

**CITY of Auburn Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness**  
**Meeting Summary for Meeting 3: Thursday, January 7, 2016**  
**5:00 – 7:30pm**  
**Auburn Senior Activity Center**

MEETING ATTENDANCE					
<b>Task Force Members &amp; Alternates:</b>					
Sarah Christiansen	✓	Alexis Schleiss	✓	Carla Hopkins	✓
Alexander Foster	✓	Leticia Figueroa	✓	Jeremy James	X
Josh Wheeldon	✓	Dennis Grad	✓	Julia Jordan	✓
Virginia Gannon	✓	Jeff Escobar	X	Ron Roberts	✓
Debbie Christian	✓	Cara Brinkley	✓	Diane Cimino-Kelly	✓
Laura Kniss	✓	Denise Daniels	✓	Kathie Blaschke	✓
Ted Leonard	✓	Matt Wetter	X	Sylvia Fuerstenburg (Alt.)	✓
<b>Staff Support Team:</b>					
Dana Hinman	X	Tami Kapule	✓	Bill Pierson	✓
Erica Azcueta	✓	Jamie Kelly	✓	Kristin Winkel	✓
Karen Reed, Facilitator	✓	Eric Robertson	✓		
<b>Guest Speakers:</b>					
Adrienne Quinn	•	Karen House	•		

The meeting convened at 5:03pm.

**Welcome, Introductions Review of Agenda.** Karen Reed, Task Force facilitator, welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda. She thanked the presenters for being there and reminded Task Force members to fill out the Doodle pole sent out by Erica Azcueta concerning a date for the fourth meeting.

**Site Visits** Karen reminded Task Force members about the site visits and to sign up for those. Karen also circulated a sign-up sheet for an additional site visit to The Landing, a permanent supportive housing property operated by Valley Cities in Auburn.

**Standing Items**

**Approval of summary notes from Meeting #2:** Virginia moved to accept the notes, Ted Leonard seconded the motion. Meeting notes were approved as submitted.

**Co-Chair remarks.** None.

**Public Comment received since Meeting 2:** Four comments have been received on the Talk Auburn forum since the third meeting. These comments were provided in materials provided for meeting #3. Karen also pointed out a matrix in the packet materials summarizing the *Talk Auburn* comments; the matrix was created by an Auburn council member interested in the issue.

**Response to Questions from Meeting 2:** Karen noted that responses to questions from Meeting 2 are in the packet, including copies being circulated tonight. She noted that Question 4 was addressed by a DESC summary page and Question 5 was answered with the provision of two articles concerning Salt Lake City and their strategies for ending chronic street homelessness through a housing first model.

**Presentation & Discussion: Auburn Local Government Services: Their Role, What they're seeing in terms of homelessness, gaps and ideas.**

Erica Azcueta, Veterans and Human Services Coordinator, Community Services, City of Auburn:

- Community Services has a small staff but we provide many services such as Housing Repair, CDBG funding to local non-profits, Neighborhood Programs, resource navigation, and more.
- Issues that we see: Auburn does not have enough capacity to meet the need. Many good resources are here, like AYR, Valley Cities, and the Food Bank, but their capacity does not meet the huge need in the community. We also see that there is a lack of reliable transportation for people: they can't get to the services that are in other parts of King County that we don't have (or have too little of) here in South King County. A lack of emergency services like shelters is also felt here in SKC. The AmeriCorps member that does outreach in the community has noted two gaps: a lack of hygiene facilities in Auburn and a lack of knowledge or confusion about what resources are available to them.
- Strengths: partnerships. Erica is part of HAC (Housing Action Committee) which is a group of non-profits and governments that work together to create partnerships and meet the need. They are hiring a full-time planner soon.

