

OHS Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

January 18, 2024

Front Steps Housing & Services

9am

Members present: Karen Anderson, Dr. Michael Seidman, Barb Karam, Chris Knestrick, Yvonne Conwell, Paul Mosher, Starr Sizemore, Natasha Wynn, Linda Uveges, Fred Berry, Beth Graham, Angela Glassco, Elaine Gimmel, Raymond Mills, Loh.

Members absent: Dorivette Nolan, Mary McNamara, Michael Wackers, Kris Harsh, Marcia Zashin, Kirsti Mouncey, Karen McHenry, Peter Schindler, Teresa Sanders, Melissa Graves, Mike Sering, Ania Lashay.

Others present: Melissa Sirak, Jenn Kons, Megan Scheck, Franco Formichelli, Candace Robinson, Sharon Parries, Allison Gill, Erin Rearden, Nick Butina, Jessica Beck, Angela D'Orazio, Michael Bernot, Kait McNeely, Jennifer Harrison, Kate Lodge, Luke Drotar, Jenny Eppich, Nicole Evans, Samantha Justhar.

1. Welcome and open remarks

Elaine Gimmel, Tri-Chair called the meeting to order at 9:15am and proceeded with roll call to establish quorum.

Fred Berry, Tri-Chair welcomed everyone.

2. Decision Issues

a. Fred led the board in the Approval of Advisory Board Minutes 11/16/2023

i. Chris Knestrick motioned to approve the minutes

ii. Linda Uveges seconded

iii. All were in favor with no oppositions or abstentions. Motion carries.

b. Fred led the board in the presentation and voting on open seats for the OHS Advisory Board

i. Fred explained that these seats are 3 year terms.

ii. Fred stated that Natasha Wynn is stepping away from her role as tri-chair, and that Christian Anderson is going to step into that role in her place.

iii. There are three open seats and one member up for renewal.

1. The three applicants for the open seats are: Mike Bernot from West Side Catholic Center, Christian Anderson for a lived experience seat, and James Dombard for a lived experience seat.

a. Discussion ensued regarding Christian's fulfillment of two roles (lived experience seat and tri-chair/member), which will be taken to the Governance Committee for discussion.

2. Mike Sering is up for renewal

iv. Elaine pointed out that there is an at-large seat available, and they did receive applications for that seat but they were from provider agencies so they did not qualify. The Advisory Board will be sending out notice asking for applicants for that seat.

- v. Elaine expressed appreciation to Natasha for her role as tri-chair, and Natasha expressed gratitude for the opportunity.
- vi. Elaine stated Ania should be removed from the Board as she has resigned.
- vii. Fred asked for a vote for the Board changes to include the candidates for appointment (Mike Sering's renewal, as well as appointment of Christian Anderson, Mike Bernot, and James Donbard) and one resignation (Ania Lashay)
 - 1. Motion to approve from Loh, Barb Karam seconded. No further discussion, all were in favor with no opposition or abstentions. Motion carries.
- c. 2024 Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) tax credit application recommendation
 - i. Fred asked Melissa, Jennifer, and Jennifer to present.
 - ii. Melissa shared some historical background on this
 - 1. OHS sent out a solicitation to the CoC mailing list opening up applications for tax credit applicants, which are due in February.
 - 2. OHFA looks to localities to identify the priorities for their continuum, so this is that process.
 - iii. CHN representatives presented the Cleveland West Veterans Housing proposed project for the tax credit
 - 1. CHN is working with the VA on this project.
 - 2. Proposed project is a 62 unit affordable housing project to be built in the Stockyard neighborhood, for homeless veterans (HUD VASH). The project will include supportive services to the residents through on site VA staff. There will also be 24 hour staffed front desk. This will be a low-barrier, Housing First project. VA will be the on-site service provider.
 - 3. Supportive services will include primary care, mental health care, specialty care, social programs and services, as well as other services that will be in a mobile unit coming on-site.
 - 4. For residents who didn't serve in the military long enough to get an honorable discharge, or got a discharge other than honorable (excluding dishonorable), they will link them to community services.
 - 5. Government vehicles will be utilized for any transportation needs for the residents through their VA worker.
 - 6. Loh asked about future plans to develop more buildings, and a discussion ensued.
 - a. Elaine shared about their senior building that has 25 units for HUD-VASH and for homeless veterans without HUD-VASH.
 - 7. Loh asked if the units would be ADA accessible. Jennifer from CHN shared that they would have walk-in showers, and would have some other accessible features such as grab bars. These measures will help residents to age in place. 8 units will be fully ADA accessible.
 - 8. Total investment for this project is \$20MIL. They are applying for funding through the OHS application process in February. They are also applying for Cuyahoga HOME funds through the City of Cleveland, OHFA, and philanthropy.

