

REGIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE HOMELESS

January 10, 2006

MINUTES

Attendance: Laurie Gross, Chair

Betty Skaggs, Helen Wasserman, Nilda Havrilla, Brian Jenkins, James Saint Paul, Eileen Lopez-Cordone, Paul Mendes, Rick DeNisco, and Catherine Brennan of United Way campaign staff.

Ms. Gross welcomed all to the meeting.

Ms. Gross asked for approval of the November 8, 2005 minutes.

The minutes were approved, noting that a portion was missing due to the tape ending.

Mr. Rick DeNisco of Southwest McKinney Healthcare for the Homeless reported that on the 15th a Memorial Day for the Homelessness was held, which raised awareness in the Bridgeport area regarding homelessness.

Mr. DeNisco reported that he is recruiting for nurse practitioners to do rounds in the nursing homes or a physician's assistant. Advertisement for that need is listed in the Connecticut Post, in the APR Insights and word of mouth. Southwest McKinney Healthcare has been short-staffed for three months due to the high demand for nurse practitioners. In May, when people graduate, Southwest McKinney Healthcare will do the loan repayment and that's will be when they will be able to get staff. United Health Care and other health care organizations are recruiting nurses to do rounds in the nursing homes. In the past they couldn't get third party payments. The result has been a starting salary of \$78,000 plus you get over a certain amount of patients a day that you see then you get a differential also, totaling approximately \$90,000-\$92,000 a year, which is very hard to compete with. A nurse practitioner is a RN (Registered Nurse) with a Masters degree. Mr. DeNisco asked if anyone should hear of someone qualified to let him know.

Mr. Brian Jenkins reported that Thomas Merton Center is still serving approximately 250-300 breakfasts and lunches, Monday through Friday and a bag lunch on Saturday. Thomas Merton Center is seeing many younger people between 15-21 years of age. Bishop William Lori served lunch on Friday, January 6, 2006 at the Thomas Merton House.

Ms. Betty Skaggs of St. Vincent's Outreach reported that their Geriatric Assessment Program is backed up to April or May. Three geriatric assessments are done each month for people who may have dementia or Alzheimer's disease. Referrals come from family members, doctors and agencies. It is a one-time consultation with Dr. Hoffman. St. Vincent's Outreach is still at Merton House, three mornings a week. Monday and Thursday a doctor is available. Friday's there is no doctor available. St. Vincent's Outreach is seeing a lot of the younger people that Thomas Merton House sees.

The Safety Net Committee is working on putting together an informational booklet of services being accessible throughout the state.

Mr. James St. Paul, Assistant Director of Human Services Infrastructure at ABCD, Inc., announced that this was his first Homeless meeting. Mr. St. Paul worked with the refugee population at International Institute for 10 years, prior to his employment at ABCD, Inc. With much homelessness in Bridgeport, ABCD has a grant that helps with the first month's rent. There is an income requirement for applicants needing the assistance from this grant. Money has not yet been received for the Eviction Prevention Program.

Mr. Paul Mendes of the Mount Airy Development Corporation reported that they have partnered with Bridgeport Community Health Center. The footings have been placed into the ground yesterday, January 9, 2006, and the modular units for the health center will be delivered on Wednesday, January 11, 2006. The city of Bridgeport is saying that there are asbestos shingles on the outside of the building that need replacing. A slight setback but Mount Airy Development Corporation is not discouraged. Mr. Mendes stated that things are moving slowly in Bridgeport but they do see a turnaround.

Ms. Nilda Havrilla of Connecticut Legal Services stated that they do outreach and would come to talk to a group of clients or agencies, about their rights and responsibilities whenever needed.

Ms. Eileen Lopez-Cordone reported that United Way of Connecticut 211 Infoline and Connecticut Policy and Economic Council (CEPC) have merged. City scanning does a lot of work with neighborhoods in how to revitalize neighborhoods. This merger would generate data that is relevant and useful to legislators and community planners, much more so than it is now. CPEC does have an outreach staff in Bridgeport, the only outreach staff in the entire state, housed at the Bridgeport Economic Regional Council (BERC) on Middle Street. Ms. Laural Anderson has been working with the City of Bridgeport, GIS Program, and will be working with a group of neighborhood teens in April on a community project to show teens a neighborhood that needs to be revitalized and submit it to the Mayor's office and they can experience the process of how things get done through the government. This is an effort to get teens involved in community service also. This program originated in Hartford and has become very successful. Stamford and Norwalk have started the program also.

Ms. Helen Wasserman reported on the Public Policy Task Force. There has been an increasing amount of awareness on the country's ten-year plan to eliminate homelessness, 120 units for each year of the ten-year plan. One of the positive steps underway is to meet with the common council to know the goals and steps that need to be taken. The target date is March 1, 2006, with one agenda item. A meeting with the RTM's of other communities needs to take place.

With no further business, Ms. Gross thanked all for coming and reported that the next Homeless Council meeting will be held on March 14, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. at United Way.