Tami Kapule, Code Compliance Officer, Community Development & Public Works, City of Auburn

- Code Enforcement often has to clear out and clean-up homeless encampments. Tami expressed a frustration that they are kicking them out and have no where to offer for them to go. She would like to be able to send them to a shelter or something where they can stay safely and perhaps get help to get off the streets more permanently.
- Chris Andersen from Environmental Services at the City spoke to the environmental issues that encampments present. Chris mentioned that they often end up on unstable/unsafe land, disrupt existing ecosystems, and pollute the areas with trash, various liquids and human waste. People living in flood plain areas along the river are also at risk from winter floods.
- Tami feels that Code Enforcement is responsive to the various communities it services such as residents and business owners, and has good partnerships with other City Departments including Police and local agencies.
- Gaps: they've seen an increase in encampments but not an increase in places to send the "residents" of these encampments.
- Other ramifications: they've noted an increase in tampering with locks on garbage bins. Homeless individuals are finding their way into garbage bins not just to dumpster dive, but also to sleep. This presents a new set of hazards because it damages property and creates a mess – and it also creates a risk to the individuals seeking shelter in dumpsters.

**Presentation: Other Public Agencies**

King County Department of Community and Human Services (Presenter: Adrienne Quinn, Director)

- Thank you to Auburn for setting up this Task Force and working to address this issue
- Spoke about homelessness as a symptom of other systems failing: failure of mental health treatment, failure of substance abuse treatment, failure of the foster care system, and high housing costs.
  - Washington is 50<sup>th</sup> in the nation in terms of access to mental health care; 48<sup>th</sup> in access to mental health care inpatient services and 45<sup>th</sup> in investment in developmental disabilities services.
  - We also have very high housing costs.

- There is a need in Auburn but the investments aren't happening there.
- The County has mapped data on service utilization by zip code. Shows very heavy concentration of people calling from Auburn to find emergency shelter, substance abuse services, permanent shelter, on Medicaid,
- Funding federally has been reduced since the 1980s but local agencies just don't have the funding/capacity to fill the gap that was created by a federal funding reduction. For example, Ending Veteran Homelessness has been a joint effort by local, county, state and federal resources/funding and that is why it has been successful (housed 837 Veterans Countywide in 2015).
- King County provides funding support to nonprofit operators of 492 low income housing units in Auburn and provide about \$10,088,147 operating dollars to local agencies in Auburn.
- Adrienne expressed that there is a challenge of finding sites for additional affordable and low income housing units. We need cities to help invite the nonprofit service providers in to site housing. This will require increased community education about these issues. Most of the opposition comes in advance—not after it's built. We have great service providers in this county but not enough investment in where people can lay their heads. Barriers to building units include but are not limited to: land use codes, potential neighbors fearing a negative impact, historic building requirements, etc. Possible temporary solutions include finding places – church parking lots for example -- for people with cars to park safely for the night hours and where outreach workers can connect those folks to resources.
- Also something to note, big substance abuse and mental health facilities are not paid for by Medicaid. Medicaid will only cover mental health/substance abuse care if the facility is 16 beds or less.

*Questions and discussion included:*

- How many units do we need? A: Difficult to say. One metric: when the waiting list for Section 8 Vouchers opened, 871 Auburn households applied to be on the waiting list.
- Where should local dollars be applied to make the biggest difference? Mental health? Housing? Substance abuse? A: Housing. Historically, substance abuse and mental health have been the responsibility of the *federal government* because they are very expensive programs; local dollars would not help much. Local dollars can, however, make an impact on available housing units.
- Don't you see people migrate to where the services are? Why should we have services in Auburn if it will attract people? A: If you look at the provided maps, the need for the services is already in South King County, we would just be bringing services to where they are already being requested.
- Comment: It is important to remember that there are certain populations that need more than just housing, they need supportive services in addition to a roof over their head, because they do not have the tools to manage their lives. Examples include: youth, mentally ill and disabled individuals.