9. Construction would begin in summer 2025 after receiving needed funding, with the goal to complete construction and begin occupancy summer 2026.
 - iv. Fred asked for a vote for the OHS Advisory Board to provide support to CHN to move forward with this project.
 1. Loh motioned to approve the Advisory Board's support of this project, Elaine seconded. There were no oppositions, and Barb Karam abstained. Motion carries.
3. OHS 2024 priorities
 - a. Melissa Sirak presented.
 - b. OHS receives the Planning Grant directly from HUD. This planning grant helps to further the mission of OHS through special projects and expansions.
 - c. In 2024, through the planning grant, OHS is supporting A Place 4 Me to further the work that will be coming from the YHDP grant. They are also expanding youth involvement in YHDP, increasing their participation in the infrastructure, implementation, and monitoring of the YHDP grant.
 - d. OHS will also continue to support workforce, income, and stability through their contract with Enterprise. They will continue the workforce steering committee work, including a pilot project focused on youth/young adults. This is one of the pillars of the strategic plan. OHS will be contracting with CWRU for assistance with this.
 - e. OHS will continue contract and technical assistance from Bit Focus. This will continue to enhance our ability to use data analytics to enhance services.
 - f. Housing Innovations will continue contract with OHS to continue their work through the PPC committee, work on the NOFO.
 - g. We are coming up on the first year of the Strategic Plan for the CoC. As we continue to work and move forward, we are going to be reflecting on the work accomplished and yet to be done on the strategic plan at the next OHS advisory meeting.
 - h. Melissa also shared that the CoC has continued to grow and now receives \$70MIL from HUD, but OHS itself has not grown. As such, OHS will be working on a plan to ensure the completion of the core responsibilities of OHS, but this may lead to OHS Staff needing to step away from certain meetings and efforts simply due to needing to utilize staff time effectively and efficiently. It is not that these efforts and meetings are not impactful and important, but they have to allocate their time as wisely as possible.
4. RRH/ERA 2 Update
 - a. Elaine presented.
 - b. EDEN opened ERA 2 and is not getting very many applicants and these are only for CoC partner agencies. They have \$10MIL, so please refer clients to this program. The program provides up to 18 months total assistance for each client, with no inspection requirement. This program is eligible to people who are housed and need assistance. No case management is provided in this program.
 - c. EDEN also received dollars from OHS for homeless prevention for utilities, rent arrears, and cleaning units, as well as short-term hotel stays for issues in units that are in need of repair.

- d. Healthy Beginnings at Home – EDEN applied for this with First Year Cleveland as applicant (Partnership with Neighborhood Leadership Institute, CMHA, The Centers, and EDEN). Similar to RRH, this program provides services and short-term housing assistance to pregnant mothers.
 - e. Jessi Beck presented on RRH
 - f. EDEN had to stop referrals for families in November 2023. There was a waitlist with a large number of applicants, but EDEN did not want this waitlist to continue into 2024. EDEN reached out to shelters to see if any clients were ready before they shut down the waitlist. EDEN closed the waitlist because many people would have been ineligible. EDEN is able to enroll 5 families each month through RRH. DV program never stopped or shutdown, and have been enrolling up to 25 families each month in that program – this is separate from the family RRH program. The first 5 applications received each month will be the families that get the assistance, this is communicated via email to CoC list serv.
 - g. Elaine shared about the dollars available and about the requirements of these grants and programs and the restrictions this puts on the various programs’ ability to provide assistance, but they are doing their best to meet the housing needs as they are able.
 - i. Melissa shared that the funding gaps are largely due to going back to pre-COVID dollars and still trying to continue to provide the assistance that continues to be needed in the housing crisis.
 - h. Chris wondered what impact only providing assistance to 5 families a month would do for the length of stay in shelter. He also wondered what the long term plan is to increase that number.
 - i. Allison Gill shared that ERA 2 is helping, and wondered if the Board could consider a special project to provide assistance.
 - ii. Elaine connected the funding to FMR and the need to get an increase on FMR which will help. Elaine suggested discussing all of the programs in the CoC more in depth during the strategic plan discussion next month, since this isn’t the only RRH program available in the community.
 - iii. Another member stated CMHA prioritizing homeless households would make a huge impact on the system.
5. Family Overflow Transition
- a. Melissa presented.
 - b. There has been an influx of families in the system since 2023. The current family overflow provider is transitioning away from that, and Mike Sering and Melissa started working toward a plan to get that gap filled. We are going to use hotels as a short term interim plan, and are working on finding a space long-term. There seems to be a site that can work for overflow family shelter as a permanent solution, but there is about 6 weeks of renovation needed and it is still not finalized as they need to make sure the city approves of it for that use. The City of Cleveland has been a great partner in working toward getting this location secured and approved for use. Hopefully the site will be secured in the next week or two. Working with families on alternative housing options in the meantime so overflow is not needed.

