

## **Hartford Ad-Hoc Committee on Emergency Shelter**

4/07/22 - Meeting Minutes - 5:00 PM

Committee Members present: Bryan Luikart (Chair), Ally Tufenkjian (Vice-chair), Simon Dennis (Secretary), Tom Peletier, Scott Sablan, Michael Redmond

Community Attendance: Martha Hafner, Will Eberle

**Bryan called the meeting to order at 5:04 and reviewed the agenda.**

**Ally moved passage of the HADCES minutes of 3/24/22. Scott seconded. The minutes passed without objection.**

### **Presentation and Discussion with Will Eberle**

Will reported that he was heartened to learn that HADCES exists and thanked the group for our efforts. Will is the Field Director of EHS which is a bridge between the District offices, community partners and the Governor's office, to ensure that there is a constant understanding of the policy landscape and the actual situation on the ground.

The General Assistance Program is an emergency assistance program that has been in place for many years which provides emergency shelter for people who fit a very specific set of parameters. The duration of the program tends to be short, with a ceiling of 84 days. During the pandemic, there was a threat associated with congregate living, which triggered a lessening of the criteria for admission. That removal of criteria has been extended a number of times and we are coming to the end of the period of pause of the GA Criteria.

We are now coming into a new program which will use Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) Funds which can be used to pay rent. This funding would allow people to stay in participating hotels with something like a lease. We are now in the middle of this shift in funding mechanisms. The Hotel or Landlord has the right to accept or deny residency to the particular resident.

This money will be accessible to the vast majority of the people who are currently staying through Hotel Vouchers. However some may not be eligible based on past behavioral issues.

Martha asked if there is some liability insurance that comes with the ERAP funding mechanism. Will said that there may be additional funds to serve as an extra deposit for "difficult tenants." This would be a limited amount of coverage which might or might not assuage insurance concerns for existing venues.

Michael mentioned that this is dependent on the hotels deciding that the ERAP funding is good for its business model. He had heard that two of the existing WRJ hotels had opted out. He asked if Will had learned of other non-participating hotels. Will mentioned that he had seen several hotels with concerns ultimately be convinced by the high dollar amount (\$3200/month) to participate.

Bryan asked if more creative lower-cost solutions that will endure were being considered at the state level. Will mentioned that local administration of the funds could allow for greater flexibility. There are some in the unsheltered community that could benefit from being in congregate care settings. There are real barriers to getting people into those care settings and there has been discussion about alleviating these barriers.

Martha asked if there is any exploration of what other States are doing with regard to using ERAP funds to create enduring emergency funding. Will said that he is emphasizing permanent supportive housing. There are some flexible dollars that can be used for innovative things. The hope is that by being able to pay for the services, more congregate service housing environments could be created. Michael mentioned that Twin Pines and the Haven are currently collaborating around creating a supportive housing model. He mentioned that there has been some opposition from some members of the community. He mentioned that letters of support would be helpful. Bryan also mentioned that we should talk about the role of HADCES in supporting the Haven's efforts to advance these efforts.

Bryan mentioned that there are some members of the unhoused community who may need a residential treatment facility. This may be a piece of the puzzle that is missing. Another is the public misperception of homelessness. He suggested that it may be helpful to use public funding a support a campaign to help people understand the actual nature of the risks associated with different kinds of support.

Ally reported that Hartford did recently hire a peer support advocate named Rachel Hobart. Will reported that there is something called a community investment where a portion of the General Assistance budget can be allocated to support community needs.

### **RV Policy Update**

Simon reported that the Planning Department had heard back from Counsel that an owner-occupied RV that is situated on non-occupant-owned land would not be subject to the State Rental Regulations. So we are cleared for moving forward with the first of the two hearings before the Planning Commission.

### **Discussion on the Haven's Supportive Housing Project**

The group discussed the value of a letter of support coming from HADCES. There was also more discussion about blatant expressions of bias against people experiencing homelessness within the past meetings on the subject. Simon said that a proclamation could be drafted against such expressions of bias and that there was work to be done to create a climate where such expressions in the public forum do not go unchecked.

**Simon moved adjournment. Scott seconded. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:13 PM.**

Respectfully submitted, Simon Dennis