Coulee Collaborative to End Homelessness

*Collaborative, diverse, and compassionate individuals working to eliminate homelessness in La Crosse, Vernon, Monroe, and Crawford Counties.*

**MEETING MINUTES**

**June 20, 2023**

Present:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Abagail | Jeffers | Couleecap | [abagail.jeffers@couleecap.org](mailto:abagail.jeffers@couleecap.org) |
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| Brian | Sampson | City of La Crosse | [sampsonb@cityoflacrosse.org](mailto:sampsonb@cityoflacrosse.org) |
| Deanna | Kloster | UnitedHealthcare Community Plan | deanna\_kloster@uhc.com |
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| Emily | Pyrek | La Crosse YMCA |  |
| Heidi | Svee | New Horizons | [programcoord@nhagainstabuse.org](mailto:programcoord@nhagainstabuse.org) |
| Isaac | Hoffman | La Crosse County LAFC | [ihoffman@lacrossecounty.org](mailto:ihoffman@lacrossecounty.org) |
| Jessica | Thill | Cia Siab, Inc. | [jess@ciasiabinc.org](mailto:jess@ciasiabinc.org) |
| Julie | McDermid | Karuna Housing | [juliem@karunahousing.org](mailto:juliem@karunahousing.org) |
| Kael | Clemmerson | New Beginnings Christian Fellowship | [kaelclemmerson@yahoo.com](mailto:kaelclemmerson@yahoo.com) |
| Kathryn | Thoen | La Crosse County Veteran Services | [kthoen@lacrossecounty.org](mailto:kthoen@lacrossecounty.org) |
| Katie | Spaeth | ICA Alliances |  |
| Kayla | Ryan | Salvation Army | Kayla.Ryan@usc.salvationarmy.org |
| Kevin | Hundt | Coulee Tenants United | [couleetenantsunited@gmail.com](mailto:couleetenantsunited@gmail.com) |
| Kristina | Bechtel | Peace of Mind Counseling | [klbechtel23@gmail.com](mailto:klbechtel23@gmail.com) |
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Introductions and Housekeeping were done.

May Meeting Minutes. No changes were requested. A motion was made to approve the minutes by Kael Clemmerson, seconded by Sandy Brekke. No additional discussion. Motion carried.

Brian Sampson presented the [Data Dashboard](https://public.tableau.com/views/May2023CouleeCOCHomelessDataDetails/Story1?:language=en-US&:display_count=n&:origin=viz_share_link). The Dashboard is a snapshot as of the end of May 2023. 246 singles and 44 families were on the housing prioritization list. Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing with Intensive Case Management are the categories of interventions needed most. Trend lines were added to the inflow and outflow for a better view of how things are going with people being added to the list and coming off the list.

Kristi Bechtel presented a Balance of State (BOS) update. The HAP (Housing Assistance Program) applications were due at the end of last week and are being reviewed. CoC competition applications are expected to be out in July. The BOS Board is recruiting a member who is currently or formerly homeless. The next quarterly meeting is in August. The February meeting is going to be an in-person conference at the Jefferson in Wausau. There will be training opportunities.

Liz Evans announced CCEH is requesting nominations for our Balance of State Representative and CoC Delegate. Kristi Bechtel provided expectations of a member of the BOS Board: you are committed to attending the meetings on the first Tuesday of the month 1-3pm. Board members are required to co-chair a committee. Kristi co-chairs the Discharge Planning Committee. She spends about 1 hour per month facilitating committee conversation and work and 1-2 hours of work outside the meeting. Rosanne Northwood provided input on her experience as a BOS Board Member. A person could expect about 5-8 hours per month time commitment. Kristi is currently the secretary for the BOS and takes minutes for all BOS meetings. The person elected will not automatically be the secretary. This is a good way to make connections, learn more about the work throughout the state and be involved. If you are part of an agency doing the daily work with homeless people, you should have no problem filling this role. It’s important for you to provide voice for the community and being on the front line is very helpful. Liz will send out information and applications. Please get them back by July 15 so the coalition can vote in August.

CCEH will have to also hold a vote to approve replacing Kristi as the CoC Delegate and BOS Representative prior to the end of her term.

Liz Evans announced CCEH needs to vote to approve the Coordinated Entry Organization which is currently Couleecap. Abbi Jeffers provided background. Couleecap funds the position that maintains the coordinated entry list. Discussion: Does there need to be a process in place for choosing the Coordinated Entry Organization? This is the first time that the coordinated entry organization is required to be a vote at each coalition. Kael Clemmerson motioned to approve Couleecap continue as the Coordinated Entry Organization. Brian Sampson seconded. No discussion. 16 of the 24 voting members were present. 14 voted yes and 2 abstained. Motion carried.

EHH Lead Agency Vote: EHH is two different grants in one: ESG Emergency Solutions Grant and HPP Homeless Prevention Program. Rosanne Northwood provided background about the role of EHH Lead Applicant Agency. This year ESG and HPP total grant dollars is $75,000 less than last year’s allocation to the Coulee Region CoC, mostly in HPP. YWCA, Catholic Charities, Families First, and Couleecap receive funds from this grant. They have rapid rehousing funds, emergency shelter, and homeless prevention. The Lead Agency provides monitoring and coordinates the application. This is renewed annually. More information can be found on the DEHCR (WI Division of Energy, Housing, and Community Resources) website. Minutes from the Coulee CoC showing approval of the Lead Agency are required to be attached to the application. Kael motioned to approve YWCA as the EHH Lead Applicant. Vie Matty seconded the motion. No further discussion. 16 of the 24 voting members were present. 14 voted yes and 2 abstained. Motion carried.

