

## **DURHAM HOMELESS SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, November 18, 2015**

**3:00 p.m.**

**Durham County Human Services Building  
414 E. Main Street – 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room**

The Durham Homeless Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) met on the above date and time.

**Committee Members Present:** Chair Mayme Webb-Bledsoe, Vice-Chair Stephanie Williams, Secretary Fred Stoppelkamp, Lindsey Jordan Arledge, VA Medical Center, Mayor Pro Tempore Cora Cole-McFadden, City Manager Tom Bonfield, Interim Deputy County Manager Drew Cummings, Durham County Social Services Director Michael Becketts (proxy for County Commissioner Michael Page), John Bowman, Development Director Meredith Daye, Durham Housing Authority (DHA), Lois Harvin-Ravin, Durham County Veterans Services Officer, Interim Director Calleen Herbert, Department of Academic Community Services Learning Program at North Carolina Central University, Dr. Warren Herndon, Angela Holmes, Jennifer Jones, OEWD, Pam Karriker, Christian Assembly, Resource Specialist Ve'ga Swepson, Durham Technical Community College and Reverend Chris Tuttle, Westminster Presbyterian Church.

**Committee Members Absent:** Minnie Forte-Brown, Durham Public Schools Board, Captain Stan Harris, Durham County Sheriff's Department, Durham Public Schools Homeless & At-Risk Liaison Jackie Love, County Commissioner Michael Page and Charita McCollers, MSW, Lincoln Community Health Center.

**Excused Committee Members:** None

**Staff Present:** Director Reginald Johnson, Project Manager Matthew Schnars, Administrative Analyst Keshia Barnette (Department of Community Development) and Sheila Bullock (Office of the City Clerk).

**Also Present:** Linzie Atkins, Durham County Veterans Services.

**Subject: Call to Order/Welcome**

The meeting was called to order at 3:09 p.m. by Chair Webb-Bledsoe.

**Subject: Minutes Review & Approval – October 28, 2015**

**Motion** by Mayor Pro Tempore Cole-McFadden, seconded by Committee Member Herndon to approve the HSAC minutes of October 28, 2015 was approved unanimously at 3:10 p.m.

**Subject: Public Comment Period**

Mayor Pro Tempore Cole-McFadden commented that the Mayor of Fayetteville, N.C. had received an award from the President for his work with the Mayor's Challenge to end Homelessness among Veterans. She stated that she was embarrassed by this because she felt that with everything they were doing in Durham they would be the best in the state and this region. She added she is glad there is a report that will share information about the Mayor's Challenge. Mayor Pro Tempore noted that she is troubled by this because she is a "cheerleader" for Durham.

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Committee Member Herndon added that Durham is doing really great work. He wanted to follow up concerning his visit to California where he heard that in Los Angeles the City Council is wrestling with how to continue to allow homeless persons to put up tents during the day. He noted that Durham should be applauded for the work it is doing. However, regarding the number of individuals that are still homeless, he is still receiving calls. He asked that members continue their work; they are doing great work and he encourages everyone to press forward. In order to do this, Committee Member Herndon mentioned he had previously requested the number of individuals that are on the waiting list. He understands that this information is forthcoming and they applaud all of the organizations that are doing such good work.

### **Subject: Welcome New HSAC Members**

Chair Webb-Bledsoe welcomed new HSAC members Ve'ga Swepson with Durham Technical Community College and Jennifer Jones with Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD).

### **Subject: Executive Board Meeting**

Chair Webb-Bledsoe requested that all of the Committee Chairs of the HSAC Subcommittee meet on December 15, 2015 at 1:30 p.m. at the Community Development Department in the Golden Belt Building. Chair Webb-Bledsoe explained that as Chair she is concerned and wants to learn more about the committees that are a part of the HSAC. She stated the purpose of the meeting is to become aware of what is going on in each of the committees and to obtain a clear understanding of the areas that the committees are focusing on as a result of their work. She added by doing so they can connect, create relationships and understand how everything fits into HSAC's overall goals. If the Chairs are unable to attend this meeting, Chair Webb-Bledsoe asked that a representative be designated to attend.

### **Subject: CoC & ESG Organizational Threshold Requirements to Administer HUD Funds**

As a follow-up to discussion held at the October 28, 2015 HSAC meeting, Project Manager Matt Schnars (Department of Community Development presented) an overview of the minimum threshold requirements for an organization to receive HUD contracts.

