consecutive nights of severe weather and provided 800 bed nights. Almost all other warming centers were at or near capacity. 211 performed well and participants said that communication channels during severe weather have been very good. Severe weather determination is usually made by 1 p.m. for that night.

Central City Concern – \$8.9 million awarded in recovery Act Funds (Rachel Post)

CCC received an \$8.9 million grant for a homeless health care clinic to be located on the defunct Burger King site at Burnside and Broadway. The money will go towards the construction of the facility as well as purchase of an electronic medical records system, allowing services to 1,300 additional clients annually. Construction should take about two years. Ms. Armitage added that the facility will be two stories initially, with the hope of adding on in later stages. Ms. Jensen commented that the project will provide local jobs, and CCC is the only such grant recipient of its kind in Oregon.

Housing Authority of Portland – STRA program update (Ian Slingerland)

The Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) funds are up and running at all agencies. The money has helped many households, although agencies are finding the funds difficult to use, kind of like “shiny new shoes made out of steel.” The eligibility documentation requirements are onerous. Housing retention rates continue to be strong.

Human Solutions – Opening Doors Rapid Re-Housing program (Jean DeMaster)

This HUD-McKinney-funded program began in the Fall and serves unsheltered homeless families.. It is a joint effort of Human Solutions, Volunteers of America, Impact Northwest and Neighborhood House, with volunteers from JOIN and 2-1-1 . So far, the program has housed 11 families. Referrals welcome.

Sisters of the Road – Affordable housing advocacy effort (Brendan Phillips)

The Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP). They have been very active and are going to San Francisco on January 20 for a rally at the federal building to demand President Obama’s commitment to affordable housing. HUD secretary Shaun Donovan has indicated his support in the past. Now is the time to take affordable housing issues to the regional coordination level and reverse the slashing of funds that has occurred since 1980. Commissioner Fish also seems supportive.

January 2010 Election: Review of Ballot Measures (Steve Robinson, Oregon Center for Public Policy)

Mr. Robinson’s agency supports efforts to help low-income Oregonians. The purpose of Measures 66 and 67 is to make Oregon’s tax system more fair and to protect vital services. The economic growth of the past decade almost exclusively benefitted individuals with the highest-income levels. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) allowed us to plug some holes, but reserves have been exhausted. The measures would raise \$750 million – money that would be spent in Oregon and help maintain economic stability and social services. If the measures fail to pass, Oregon could lose up to \$250 million in federal matching funds. OCPP helped shape the budget package passed by the legislature earlier this year to raise the annual corporate minimum tax from \$10 (unchanged since 1931) to \$150. Mr. Robinson characterized the measures as modest changes. For example, the top 1% of Oregon earners currently pay 6.1% in taxes. Measure 66 would increase that to 6.8%. By contrast, lower income earners pay around 8-9% in taxes. For a couple that had income of \$250,000, there would be no change; a couple earning \$260,000 would pay an additional \$180 per year.

The question was asked “What helpful actions can CCEH members take?” Ms. Netboy said there was a need for phone banking and canvassing, or you could bring drinks and snacks to the volunteers. Mr. Robinson said, sign the pledge form, go to the web site and go from there. Mr. Phillips said we could encourage our clients to get registered and vote, and to make information available at our work sites. Ms. Armitage seconded the notion to get voters registered; the registration deadline is January 5, 2010.

Ms. DeMaster challenged the group to sign the pledge today, forward it to a friend, and have a conversation with someone about the issues. She will ask us to report back at the next meeting on January 20. Mr. Jolin asked where we could find more information on the impacts if the measures fail. Mr. Robinson suggested the Legislative Field Office web site. Ms. Netboy indicated she had access to many informational flyers and she will make these available to the members. Mr. Turner asked about the loss of federal matching funds and Mr. Robinson said the exact amount would depend on what ended up being cut from the budget, and what federal matching funds were attached.

Census 2010: Outreaching to and Counting Homeless Individuals (Sanjeev Balajee, Multnomah-Portland Complete Count Committee and Marc Jolin, JOIN)

Mr. Balajee serves as the coordinator of Complete Count Committee (CCC), which consists of about 50 representatives from government and community-based organizations. Their philosophy is that “everyone counts,” and they want our help during this year’s census count. \$1,200 in funding is lost for every person who fails to return a census form. Every effort is made to keep records safe and confidential. Results from this census could result in an additional Congressional seat for Oregon.

Census Day is April 1, 2010. Every household will receive a census form. If the form is not returned, a second form will be sent, and if the second form is not returned, a census worker will go to the address. The form will be available in many commonly-used languages. There will be about 150 “Be Counted” sites throughout Multnomah County, where anyone can go to be counted. Illiterate residents can go to one of the assistance centers to receive help in filling out the census form.

Mr. Jolin commented that Commissioners Fish and Kafoury brought the CCC group together. Many of our clients fall into the under-represented categories. They will be counted using a nationally imposed methodology. This includes a service-based enumeration on March 29. Official census enumerators are the only ones allowed to help people with their forms. There will also be a count of unsheltered individuals on March 31 from midnight to 6 a.m. This count will not be able to find everybody. For instance, people who are doubled up may be hesitant to disclose their living situation.

Ms. Jenssen asked about outreach to the faith-based community, which are places where many of our clients feel safe and have established trust. They might be more likely to fill out their forms via their church. Mr. Balajee replied that that was a high priority for them and he welcomes additional suggestions and resources. Ms. Jenssen also offered her building as an access center. Ms. Plumb observed that a lot of people do not like folks coming to their doors. If you have an opportunity to make your client aware of the situation in advance, that may encourage them to feel more comfortable.

Several CCEH members commented that the midnight to 6 a.m. unsheltered count time was undesirable. Mr. Jolin said they are focusing more efforts on other outreach strategies and had reported their opinion back to the Census. He also said that the last Census response rate was 77%, so there was definitely room for improvement there. Please encourage everyone in your networks to work with their clients towards a high response rate.

Announcements/other items

- Mr. Davis asked for an update on the anti-camping ordinance. Mr. Jolin said the wheels were grinding very slowly, but things were proceeding. Public input was still being accepted.
- Mr. Rhodes reported that he received an exclusion ticket about a month ago. The police seemed uninformed about the policy and unhelpful in offering resources. There was also a recent sweep under the Hawthorne Bridge; we need to be out there saying we need to bring people inside.
- Mr. Davis reported on conversations with Multnomah and Clackamas Counties. Clackamas County has a policy of posting a written notice five days in advance of clearing a camp, although they recently did a sweep in violation of the rules. In Multnomah County, ODOT has placed iron gates under the overpasses to prevent access. He said that was a misappropriation of funds because it was not related to a road project.
- Ms. Singleton asked us to keep Katie Nolan, one of the missing Mount Hood climbers, in our thoughts. She has worked with Catholic Charities and has been a great advocate for the homeless.