King County Housing Authority. (Presenters: Kristin Winkel, Director of Leaded Housing Programs and Karen House, Associate Director of Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) Program)

- The King County Housing Authority (KCHA) is not part of King County government. The majority of its funding is from the federal government.
- Mission: to provide affordable housing in the community; “transforming lives through housing” is their tagline.
- On any given night, KCHA is supporting 18,000 households in King County (excluding Seattle and Renton which have their own Housing Authorities).

- Public Housing: When someone is in public housing, their rent is subsidized and they pay 30% of their income. There are 272 KCHA housing units in Auburn (vs. 310 in Bellevue). Public housing targets people who make less than 30% of the area median income, are experiencing or have experienced homelessness, domestic violence victims and rent burdened people. KCHA focuses on three priority populations: families with children, elderly individuals, and disabled persons.
- KCHA has a few properties in Auburn including Valley Park East and Valley Park West, Burndale Homes, Firwood Circle, Green River Homes and three high rise buildings that house the elderly (these have a 3 year waiting list that does not close).
- KCHA has 11,400 housing vouchers to offer to households in their service area. These vouchers subsidize private rentals. Individuals/families receive the voucher and then work to find a landlord who will accept the voucher which will pay for part of the rent. 1,100 vouchers are being used in Auburn right now. When the waitlist opened for the vouchers last year, 22,000 King County residents applied and qualified to be on the waiting list but only 2,500 were randomly chosen to be placed on the waiting list which will take up to 5 years to clear. 98 of the 2,500 were Auburn residents/households.
- Individuals/families tend to stay in subsidized housing for 5-6 years which means that a new individual or family cannot be placed in that unit for 5-6 years. Housing new persons requires some now in public housing to make enough money to move into market rate housing.
- There are some special programs such as VASH Vouchers which provide housing subsidies and supportive services through the Veterans Administration for Veterans, and KCHA also holds some vouchers to offer to victims of Domestic Violence.
- There are also supportive housing options in Auburn and these are run by non-profit organizations like Valley Cities and AYR with funding from county, state and federal sources.

*Questions and discussion included:*

- How can we get more vouchers in South King County? A: Vouchers are not location specific. Recipients of the vouchers can use them wherever they can find a landlord that will take them, which may mean they have to move to somewhere else within the county.
- How can we get more housing in Auburn? A: Help make locations available to build.

King County Library System (Presenters: Jonna Schissus, Operations Manager, Auburn Library; Steven Bailey, Librarian Services Manager, KCLS)

- In 2015, The Auburn library served 28,500 patrons each month which averages to about 115 people per hour and the library is open 63 hours per week.
- There are rules of conduct for use of the library and individuals will be removed if they don't follow these rules. But the library is for EVERYONE.
- Since it is for a diverse group of people, there are challenges. Some patrons express frustrations such as "is this a space for me as a tax payer or is it a shelter for the homeless?" Some of the homeless patrons have expressed frustration as well such as feeling like they are not treated as human beings; they have provided feedback that they sleep in the library during the day because it is safe and they cannot sleep at night because it is not safe.
- Fear has also been expressed on both sides. Some patrons are afraid because of the loitering, panhandling and smoking that occurs just outside the doors of the library. Homeless population expresses fears concerning where to go after the library closes.
- But compassion has also been expressed. Some patrons are happy to see that the library provides a safe, warm place for homeless patrons to be.
- The library has responded to the situation by training its staff to manage patron behavior, perform CPR, provide individuals with a list of resources in the area, and how to call 911. A contract has been made between the Police and library to manage the front of the library and

janitorial staff has been increased to maintain cleanliness. The library has also been in contact with many local organizations to discuss shared challenges and successes. All of these strategies have caused the complaints to decrease. In the future, the library plans to hire off-duty police officers as additional security as well.