Brian Sampson provided background and an update on the City/County Collaboration. On June 6 a partnership between the City and County was announced. The goal is to develop a strategic plan for the community to get to functional zero homelessness. There is a gap in overall organization of the work. They will be reaching out to community partners for input on plan development. They will reach out to specific partners with specific requests. Brian provided a link to the La Crosse City Council meeting. [https://cityoflacrosse.granicus.com/player/clip/1244?view\_id=1&redirect=true&h=4527232a104921be65373b0e11fddc28] The plan will be developed collaboratively with everyone in the coalition. Discussion: Question regarding talks with local landlords on their policies. The lack of affordable housing is a big part of the problem. The plan will look at how to engage landlords and other resources to break down barriers to people gaining housing.

Becky Koske provided an Action Plan update. The committee discussed the coalition’s input on providing training to the community. If we are looking to bring a trainer to the community, there is cost to do so. In some capacity there would have to be a fiscal agent to pay a trainer/speaker. The group is also looking at local experts who would be free or less cost associated with training. Discussion has been around what kinds of trainings and what we would want them to educate the community and coalition on.

Becky Koske provided an update on Homeless Connect and Point-In-Time Count. Homeless Connect is July 27 from 11am to 3pm at English Lutheran Church in La Crosse. Informational fliers have been emailed. Many members can expect to receive information about setting up a booth. If anyone has questions – Becky can be the central contact person. Two more hair stylists would be helpful – that is a heavily utilized service. No footcare provider has been found yet. If you know anyone who may be able to help with these services, please contact Becky. English Lutheran has a limited amount of tables and chairs available for using. Vendors will need about 2 tables each. If you can lend long tables and/or chairs, please contact Molly Betts. Billie is working on sending out RSVPs to the vendors. Question: Has anyone asked Legions or VFWs to use their tables/chairs? Tabatha Dahn will share contact information for local Legions and VFWs.

The Point-in-Time Count is happening the same day in the early morning hours. Teams will go out around 3am to connect with folks who are unsheltered. Reach out to Becky if you wish to participate.

Brian Sampson provided an update on City Council actions on an ordinance addressing camping in City parks. The ordinance was short circuited and went in front of City Council without going through committee. The proposed ordinance change would state that either a sign be posted OR a police officer notify a person of no camping. The ordinance also defines camping. The City Council voted to refer it to the normal committee process. The Judiciary and Administrative Committee will discuss the proposed ordinance on July 5 and the City Council on July 13. This action comes from the City Council which acts independently from the administration. They are two different parts of city government. No questions were asked.

Agency Updates

Suggestion to discuss Ruth House.

Ruth House is suspending services as of August 15 due to funding. They are glad to be able to stay open that long. It is a one-of-a-kind service in the state. The hope is the community sees the benefit of this type of service and can figure out a solution. YWCA is helping current residents figure out a place to go. They are taking new residents now with the understanding that it will be closing on August 15.

Ruth House was not funded in the most recent Community Development Block Grant competitive process. Community Development Block Grant funds come from HUD. Agencies apply with different projects and a committee makes recommendations based on HUD requirements. We have a lot of holes and needs and not enough funds to go round.

Discussion: is there opportunity for this group to have a better understanding of the CDBG process? Is there opportunity as a community to pull together and find resources? There are philanthropic dollars in the community. WDVA offers grants for this type of project if you serve a veteran population. A certain percentage would have to be veterans. It’s a good time to rally around the residents at Ruth House so they do not end up on the streets. On Saturday, the news was told to the ladies and they were at capacity (8). Now they have 7.

Concern was expressed that the City of La Crosse says they care about helping the homeless, but take actions that seem at odds with that goal.

Discussion and Questions: Regarding the June 6 meeting, the mayor stated there isn’t enough affordable housing, but there is funding. What funding was he referring to? Where did the $1M the city was receiving go to? A: Don’t know what the mayor was referring to. There was about $1M from HOME ARP funds at HUD that the city has yet to go through an approval process. It has not been allocated as of yet.

Liz Evans shared the Compass survey is live: www.compassnow.org. Please take the survey yourself and encourage those you work with to also respond.

Sandy Brekke shared from her involvement with the Western Wisconsin Enrollment Network. With the unwinding of Medicaid expansion due to COVID, everyone on Badgercare received a letter in March notifying them of their renewal date. Lindsey Schwarz-Nichols at La Crosse County Health Department can help look up the renewal date – folks may have missed the letter if they are unhoused or have moved.

Cia Siab, Inc. has been doing outreach about the Medicaid unwinding to the Hmoob community. Please refer Hmoob speaking clients to them if they need help with this process.

Michael Fitzpatrick provided an update on the HOT Group. The Homeless Outreach Team is a group of professionals representing various services outreaching to folks in encampments to help with their needs. Homeless Outreach Team consists of more than just the two outreach people, Michael and Kish, a whole team of folks are out including Vivent, Coulee Recovery, St. Clare, to offer services on the spot. They build relationships with folks and help them connect to resources.

Mary Jacobson reported that Family and Children’s Center is moving to the old Marie Credit Union building on Monitor. The building at 1707 Main is up for sale.

Summer Family Navigation Team is at REACH Center Tuesdays 10am-noon.

Next Meeting: August 15, 2023

Minutes Submitted by Liz Evans, 6/21/2023