



**Joint Meeting of the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness and the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition
Wednesday, September 11, 2013**

Attending the Joint Meeting were:

Elizabeth Miller, Gov's Chief of Staff; Rep. Tess Taylor, House Asst. Majority Leader; Susan Elliott, Congr. Welch's Office; Mike Bard, USDA Rural Development; Mike McNamara, HUD; Kathleen Berk & Daniel Blankenship, VSHA; Chris Curtis, VT Legal Aid; Jeanne Montross, HOPE; Ted Wimpey, CVOEO Fair Housing Project; Amy Perez, CVCAC; Andrew Winter, TPHT; Angus Chaney, AHS; Annie Paumgarten, WHBW; Arthur Hamlin, DHCD; Auburn Watersong, VT Network; Paul Hill & Barbara Petrie, VCLF; Brian Smith, DMH; Brooke Salls, Good Samaritan Haven; Cara Collins, Safe Haven/CMC; Chris Dalley, DCF/ESD; Chris Donnelly, CHT; Christina Goodwin, Home Share Now; Cindy Reid, Cathedral Square Corp.; Deborah Hall, RCHC; Denise Bailey, VCIL; Denise Beasley, DAIL/MFP; Devan Forbes, Pathways VT; Elizabeth Eddy, BROC; George Mathias, RuralEdge; Gini Milkey, COVE; John Broderick, Shires Housing; John Rauscher, Veterans Inc.; Josh Davis, Morningside Shelter; Josh Slade, VHFA; Julie Lowell, Brandeis University; Kathleen Kanz, VHCB; Kelli Cheney, Good Samaritan Haven; Kimberly Mayo, RMHS; MaryEllen Mendl, VT 2-1-1; Meribeth Seaman, CVOEO; Pat Burke, SEVCA; Paul Dragon & Sarah Phillips, VT OEO; Ray Brewster, Building Consultant; Rich McNerny, Springfield Supportive Housing Program; Sara Kobylenski, Upper Valley Haven; Justin Henry, VAHC/VCEH A*VISTA; Erhard Mahnke, VAHC.

The Joint meeting of VAHC and VCEH was called to order at 9:35 AM on Wednesday, September 11 at 1051 Route 66, Randolph, VT.

After brief introductions of all in attendance, **Erhard Mahnke** circulated packets of information and announcements. He particularly pointed out the availability of free CFL light bulbs for eligible households.

II. Chris Curtis, Staff Attorney at Vermont Legal Aid provided his perspective on the **2013 Legislative Session**. He reminded attendees of the "increasing economic hardships" being faced by programs participants. He described the increasing "squeeze" being placed on already stressed persons from cuts in social service programs, including food stamps and other support services essential to aid those in most need. He described the "slow erosion in support" and talked about the "domestic isolationism" permeating political thought and the rippling effects of this deterioration in government's commitment to the poor.

Erhard described 2013 as a "mixed year," regarding the current administration's actions on behalf of the Coalition's constituency. While being "supportive overall," he talked about positives such as funding for VHCB and homelessness, and negatives like the Reach Up and GA debates and the Earned Income Tax Credit position.

III. The meeting was then addressed by **Elizabeth Miller**, Chief of Staff to Governor Shumlin. She labeled the Administration as a supporter overall of affordable housing. Focusing on the



recent successes, she noted an increase in state spending on affordable housing of \$3.4 Million over the previous administration. She spoke of the need for balance of emergency and affordable housing.

About federal funding, she stated, “There will be more cutbacks, and the state cannot backfill it all.” She stressed that there was a need to assure enforcement of existing rules on emergency housing so as to avoid potential “ramping back” by the Legislature. But the state is ready to “invest in results.” She added, “The challenge is to think of creative solutions and bring them to the administration.” She offered her direct line – 802-522-3090 – for contact. She hoped that we could find common ground or admit a difference in perspectives despite common goals and work toward solutions. **Erhard** and **Linda Ryan** commented positively on both the administration’s overall performance and on Elizabeth’s personal efforts. Linda stressed the need to support the increase of the Emergency Shelter Grant Program, Vermont Rental Subsidy Program, and necessary services.

IV. Representing Congressman Peter Welch, **Susan Elliot** spoke on **Federal issues** and described a “gloomy outlook,” regarding sequestration and the Continuing Resolution. “No one is talking about repeal or changes to Sequestration at this time,” she stated. Level funding is expected until the debt ceiling showdown on October 17. “The obstructionists are hard at work,” she warned.

