

**City of Lawrence, Kansas  
HOMELESS ISSUES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**May 7, 2013 Minutes (Lawrence City Commission Room)**

**Members present:** Brad Cook (Bert Nash Homeless Outreach Team), Becky Peters (Family Promise), Laurie Hooker (LDCHA), Lt. Matt McCluer (Salvation Army), Trent McKinley (LPD), Michael Brouwer (Douglas County Sheriff's Office Re-Entry Program)

**Members absent:** Cary Strong (Lawrence Business Community), Kadie Jorgensen (LMH), Hubbard Collinsworth (at-large)

**Staff present:** Danelle Dresslar, Rhonda Peterson

**Public present:** Pat Benabe, Rachel Schwaller, CJ Brune, Crystal Camis (Willow Domestic Violence Center)

The meeting was called to order at 8:34 a.m. by McCluer in the absence of Chair Cook.

**ITEM NO. 1 Introductions**

The members of the HIAC, city staff and guests introduced themselves.

**ITEM NO. 2 Approval of the Agenda and the April 9, 2013 Minutes.**

Motion by McCluer **to approve the Agenda and the April 9, 2013 meeting minutes of the HIAC**; seconded by Peters.

Motion passed unanimously.

**ITEM NO. 3 Receive Bert Nash First Quarter Performance Report.**

Dresslar said there is nothing to discuss for this item, there is just a report to receive, and it will be sent to the City Commission as well.

**ITEM NO. 4 Discussion of Transportation and LCS.**

Rachel Schwaller said they had a meeting with Bob Nugent of the Transportation Department. He recommended asking the City Commission for a committee to examine the issue of transportation. Schwaller said she revised the proposal based on his recommendation; she did not have a copy to read for the record but will email it to Dresslar. The changes request the City Commission put together a transportation committee, and that this committee be prepared to address the Commission with one or multiple solutions by the end of July. Schwaller said they do not want this to be a policy committee that lasts for one to two years. She indicated she tried to make it clear to Mr. Nugent that this is a current problem that needs to be dealt with quickly. She added that one of the proposed solutions is the introduction of a free bus stop at the shelter, of which Mr. Nugent was not in favor. Schwaller said she also visited with Dave Corliss about the issue and was told that it had already been brought up informally with the City Commission. She said she is waiting for a timetable as to when it will be discussed by the Commission.

Brune added they will be contacting City Commissioners and staff regularly until the item is placed on the City Commission agenda. She also added that prior to meeting with Mr. Nugent, she and Schwaller met with McCluer and Peters to clarify issues that were addressed at the previous meeting.

At that meeting Brune got the impression that HIAC would not have a problem supporting the individual issue of the need for transportation at the shelter in the form of a free bus stop. Addressing the committee as a whole, she asked if the committee does support the proposal, she would like the members to draft a letter to the City Commission on behalf of HIAC endorsing the proposal for the free bus stop. She said they would appreciate HIAC's support.

Cook asked if the committee would like to discuss the development of a letter to the City Commission, or if anyone wants to compose it.

Dresslar said she would most likely be the person who drafts the letter, with input from the committee for content.

Peters said she thinks the letter should also include support of the committee to address transportation issues.

McCluer said since he was part of the discussion with Schwaller and Brune, he would be willing to write a draft of the letter and email it to Dresslar. Dresslar said that would be fine.

Cook said parts of Schwaller's proposal could be cut and pasted into the draft. Schwaller said she would email the original document to McCluer.

**Motion by Cook to draft a letter of endorsement for the transportation committee and proposal to the City Commission;** seconded by McCluer.

Motion passed unanimously.

McCluer asked Schwaller why she felt Nugent was not in favor of a free bus stop.

Schwaller responded he was not overly specific. She felt his biggest concern is the "slippery slope" argument: if we give a free bus stop here, there will be people inundating the transportation department asking why they are not getting a free bus stop on their route. Schwaller said at this time, their point was not to argue with Mr. Nugent about the need, but to gain more information about the pros and cons of the proposal.

Brouwer asked if it is known how many people use the stop at the shelter on a daily basis.

Brune said Nugent said there are 25 each day, but she volunteers at the shelter three days a week and sees more people than that waiting at the stop, usually 3 or 4 people waiting. If that number is multiplied by each hour the bus stops, that would be 30-40 people each day. Brune added that she felt Nugent's issue with the proposal was that they did not follow proper procedure in approaching the department. She felt he wanted this to be a bureaucratic process, and that he had been left out of the loop. Brune feels the group discussion the transportation issue approached this using the correct and logical manner by obtaining community and neighborhood support before approaching the Transportation Department with their proposal. She said Nugent did not necessarily oppose it, but said he would do whatever the City Manager told him to do. Brune added they had talked to a couple of the City Commissioners, but they would really like the support of HIAC since it is the official advisory board.

McCluer asked what the purpose is for the committee that Nugent proposed.