In response to Committee Member Herndon's questions as to whether money has been drawn down on a scheduled basis, Mr. Schnars responded that there is about 5 to 8% of the money nationwide that does not get drawn down. He explained that it is important to know to what extent this may be happening and what are the reasons.

There was some discussion regarding the APR (Annual Performance Report). Mr. Schnars explained that the APR is a standard report that all of the Continuum of Care (CoC) projects submit each year.

Committee Member Karriker asked about the group having access to the information on projects unless it is requested. In response, Mr. Schnars noted that they don't have access to the financial information but access is available through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) on information concerning how many people are served.

**Motion** by Mayor Pro Tempore Cole-McFadden, seconded by Committee Member Bowman to have HUD and the state of North Carolina with ESG, provide the Durham Continuum of Care with regular reports of drawdowns of funding was approved at 3:29 p.m.

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Abstain: Vice-Chair Williams, Secretary Stoppelkamp and Committee Member Daye.

Secretary Stoppelkamp made comments about the challenges small organizations face when trying to receive funding. He explained that these organizations require a bank account or savings that would front the money. For rental assistance, the money would need to be there and a receipt submitted; then sometime later the organization would receive the money. He added that in order to submit a strong application the organization must have a strong financial foundation to even apply.

Vice-Chair Williams pointed that staffing capacity can also be a challenge for smaller organizations. She noted that a lot of times smaller organizations do not have enough staff to handle duties such as turnover, drawdowns, inspections, participant training and various other job functions.

Committee Member Herndon asked about the percentage of the organizations that have these challenges. He felt as they move forward into the year 2016, it would be prudent for the HSAC to find out this information and determine if there are resources that could help support the smaller non-profits.

In response to Chair Webb-Bledsoe's question about there being a committee that would address these issues, Mr. Schnars stated the Performance Management Subcommittee would be the one.

#### **Subject: CoC Referrals for Housing Choice Voucher Priority**

Mr. Schnars provided background information on Durham Housing Authority's (DHA) amendment to its administrative plan for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program as it relates to the number of referrals for homeless housing providers in the Durham CoC. The plan specifies that the Durham CoC can have up to 25 referrals per year. HSAC staff is recommending that the 25 referrals be administered as part of the homeless prioritization process adopted by the HSAC and take place as a part of the *Mayors Challenge* and the *Care* review processes.

Discussion followed concerning the referral process including the point system, the number of HCVs and how they will be allotted.

Interim Deputy County Manager Cummings commented that it would interesting for the HSAC as well as the community to see in a given month how many referrals from those homeless organizations under the CoC end up getting vouchers. Over the year it would be good to track how these commitments are working out for homeless individuals.

Mayor Pro Tempore Cole-McFadden voiced her concern about the Mayor's Challenge to End Homelessness among Veterans. She pointed out that it is not just the Mayor's challenge but this challenge came from the President of the United States and if emphasis can't be placed on this issue just because of where it is coming from, she is troubled by this. Mayor Pro Tempore Cole-McFadden added that no Veteran in Durham County should have to worry about having a place to stay.

In response to Secretary Stoppelkamp's question about what would a strong application look like in reference to the point system, Committee Member Daye stated that she would have to refer this question to Section 8 Director, Rhega Taylor because this point system was devised by the Section 8 division of DHA.

Mr. Schnars provided an explanation concerning the number of HCVs and how they are received and used.

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Because it appears that HSAC members may be somewhat hesitant and may not understand the scoring process, Vice-Chair Williams recommended that Rhega Taylor with DHA attend the next HSAC meeting and explain the process.

Secretary Stoppelkamp commented that it's key to have the providers involved with the DHA and the vouchers so that if people get into housing, the provider will assist them in sustaining the housing and also maintain the relationship with the landlords.

Committee Member Herndon again asked how many children in Durham County that attend Durham Public Schools are living in shelters, cars, on the street or wherever. He feels that as they work on this issue it would be prudent to be able to follow these numbers and say that the numbers are going down each year. Committee Member Herndon added that if this is not done then they will not know whether things are getting better, worse or staying the same.

Committee Member Tuttle added that everyone wants to be supportive of this process and the collaboration it is creating. However, he feels that more information and clarity is needed and the group should re-visit this item at the next meeting.