Mike McNamara, of HUD shared equally “gloomy” forecasts stating that HUD had been “cut by \$2 Billion in 2013 with 16 of 81 offices closing and a reduction in over 500 jobs.” He noted that only “one third of those eligible actually receive HUD support.” He added that operating under a continuing resolution makes it extremely difficult to manage operations. **Erhard** commented on the 2013/2014 HUD budget and the most impacted programs, including rental subsidy as a very serious issue for everyone. **Linda** commented that she believes that preference for subsidies needs to shift to homeless persons.

Mike Bard, Housing Director for USDA Rural Development (RD), announced that Ted Brady, formerly of Senator Leahy’s Office, is the new State Director for VT and NH. Mike focused on the shortfall in FY 13 funding for RD Project Based Rental Assistance and the potential loss of eligibility for RD funding for many communities across the New England region and nationally. VT only has three developments that are jeopardized by the funding shortfall, but there are hundreds nationally. He believes the VT projects will be OK in the short term. Unless there is a grandfather provision in the expected Continuing Resolution (CR), three VT communities will lose eligibility for RD funds: Colchester, Essex and Milton.

V. **Kathleen Berk**, of VSHA reported on the impact of Sequestration on the **Section 8** voucher program. She stated that over 775 vouchers will have been shelved by year-end as a result of cutbacks. She added that if shelving does not respond adequately to losses, then contracts will have to begin being canceled. In that case, those receiving assistance the longest will be first to be removed, with exceptions for elderly and disabled. Burlington is not just shelving vouchers, but also withdrawing assistance from people who are in violation of Section rules. **Linda**



encouraged “mass movements” protesting Sequestration and its impact. **Kathleen** stated that VSHA does not support the numbers shown in the latest update of Fair Market Rents, noting that most adversely affected will be Bennington, Windham, and Windsor counties. She expects that VSHA will, with available flexibility, be able to maintain funding levels for the other counties. The Members discussed the need for and ways to produce better rent survey figures and the need for new methodologies for rural areas. It was noted that HUD will not do any new rent surveys.

Chris spoke about the need for a state rental housing registry and that such a registry would facilitate survey results.

VI. Reach-Up Work Group news was discussed by **Chris** and **Erhard** updated folks on **GA Temporary Housing**. Chris summarized the administration’s Reach Up proposals, with which the Coalition strongly disagreed, and the legislative outcome. Advocates did a lot to improve the outcome and mitigate the potential for harm. The FY 14 State Budget created a Reach Up Work Group, which Chris is a member of. The Work Group is focusing on reduction in demand. He is arguing that time limits were addressed last session; we don’t need more regs and limits. The group needs to figure out ways to support people on RU and help them be successful.

Erhard summarized the GA rule changes, which have been substantially softened since DCF’s first proposal, thanks to advocacy, public input, engagement from the Governor’s Office and a willingness to listen and make changes on the part of AHS/DCF. DCF agreed to incorporate four broad categories of vulnerable people for eligibility: seniors 65 and over, people on SSI and SSDI, women in their third trimester, and households with children six and under. Other vulnerable people must qualify under a four-point system. People can also qualify under “catastrophic” or during cold weather. The emergency rules have been approved by LCAR (Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules). Though the changes are welcome, there are still problems. Residents in emergency housing must pay 50% of their income toward the housing is particularly counterproductive. Erhard noted major problems in the final Emergency Rule: the 50% requirement; lack of exception provisions; and hospital discharge issues.

VII. Representative, Tess Taylor, Assistant House Majority Leader reported on **State Legislative issues**. Rep. Taylor opened her remarks with a description of her personal experience as a resident of downtown Barre and her deep connection with affordable housing and homelessness programs and its participants. She noted that in her role, she has the privilege of working with committee chairs to set upcoming priorities. She spoke of paid sick leave, dental services availabilities, and other issues of particular interest to those serving low-income persons. She pointed out that on September 30, House committee chairs will gather to discuss the upcoming session and that calls to those leaders can greatly influence where attention is paid. She encouraged all to make their wishes known. **Chris Donnelly** asked whether increasing revenue will be included in any discussions or legislative considerations. Tess did suggest that the Coalition of Progressive Democrats understands the need to include such a discussion. She suggested that “Tax Fairness” is the approach most palatable. **Erhard** asked for and **Tess** provided some advice for encouraging constructive discussion of these issues with legislators.

The Joint Meeting adjourned at 12:10 for lunch.