Schwaller replied she believes he is interested in forming a committee with the idea that we get more people in a room to come up with a more comprehensive solution for the shelter's transportation. It would not be a committee to make decisions for city-wide transportation issues. She agrees it would be beneficial to have more people to be able to get more ideas that perhaps have not been considered. Schwaller added that he felt it would be beneficial to get representatives from organizations who are transportation leaders, like Burt Nash, KU and Independence Inc. Her concern is that these organizations really do not care or have a stake in whether or not the shelter has a free bus stop. She was not clear if his proposal for having these organizations participate was to address the bus stop issue or to find another solution; she said they seem to be discussing both issues at once.

Dresslar said the City and KU have a partnership on transportation, which is most likely why Nugent is suggesting these organizations participate in the discussion. KU would have an interest in it because it affects them as well.

Schwaller said she hopes the committee would be able to put pressure on the Transportation Department to get answers to questions such as the cost comparison of having a prepaid, free bus stop versus buying a ticket each time. These are the kinds of things about which a committee has a better chance at getting the facts rather than individuals.

McCluer asked if Nugent indicated if he would be willing serve on the committee.

Schwaller said she believed he would be, but was not positive.

Brune said she felt he would be willing to serve. She reiterated that it is not their goal to have oversight of the city's overall transportation needs. They saw one specific need and are trying to address it and come up with a no-cost solution to it.

McCluer asked if the Police Department has a position on the transportation issue for the homeless.

McKinley said they do not have issues with it. One of the problems that came up to their Neighborhood Resources Officers was people walking through neighborhoods; that is, however, a few individuals and not the masses. He agreed that it would be helpful to have something in place where those people did not need to walk through neighborhoods to their destinations.

Cook asked if anyone wanted to start getting the points of the letter done.

McCluer asked if a city staff person had to write it, or if the board can draft a letter for her review.

Dresslar responded that the board can write a draft letter and she would place it in the proper memorandum form for the City Commission.

Cook asked if Dresslar had the most recent version of Schwaller's proposal.

Dresslar replied that she had the draft from the previous meeting.

Schwaller said she would email the new proposal to Dresslar.

McCluer said they should be prepared for the City Commission to want the transportation committee to deal with city-wide transportation issues.

Cook asked if it would be an option for the shelter could rent the bus stop and pay a monthly fee to use it.

It was suggested that would be a question for the Transit Department.

Dresslar indicated she sat in on the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) session at the recent Homeless Summit and learned that transportation is eligible for ESG funding, which could be an option. It is not a guaranteed funding source; an application would have to be submitted, but it could cover things like gas expenses, bus passes and other similar things. It is the same grant that Willow and LCS currently get. Dresslar clarified that the City of Lawrence gets this funding from the State of Kansas.

Schwaller said based on the meeting with Nugent, there seemed to be a frustration with the shelter. He said the shelter had presented itself as being "isolated and independent" at its new location. Nugent seemed to be unhappy that people were coming on behalf of the shelter to make the request for the bus stop, because the shelter said it would be able to function independently. Schwaller said there appears to be a severe misunderstanding by the Transportation Department on the needs of the homeless people, and poor people in general.

McCluer said based on what Schwaller said indicates to him that the shelter is having a negative effect on some people. To find the solution for the shelter, the committee needs to find a more comprehensive solution for the homeless. Going from a broader spectrum, there will still be a solution for the shelter, but there shouldn't be what appears to be a negative feeling.

Peters added that it is frustrating, but coming up with a more comprehensive solution is better but will take longer to accomplish.

Brune asked McCluer for clarification on his comment as to why he feels the community has negative feelings about the shelter.

McCluer said having the shelter placed so far out of town is an indicator.

Dresslar interjected that the shelter looked for a site for a very long time, and they looked all over the Lawrence city limits. There has been a lot of assistance from both the county and the city to be able to be in this location. Dresslar said she does not necessarily like to hear that the City "put them out there", because she does not feel that accurately speaks to the collaboration and the process of finding a location that would suit the needs of the shelter.

McCluer said he understands that the city feels like the shelter issue has been dealt with, but the problem seems to keep coming up again, this time with transportation into downtown.

Brune said it will take at least two years for the shelter to be established. It has only been in operation at the new location for a few months. It is a new endeavor, a very expensive endeavor, even though the city and the county have been very generous with their assistance. No one knew what the costs associated with the location would be. It would be very naïve to think that the shelter issue has been resolved just because it has been built and is in operation.

Schwaller returned to the topic of talking points for the memo, stating that support of the creation of a committee would be beneficial, and that the committee comes up with a solution in a timely manner, *timely* being the key factor. The committee should then look at, as one of its possible

solutions, the provision of a free bus stop at the shelter, and the pros and cons associated with that solution. Schwaller also said that someone, either herself, Brune, or someone from HIAC, be proposed as being a member of the committee so that the needs of homeless, and poor people in general, are brought to light.

Dresslar asked that McCluer write up a draft of the memo and send it to her so she can finalize it and put it in the proper format to be presented to the City Commission.

**ITEM NO. 5 Housing Vision Reports.**

**A. Non-Housing**

Presentation deferred for May.

**B. Emergency Shelter/Temporary Housing**

Presentation deferred for May.

**C. Transitional Housing/Supportive Services**

Hooker said LDCHA currently has 45 transitional tenants in housing, with 29 on the waiting list and one jail re-entry person.

