

Hartford Ad-Hoc Committee on Emergency Shelter

04/29/21 Meeting Minutes - 5:00 PM

Committee Attendance: Simon Dennis, Becca White, Tom Peltier, Ally Tufenkjian, Bryan Luikart, Michael Redmond

Community Attendance: Martha Hafner, Brigid Armbrust, Kelly Armbrust and Molly Armbrust

Becca called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM.

Jon moved passage of 4/15/21 Bryan seconded. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Brigid and Kelly Armbrust introduced themselves and said they wanted to learn about what the Committee is doing.

New Encampment Policy Review

Ally shared that she did not believe that the policy had Selectboard input. She received it this morning. It focuses on public safety. The policy contains protocols regarding which departments will respond under what circumstances. The policy prohibits camping in high-sensitivity areas as defined, including schools, wetlands, etc. How close are they to various sensitive areas, and defines public health and safety concerns. There is also a section on compliance. 48 hour notice if people are asked to move on and do not oblige, when trespassing would become a factor.

Becca said that will give people time to review this policy over time and return to it later in the process.

Bryan said that 48-hour response time may not give sufficient notice. He suggested that 2 weeks would be more appropriate timeframe for departures. Ally reminded people that if the Town calls for relocation, according to the policy, they would be on the hook for supporting relocation.

Simon reported new news regarding the timeline of phasing out the hotel voucher program. As of July 1, it is estimated that 30% of the hotel residents will become ineligible to the hotel housing. This group will have a grace period to depart the hotel. By May 1 of 2022, the State will return to normal General Assistance Guidelines.

Becca said that perhaps this is a good time for HADCES to give a report to the Selectboard.

Michael confirmed that this policy was already set.

Jon mentioned a timing problem on page six, mentioned that it would be longer than 48 hours before any town officials can offer any alternatives. Jon suggested a one-week margin, but said that perhaps that the residents could be asked to state that they will comply with the request to vacate within 48 hours.

Planning Commission Letter

The letter we edited was sent by Becca to Bruce Riddle and Jo-Ann Ells. We heard back from the Chair who said that they would be happy to hear about it at an upcoming meeting. Jo-Ann Ells has invited us to come to the meeting next week. It is moving forward.

Jon suggested that the thrust of this is to allow for people to be dispersed in the community in RVs. Tiny Houses are not covered in the suggested amendments.

Micro-Dwelling Development

Simon reported that we are waiting for a proposal for a feasibility study to look at the Christian Street Land. Jon invited input on names on the proposed housing development and said that possible names (or votes for existing names) could be added to the running list.

Michael reported on the change in the rules regarding the State Hotel Voucher Program. He indicated that many hotels will be stepping away from the program. The State of Emergency may end at the end of June, either at the national or State level. This means that FEMA funding will end. People who are not in the hotels, tightening of eligibility. On July first, there will be a change in eligibility for both newcomers and existing hotel residents, based on need. People with families, people over 65, people with infirmities, etc, will be granted an additional 84 days of eligibility. By the end of September, everyone will lose eligibility.

There is an expectation that Shelters will be opening beds. The Haven will open 10 new beds, and 4 new families. There may also be additional housing, and additional shelter spaces coming online. There is money available for anyone if they can find a place to live. So it is hoped that this will help create motivation to open some more creative housing solutions.

FEMA money or the food program is not going to be available as of July 1st, 2021.

Michael will share a document that summarizes eligibility guidelines.

Becca reported that the State is trying to expand the number of homes that are available, by shortening the timeframe of commitment to affordability (from 5 to 3 years) for developers who receive state and federal assistance.

The question was asked: How many people are projected to be out in tents?

Michael estimated that 35 or 40 “households” may be moving into the unsheltered unhoused community in addition to the existing camping population. This number will be compounded by the end of the eviction moratorium.

Martha mentioned that she is very concerned about the potential for a backlog jamming up the system. It would be a good idea for the port-a-johns to be combined with the bike camping options. Is there any way that barriers can be hacked at, at the state level?

Becca mentioned that we had attempted to find a way through the water regulations but we have found that this will not be possible.

Martha mentioned that she had become a Grandma.

Our next meeting will be 5/13/21 at 5:00.

Jon moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:14. Ally seconded. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Our next meeting will take place at 5:00 PM on May 13th.

The attendance link will be: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81522347053>

Submitted by Simon Dennis, Committee Secretary