Chair Webb-Bledsoe asked if a vote was needed on the item. Mr. Schnars stated that in terms of process, this item is already happening. The reason HSAC staff is bringing it before the Committee for recommendation is because City staff has already received calls at the Community Development Department about Veterans referrals and City staff does not feel comfortable in making these decisions.

After hearing Mr. Schnars explanation, Chair Webb-Bledsoe asked if other Committee Members felt the need for more information regarding this item.

Committee Member Karriker noted that she agreed with Committee Member Tuttle and Herndon and if possible, she would like to receive some kind of figures that would quantify how this is going and what kind of numbers they are seeing.

Mr. Schnars suggested that the HSAC of the CoC board request a monthly report on the number of referrals made, accepted and provided vouchers.

Interim Deputy County Manager Cummings agrees and feels this would help them understand how the prioritization process is being implemented and how it is playing out in practice.

**Motion** by Interim Deputy County Manager Cummings, seconded by Committee Member Bowman to commend DHA for moving forward; request monthly updates on how the process is playing out and endorse staff's proposed process for making CoC referrals was approved at 4:10 p.m.

**Abstain:** Committee Member Daye.

In response to Committee Member Herndon's question about whether there is an adverse effect on the daily, weekly impact, Mr. Schnars commented none that he can anticipate; he added it's all positive.

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### **Subject: Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness**

Mr. Schnars shared background on the *Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness* which is an initiative from President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. Afterwards, he presented an update on the progress that's been made towards reaching the goals of the *Mayors Challenge* as well as the goals of *Opening Doors*. HSAC members reviewed documents entitled *Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness* which included a Mayor's Challenge Self-Evaluation Tool and *Achieving the Goal of Ending Veteran Homelessness* which highlighted criteria and benchmarks.

Interim Deputy County Manager Cummings noted that they have heard that just having a VASH Voucher is not really an entrance into an apartment complex. Assuming that other resources are being found to house the homeless Veterans, it still leaves VASH vouchers on the table. He felt that there is a need for a further system of improvement.

Interim Deputy County Manager Cummings asked if there was a plan for making in-roads with landlords who may have had "hard-earned experiences" but have some "hang ups" about housing Veterans. Mr. Schnars responded that the need for more landlords was heard consistently across the system among Veteran providers as well as homeless housing providers. As a result of this, the City of Durham's Public Affairs Department did a press release in June asking for landlords who would work with the HUD VASH program. The DHA placed on their website a portal which allowed landlords to put information about their units such as the location, the name and cost of the unit.

In reference to the utilization of vouchers, Committee Member Arledge pointed out that DHA has over-issued their allotment of Vouchers for the VASH program. She added that based on VA's data; all of the vouchers have been issued and the majority of them are lease so there are no vouchers "sitting on the table" that Veterans don't have access to. Committee Member Arledge also noted that Durham is one of the highest rated Housing Authorities in North Carolina as it relates to the percentage of utilization of vouchers.

Committee Member Herndon wanted to know if the number of Veterans was growing, remaining the same or getting better. He noted that based on the information presented the numbers are getting better. He applauded staff on their reported information and added that this helps them get better at what they do.

Another point brought up by Committee Member Herndon was that from the President's initiative very recently, North Carolina will receive about 600 individuals that are released. He added that if they continue to stay out in front of the curve then they will continue to manage our homelessness.

Chair Webb-Bledsoe asked Mr. Schnars to make a summary statement as to their progress in response to Mayor Pro Tempore Cole-McFadden's question about the *Mayor's Challenge*.

Mr. Schnars stated that they are in the final stages of making the goal and potentially making an announcement. He added that they will not stop and will continue to work hard to sustain this goal.

### **Subject: Reminders/Announcement**

- The Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) is due December 2015
- The Annual Homeless Point-in-Time Count is Wednesday, January 27, 2016.

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Committee Member Herndon commented out that since they have done such a wonderful job over the last year he asked if the HSAC could celebrate their accomplishments with some kind of festivities. Chair Webb-Bledsoe stated that they would take his request under consideration.

### **Subject: Adjourn**

With no further business to come before the body, Chair Webb-Bledsoe adjourned the meeting at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Sheila Bullock  
Office of the City Clerk