6. Seasonal Shelter

- a. Chris Knestrick presented.
- b. Around 100 beds for seasonal shelter in multiple locations, most are around capacity but are not turning people away. Usage is high due to cold. Shuttle provided by LMM is in place to pick up program participants which has proved successful. Many sites have adjusted their hours to be open during the times when drop in centers are not open.
- c. City Council is voting on Monday on the 2nd round of funding to continue this to finish out the year. County came through with funding to NEOCH which is used for one of these sites to operate. 2nd round is going to match that first round so that UCC and Metanoiah can continue to operate their sites.

7. CE Expansion Grant

- a. Jennifer and Shawna presented.
 - i. Partnership between Frontline and OHS and United Way of Greater Cleveland/211 to take calls
 - ii. Prior to this pilot project partnership, Frontline was taking around 2,500-3,000 calls a month, and it was not sustainable, resulting in longer hold times, as well as longer returned voicemails.
 - iii. Goal of the pilot project was to increase efficiency and real time access to families and individuals in need of housing. This pilot was launched in December.
- b. Franco from UW presented information on how this project works. He also shared data on its performance during the first month.
 - i. Created a call flow where if the caller was in need of housing and was not fleeing domestic violence or a veteran, they would then be routed to housing navigators who are a dedicated team at 211 and can then get to Coordinated Intake at Frontline.
 - ii. Month 1 totals included 879 people who were in need of housing and not veterans or DV survivors. There were 550 calls that were for other needs that were then not routed to Frontline, which helped to ensure that Frontline was only taking calls for housing needs, thus utilizing their time effectively and efficiently, and decreasing the total calls they are taking.
 - iii. One member asked about the average hold time, which they estimated at around 1 minute. They have also looked at abandoned calls, which are usually less than 30 seconds, so those individuals are hanging up pretty quickly and numbers are low.
- c. Jenn explained what questions asked during the phone screening and shared data on the answers collected in the first month of the pilot.
 - i. Data shows that most callers (89.45%) were 18+, most callers wanted to get placed in a homeless shelter (78.46%), 9.68% were in need of shelter due to a DV situation, 1.02% needed shelter due to labor/human trafficking, 26.01% were a family seeking shelter and 57.29% were single seeking shelter.
 - ii. Loh asked about the question that asked callers if they can attend to ADLs if they explain what ADLs are. Jenn explained that they explain what ADLs are and

that they use this information to determine their ability to be in shelter and how best to help to meet their needs. A discussion ensued.

- d. Jenn then shared an overview of what referrals were provided to callers.
 - e. Shawna shared transfers and inbound calls to Frontline, which was about 550 calls in the first month, as compared to prior numbers of 2,500-3,000 calls per month. This is due to the new call flow established through partnership with UW 211. Voicemails are also now responded to within 33 minutes now, as compared to 4-24 hours previously. 276 calls resulted in intakes.
 - f. One member asked how long the pilot project would continue and when it would become permanent. Melissa replied this is a pilot project through June, and then will likely fold into the redesign of the process and partnerships for CE.
8. YHDP Update
- a. Kate Lodge presented.
 - b. Have worked hard this year to do a comprehensive community plan with all the partner agencies and youth. One program is a navigation program, and the other is TH-RRH project. We are now at the point where these programs can be implemented.
 - c. Recruiting an implementation team to help work through getting these programs started.
 - d. 1/29 1:30-3:30 @ Tri-C there will be an opportunity to hear about the plan and the implementation. Invitation will be sent via email.
9. Initiative Reports
- a. Due to time constraint, Natasha asked the advisory board to review the provided handouts for updates on initiative reports from the following:
 - i. Ending Veteran Homelessness (EVH)
 - ii. RRH
 - iii. Ending Youth Homelessness (EYH)
 - iv. Unsheltered Report
10. Announcements
- a. PSH Webinar on January 16th
 - i. PSH providers should have packet with information.
 - b. PSH workgroup reconvening on February 6th here at Front Steps
 - c. 2024 PIT Count is January 23rd – Reach out with any questions to Nick Butina
 - i. Please get PIT cards if you are a provider for the PIT count.

Having no further business, meeting adjourned at 11:00am.

Submitted by Megan Scheck 1/19/2024