

**Minutes from the 10/19/06 Meeting for Project Homelessness Connect:
Consumer Forum**

- I. Margaret Peabody opened with a welcome, introducing herself and Katy Bradford, and then gave a brief explanation of CCAR and the consumer forum. She read the mission statement to the consumers in the room- the homeless clients of Prospect House Shelter, Seaview Avenue Apartments and the Poplar Street House.
 - A. Margaret then introduced Chris Kelly as part of CARC.
 1. Chris introduced himself by saying that everything shared in the room is confidential and therefore to please give honest opinions and answers.
 - B. M.P. introduced a newspaper article about building homes in the woods due to homelessness.

- II. M.P. asked the participants questions in categories to consumers. The first being:
 - A. **What is the most important thing for you in this time? What would help to change/enhance the services for you? M.P. asked about community programs and what is missing from them.**
 1. Consumers explained that they want to go out to the community and bring resources to the people such as applications for housing, referrals, and the knowledge of what is out there.
 - B. **M.P. asked: How long did it take to get to where you are at now? And stated that housing is a concept because harm reduction is first. So, how long did it take for you to apply and then hear back from housing?**
 1. Consumers expressed frustration with the process and that there was no follow up so that many of them lost their housing status.
 - C. **M.P. Summarized by saying that it sounded like there was a loophole in the system. She posed the question: What is the solution to the long waiting list?**
 1. Consumers offered that people should be more professional all around, especially with mail. They also stated how Prospect House helped them take advantage of getting that help they needed.
 - D. **M.P. then switched gears to ask about Housing and asked-How can the continuum help? What can consumers use to enhance benefits and become productive citizens?**
 1. Consumers shared that knowledgeable case managers are needed because with mental health issues all the papers can become overwhelming and frustrating to someone. Shelter Plus Care was also a concern. Katy explained they use a date ranking system. Saying that the oldest application gets the first priority.
 - E. **M.P. How is housing prioritized for the people to know?**

1. Consumers asked if there can there be a central agency to keep track of all the homeless people's housing and paperwork to get people housed versus having inaccurate records of who is housed and who is not?
 2. M.P. responded saying that is a great idea although it needs state funding. Also, she noted that if records aren't accurate then there will be no money given. Therefore, she made sure to express the importance of taking advantage of the resources at the shelter so that the statistics are accurate with every record, and it will enable people to get more efficient services.
- F. At this point M.P. checked in with the status of the meeting and then asked: "What do we need more of? Where should the money be going?"**
1. Consumers said: more groups, and more shelters!
- G. M.P. switched topics, asking: What do you think about communication with providers? Is there a lack of that?**
1. All consumers in agreement.
 2. M.P. asked: The lack of communication between rap-around services can be improved, but how? How can we move the process along? We need an idea.
 3. Consumers again state that we need one communication central service agency to draw information from.
- H. M.P. Reminds consumers that they have to be ok with using the service and releasing the information. She then asks if there are enough clinics?**
1. All responded with a "No!"
 2. Consumers offered a suggestion for a neighborhood liaison between the neighborhoods and the service. This would work because word of mouth is the most powerful form of information in communities.
- I. M.P. Switched topics to employment**
1. Consumers stated an overall transportation problem; with no bus tokens and no funding for that it's hard to seek work.
- J. M.P. asked if food subsidies aren't enough because people cannot live off of them, the SSI that's given.**
1. All consumers responded with a "Yes!"
 2. The forum then agreed that there is not enough money for living, utilities, plus food, especially because there is no food bank to receive food, or transportation to even get to one. All concurred that there be a centralized food pantry for low income people, with one drop off in some empty warehouse in Bridgeport.
- K. M.P. Says that unfortunately the system is set up to be a revolving door, so we must utilize it to the fullest until ones needs are met. Services must be provided and your tax dollars pay for these services. M.P. went on to say that by acquiring a job one is giving back to society.**

L. M.P. summarized the conversation about housing and then moved on to the topic of Medicare and SAGA. She asked if the 6 month determination law should be changed.

1. Consumers said they need Title 19; its impertinent. The problem is many of the consumers were confused as to how to get it. Again, they gather a lot of information by word of mouth.

M. M.P. touches briefly on job training and says that the skills available are improving.

N. M.P. Brings meeting to a close with the handing out of surveys to the consumers and stating that Katy and herself are available to be of help.

1. M.P. announced the December 6th project date and the rap around services will be ever present there.

O. Announcements

1. M.P. announced the upcoming church events
2. PHS food drive announced
3. A consumer read her poem for the forum.

P. Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

-Minutes recorded by Katy Bradford