

Homelessness Task Force Minutes

Zoom Meeting

Thursday, September 23, 2021 – 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Chief Spalding called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

Introductions & New Members: There were no new members, but Jessamyn West introduced Scott Justus, the new Membership Coordinator for the Astoria/Warrenton Chamber of Commerce who has worked with the homeless in the Bay Area.

Roster-Virtual Roll Call

Mayor's Welcome: Bruce Jones welcomed everyone and announced that the City Council will be hearing from a consultant on October 24 regarding redevelopment of Heritage Square, with a focus on workforce housing.

Approval of the Minutes: Chief Spalding announced that Megan McCall, who has been taking the minutes, has taken a position in Colorado. Arline LaMear will take the minutes for this meeting. Because the July minutes were received just prior to the HOST meeting, members felt there wasn't enough time to review them. Approval was tabled until our next meeting.

County Update: Monica Steele

Clatsop County will be receiving funding for emergency shelters through the American Rescue Plan Act. The County Land Inventory should provide needed information as to possible sites for low-income and affordable housing, and transitional housing. In addition, it should help identify impacts on law enforcement, zoning, etc. The County is working with COLPAC (Columbia Pacific Economic Development) on brownfield cleanup. In Astoria, this includes Blue Ridge and an abandoned gas station. There are also sites in Warrenton and Seaside.

Filling Empty Bellies/Beacon Clubhouse: Chief Spalding said that he and Deputy Chief Eric Halverson had toured the Beacon Clubhouse which includes a food pantry and clothes closet.

Monica Steele also toured the facility along with Mayor Jones and County Manager Don Bohn and was encouraged that there will be space for co-location services including mental health.

Helping Hands: Mike Davies: Local facilities are mostly full. He expressed concern over the lack of transportation due to lack of drivers. Jeff Hazen, Executive Director of Sunset Empire Transportation District, is currently working with the State to see if recently released prisoners could receive training to drive buses.

The Bybee Lakes Hope Center renovation is now complete. As of January 1, 2022, the number of beds available will go from 126 to 318. 4700 individuals per year will be helped with full wrap-around services.

Opportunity Village: Ron Maxted

Ron announced that the project has a new name – Clatsop Opportunity Village – and that an advisory committee has been appointed. This advisory committee is a requirement which allows the Village to be a signer in a fiscal arrangement with an already functioning non-profit, allowing them to receive insurance coverage, etc.

Seaside Police Chief Dave Ham reported that they've been holding a series of community workshops in Seaside which will probably lead to updated ordinances.

Countywide Liaison Position Update: Susan Prettyman, Clatsop Community Action

Susan provided updated statistics on services to the homeless. Cheryl Paul and Jodi Anderson, the two homeless liaisons, shared successes moving homeless into housing, working with Viviana Matthews and Clatsop Community Action. Viviana reported that CCA has helped over 100 clients become housed.

Member Roundtable

Jonah Dart-McLean – Astoria has posted an opening for a maintenance person to oversee the Riverwalk – public restrooms, garbage pickup, etc. This will be a full-time position with benefits.

Scott Justus announced a Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours the 2nd Thursday of the month at the TLC office in Warrenton.

Roger Rocka asked if there is any place in the County where folks could park their R.V.'s or vans to sleep at night. Could basic services be provided for them?

Monica Steele brought up difficulties in siting a facility for overnight camping because of the grey water issue as well as NIMBY concerns.

Rick Bowers & Nelle Moffett requested an update from the subcommittees. Jonah reported that the clean slate program is on hiatus because the courts don't seem to be assigning fines for homelessness issues at this time. Chief Spalding said there have been changes/resignations from the subcommittees, e.g., Tom Leiner has moved from the area and Cindy Price has resigned as a member of HOST, but he said he will ask the subcommittees to provide updates at the next meeting.

Guest Comments

Bruce Williams echoed Roger Rocka's concern for identifying a site which could be used by the homeless for sleeping overnight in their recreational vehicles and vans.

Mayor Bruce Jones thanked the committee for their work on the homelessness issue and said he felt the individual members and their organizations have success every day in providing services including housing, but those daily ongoing successes are invisible to the public.

Chief Spalding announced that Barry Plotkin, a frequent guest at HOST meetings, had passed away and asked for a moment of silence in his memory.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:01. Next meeting will be on November 18, 2021, 10 a.m-12 p.m. via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Arline LaMear, Acting Secretary