

City of New Haven
Homeless Advisory Commission
April 11, 2024

Attendance:

Members Present: U. Muley, S. Bass, L. Starkes, J. Huettner, T. Streeter, Y. Chauhan, A. Jaramoga

Ex- Officio: V. George-James, N. Torres,

Staff: S. James

Guest: CAN- M. Lefever, YHHAP-J. Simmons

Members Absent: J. Edwards

Excused Absent:

The meeting was called to order by U. Muley at 6:05pm. The previous meeting minutes reviewed. The motion to accept minutes - J. Simmons and seconded by A. Jaramoga. Motion accepted unanimously.

Introduction V. George-James welcomed newest commissioner L. Starkes to the HAC commission. L. Starkes shared that she joined HAC to advocate for those that are unhoused

NEW BUSINESS:

New Department of Community Resilience Director:

V. George-James shared that the CSA department has a new Director, Tirzah Kemp. V. George- James shared that T. Kemp will be invited to the meeting within the coming months.

Downtown Bathroom Project:

S. Bass gave a brief update of the downtown bathroom initiative. She shared that while the group would like to have 24/ 7-bathroom access with attendants (to keep the bathrooms clean) downtown, they recognize there is a hefty price. The city has agreed to contribute to this project and the group has invited additional stakeholders to the table such as Yale University, Yale Hospital and Connecticut Transit. S. Bass also shared that the group explored improving the current porto potty situation as well as seeking more long-term options.

Shelter Updates: V. George shared that the warming centers will be closing on April 15,2024. She shared that the warming centers are still at capacity even with several clients transferring to the Foxon shelter. V. George-James shared that Orchard Street warming center operated by Upon This Rock Ministries will be the first warming center to be closed on April 15TH 2024. She shared that the other 2 warming centers, Varick Church and The 180 Center will operate through the end of April. The plan is to stagger the closings. V. George-James informed the committee about the Full Court press initiative which purpose is to connect warming center guests to employment, education, and housing case management. This initiative is designed to help guests toward self-sufficiency. V. George-James shared that she would present some data during the next HAC meeting. V.- George-James shared that the family triage is still in operation and there is no closing date established yet.

During the meeting a question was asked regarding clients obtaining state Identification while experiencing homelessness and how easy that process is. S. James shared that all the providers that are providing homeless services within the city are now placed on an ID waiver list with the Department of Motor Vehicles. S. James shared those agencies can provide clients with a verification letter that they will take to DMV and the fee cost will be waived. S. James also shared that the Elm City ID that is issued to New Haven resided who was previously incarcerated, a waiver can be received at the office of Mental Services at the city that the client can take to vital records and obtain a New Haven resident identification cost for free.

Encampments: V. George-James shared that since the last meeting, the encampment located at James/State Street has since been cleared. V. George-James shared that the encampment was on state property, and it was a collaborative effort with the clearing. V. George-James shared that two individuals identified as a couple occupied the sited. The female accepted the shelter bed offered to her and reconnected with Cornell Scott Street medicine team. V. George-James shared that there are a few more encampments scheduled for clearing within the coming weeks due to health and safety concerns.

CAN Update: M. Lefever shared that 838 households made calls to 211, 946 households with children called 211, 124 matched to housing resources, 184 singles and 34 families are on the waitlist. M. Lefever shared that families and individuals are still struggling to find affordable units even with being matched to a housing voucher. M. Lefever shared that DOH allocated 20 homeless vouchers partnering with New Haven Housing Authority Project base sites from the shoreline. She shared that an additional 29 households were matched to a housing source. M. Lefever announced that A Call to Action is scheduled for April 24, 2024, at the legislative office building in Hartford to advocate for more funding for homeless services. J. Huettner requested additional cumulative data on unhoused individuals and families. M. Lefever agreed to provide this data.

YHHAP Update: YHHAP is partnering with Witnesses to Hunger advocating for Yale's contribution to United Way's school break groceries. J. Simmons shared that YHHAP is also exploring assisting the YMCA with the purchase of a new refrigerator.

Announcements: J. Huettner announced the retirement of Rev. Bonita Grubbs- Former Executive Director of Christian Community Action Agency.

Next steps:

1. J. Huettner and Y. Chauhan will gather more information regarding the Supreme's court decision on homelessness and eviction from public land.
2. Invite Charmaine Yun new Executive Director of Christian Community Action to HAC.
3. Invite Columbus House to share updates on their development project.

Adjourn– 7:00pm