- The library provides many services for kids, teens and adults. They have a mobile book van and a mobile computer lab that go out into the community to connect with their patrons. The book van makes 14 stops in Auburn, the same day and time every month, to provide consistency.
- In addition to books, the library also has DVDs, CDs, magazines, newspapers, audio books, downloadable books, databases, tutoring, classes, and more.
- The Auburn Roundtable takes place in the library on the first Friday of every month. This brings local organizations together to talk about what they do and how they can help each other and the people they serve.
- Starting soon are Community Discovery Days which will happen on the last Wednesday of every month. These days will bring community organizations together in one space where patrons can come by and learn what is available to them in the community.
- Please remember three things from this presentation: The library welcomes everyone; we strive to treat everyone with dignity and respect; and we are flexible and responsive to the needs of our community.

*Questions and discussion included:*

- You mentioned things have improved since the agreement with the Police Department. How is this measured? A: We are getting about a quarter of the volume of library patron complaints than we did previously.
- Do you have information on 211 and other resources to make available to homeless individuals at the library? A: Yes.

### **Task Force Discussion**

Karen Reed asked each Task Force member and those on the staff support team to make a comment about something they have learned that surprised them, an idea they have or a question that is still in their mind. Comments offered included:

- Appreciated hearing from the Police Department. I've only heard negative things from homeless individuals about their interactions with police. I was happy to hear that the Police care and do want to help. My biggest concern is where to put people: housing first seems a good solution.
- Wondering about criminal history and how it affects housing. Is it possible to have more lenient housing options for those with criminal histories?
- It is important to understand that this is a regional issue. From this task force I am learning how important public education and outreach is.
- I would like to see more options for helping individuals with incidentals. Basic costs like car repairs or paying off tickets can seriously impact a homeless individual's efforts to get out of their situation.
- As a community, we need to increase the education of community members about homelessness and who the homeless people are. We also need to hear from homeless people about what their barriers are.
- What does it really cost to house someone?
- How can Health Point help more? We provide basic care packages but what more can we do. Would like to hear from DSHS as many of her clients have lost their HEN benefits which can result in homelessness. Also, what happened to the Dream Center and the laundry facilities

there? (A: They are closed for remodel so probably 2-3 years out from re-opening. The Auburn Food Bank can try to help with laundry.)

- Where do we put the resources so that people can get to them easily?
- At work, I am hoping to use my contacts to increase landlord involvement/acceptance of vouchers.
- I want to learn more about services for the mentally ill so that I can connect people with what they need.
- I am struck by the kindness and compassion shown by the Task Force so far and it gives me hope.
- There never seems to be enough money for the programs. The Food Bank for example runs mostly on the generosity of Auburn residents. It has very limited ability to help with the financial barriers to leaving homelessness that have been identified.
- I didn't know these issues were here in Auburn and I've been here for 42 years. What is the difference between panhandlers and homeless individuals? How can a resident tell the difference and identify the true need? And what can residents do to help?
- Thank you for caring, Auburn!
- We've gotten a lot of information. The problem is not easy to solve. I would like to focus efforts on housing and emergency shelters, finding a place for people to go.
- The 16 bed limit for Medicaid: how can this be changed?
- I would like to increase community member education with the goal of convincing them to accept additional public and supportive housing in Auburn.
- Homelessness is an issue everywhere and Auburn is not unique. I would like to note that putting a shelter downtown would not be a good idea because it would impact economic development which would negatively impact the community's ability to address homelessness. We need to take care of our businesses too.
- First responders are amazing. Give officers a list of resources they can pass out to people since they are on the front line.
- I thank everyone for their positive comments about the Police department. Amazed by the lack of resources for mental illness despite hearing that more money is being invested in it. Wonder where the disconnect is between what I hear and what actually is occurring.

Erica Azcueta mentioned that February 2<sup>nd</sup> is State Legislative Homeless Advocacy Day -- she send out information about how to get involved.

### **Audience Comments**

Bill Peloza, Auburn Council Member thanked the Task Force and support team for being here and doing the work of the Task Force. He said it is very important work. He noted that the Sound Cities Association and is King County Regional Policy Committee are also examining the issue of homelessness.

The meeting adjourned at 7:32pm.