Benabe asked if Hooker had any data on the permanent housing waiting list.

Hooker said she did not have that data with her to present.

Cook asked if general applications are still being taken.

Hooker responded yes. She added everything is unknown at this point. They do not know how much funding they will receive. LDCHA took a big hit last quarter, which they were able to absorb without having to cancel any vouchers or lose any housing.

Dresslar added that the HOME and CDBG funding allocations are unknown at this time, and she does not know when an announcement will be made regarding amounts.

**D. Permanent Supportive Housing**

Presentation deferred for May.

**E. Permanent Housing**

Presentation deferred for May.

**ITEM NO. 6 Miscellaneous/Calendar**

Dresslar said she is done with the point-in-time homeless count data, but she still has to put it into graph and comparison format. Dresslar said there were 223 that were counted on January 23, 2013. In 2011, which was the last sheltered and unsheltered count, there were 226. She added one of the interesting parts of the survey was the reason people gave for why they were homeless. The

overwhelming response was due to lack of jobs and affordable housing. Dresslar will make a presentation on that information in June when she has finished putting all the data and charts together.

Dresslar reminded the committee the June meeting was moved up a week to June 4. She will send out another email reminder.

Dresslar said Margene Swarts's replacement has been named, and it is Dresslar, so city staff representation at the meetings will not be changing.

Peters said the Lawrence Community Shelter and Family Promise are partnering for the Home Run 5K on Memorial Day. There will be a lot of activities for adults and kids. She asked that everyone go and "like" the Facebook page so they had more visibility.

Schwaller asked if family dogs are allowed to run in the race.

Peters replied she did not know if dogs are allowed.

#### **ITEM NO. 7 Public Comment.**

Brune asked if the committee has taken a position on the rental registration proposal.

Cook asked if she was referring to the occupancy changes regarding how many people can live in a residence.

Brune clarified that she was referring to having all rental properties required to be registered under the City's rental program.

Cook responded no, the committee has not discussed this yet, other than to be aware of it.

Brune said there is a concern that the landlords will pass on this registration fee to the tenants. She added that as of July 1, 2013, landlords will no longer be required to pay income tax on rental income. She pointed out the landlords will have a lot more money in their pockets, so the registration fee should be insignificant.

McCluer asked for clarification as to what the rental registration fee is.

Cook replied the City is expanding the program to include all rental properties rather than only those located in single family zoning. This would mean that all properties would be required to be up to code to be eligible for licensing. This would have a major impact on tenants at the poverty level, because often they are only able to rent those properties that are cheaper and not as strictly maintained. While they are not always the safest places, it still qualifies as a roof over their heads. Cook asked if the City has already passed this change.

Dresslar responded no, it is going back in front of the City Commission for discussion and consideration.

Cook brought up the drop-in center issue, and said that it has not really been brought up for discussion lately.

McCluer asked if the shelter is still running at capacity.

Cook said yes, for the most part. The biggest issue is the separation of Level One and Level Two guests. Level One is for new guests who haven't been in the shelter very long and that tier is almost always full. So even if there are empty beds in the Level Two tier, they have to turn people away because someone in the Level One group cannot go into Level Two accommodations. Level Two and the family programs have more beds, but they cannot put single people back in the family area.

McCluer asked if Cook thinks there will be a need for a second shelter in Lawrence.

Cook said there is always an abundance of people needing shelter, but he does not know that the city would have an interest in opening another one so soon. It would take a lot of time and documentation to prove that a large number of people were turned away who needed shelter.

Dresslar had a question in that after looking at the point-in-time data, it showed there were only five unsheltered people who were counted. She asked Cook what he feels the actual number of unsheltered people is.

Cook said it is difficult to say. Some of the unsheltered people will take off and go camping and then return at a later time for assistance; they are just taking a break from the shelter to get away from the volume of people, etc. He ventured a guess that the number of people who are strictly camping and not using the facility at all would be greater than 10.

Dresslar added that she has contacted the school district to get their data on the number of homeless children, which would help determine a more accurate picture of the number of families and adults who are unsheltered.

**ITEM NO. 8 Adjourn.**

Motion by McCluer **to adjourn the May 7, 2013 meeting of the HIAC**; seconded by Peters.

Motion passed unanimously.

**Attendance Record**

Members	01/ 13	02/ 13	03/ 13	04/ 13	05/ 13	06/ 13	07/ 13	08/ 13	09/ 13	10/ 13	11/ 13	12/ 13
Michael Brouwer	E	+	+		+							
Hubbard Collinsworth	E	+	+	+	E							
Brad Cook	+	+	+	+	+							
Brent Hoffman	+ ^											
Matt McCluer	+	U	U	+	+							
Trent McKinley	E	+	E	+	+							
Cary Strong	E	+	U	U	U							
Laurie Hooker	+*	+	+	+	+							
Becky Peters		+ ^	+	+	+							
Kadie Jorgensen		+ ^	U	U	E							

- X - Meeting Cancelled Due to Inclement Weather
- E - Excused Absence
- U - Unexcused Absence
- () - Last meeting in term.
- \* - First meeting in term.
- ^ - Last Meeting