VCEH September Meeting

September 11, 2013

Baptist Fellowship Church, Randolph, VT

In attendance: Jeanne Montross (HOPE); Amy Perez (CVCAC); Kim Mayo (RMHS); Auburn Watersong (VNADSV); Brian Smith (DMH); Pat Burke (SEVCA); Deb Hall (RCHC); Daniel Blankenship (VSHA); Chris Dalley (DCF); Sara Kobylenski (UVH); John Rauscher (Veterans Inc.); Mary Ellen Mendl (VT 211); Linda Ryan (SHI); Sarah Phillips (CEDO); Brooke Salls (GSH); Kelli Cheney (GSH); Geoff Ayers (DMH); Justin Henry (VISTA VCEH/VAHC)

(1) Announcements

- Norris Holt now interim (part-time) Executive Director at Good Samaritan Haven
- Kim Woolaver took a job at the state

(2) **Consent Agenda: Mary Ellen moved to approve, Pat seconded, unanimous approval** (one abstention)

(3) Report Outs

- Jeanne will send out letter to Secretary of AHS about developing data and reports
- Barre Community Housing Grant going extremely well. Housing Grant going extremely well. Housing review team has fostered much collaboration.
- Good Samaritan is averaging 15 per night stay. Hasn't seen more people with new GA changes. GA reports at HRT and denials haven't been seen at shelter.
- St. Albans Shelter – numbers going down. No one in motels. Trend same across state except in Chittenden County. Red Cross donated 12 cots. Linda opening resource center to use beds if needed but doesn't think it will happen. Will bill CHG if needed.
- SEVCA worried not seeing folks in Springfield. In Brattleboro and Hartford ESD was to send GA people within 14 days. Disconnect with referral for case management through CHG. Hired case manager in Brattleboro.
- Question: So early will we see wave of those timing out or are they not coming in because they're waiting for winter.
 - Auburn: Domestic violence shelters are seeing increase. Stress increased in families. Need to review screening.
 - Linda: More people false reporting domestic violence for housing.
 - Chris: People may be self-denying because they think they won't be qualified. Numbers are missing.
 - How useful is it to track denials?



- Is CHG requiring participation in HMIS?
 - Yes
- For the DV programs, are they on board?
 - When you send in your check requests there is an opt out for domestic violence. Domestic violence doesn't want any identifiers – it is a federal law. Might be interrupting differently around the state.
 - More research to be done
 - About 50% with families with children are seeking shelter at DV shelters
 - On the ground what does it mean? Does it mean survivors don't have access to housing funds if agencies don't give some computable data?
- Sara: Focus of CoC is trying to establish warming shelter – hasn't existed in 25 years. At the Haven spent a lot of money of hotel nights in addition to GA, if we look at spill over might be, if we could find a location, we could invest about same amount of dollars in staffing and infrastructure to be able to support a warming shelter – so we asked rest of CoC, received very positive response – right now barrier is finding a location. Looking to expand capacity.
- Deb: In Rutland also trying to set up warming shelter. Seeing lower numbers as well. Would like more support developing a relationship with local shelter.
- Jeanne: In Addison County seeing a steady stream of homeless, including families. We are starting to set up a wet shelter in a church basement. We don't know what the numbers will be like, not for families, will be some of the most serious. Will be helpful when get numbers and will send out.
 - Suggest recliners instead of beds for wet shelter

(4) Update on Governor's Anti-Poverty Group

- Sara: Linda started an open door, circle of advocates with Governor, 9 people at second meeting. Looking at who else can join the group. Process matters, knowledge, and looking at ramifications at what looks good bureaucratically – like going from one of best on Food Stamps to one of worse. Looking to anyone else sitting here to add input
- Linda: Started conversation with Liz Ready, now have brought in more people. Should be proud of this Governor. He admitted he was wrong. This is a golden opportunity to advise the Governor.
- Jeanne: Who else have you expanded the group to?
 - Voices for Vermont's Children, Chris, Erhard, Karen from Low Income, Hunger Free Vermont, Rita, CVCEO, Commission on Women, Josh, Richard. Has started with housing, but has turned into Anti-Poverty group.
- Jeanne: Would it be possible to notify VCEH earlier?
 - We have only had one more meeting since last
 - Sara: We will firm up proposals, and send draft for people to review, we have to do this really quickly
 - Sara: Would like to have a building voice/ advocacy training, practice on legislative policy. Would that be something we could do to build our capacity?
 - Pat: How do you go about setting up training? I would like a legislative 101 training. I feel we are always responding to actions when it is too late.
 - Daniel: Jeanne has coordinated service provider meetings after coalition after the meetings, maybe we could get Erhard or Sara to provide a training at future meeting
 - Pat: If we have things can we send them to you?
 - Yes

(5) HUD Business

- Geoff has pulled together some information and numbers concerning getting youth counted in PIT



Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness

- Daniel: In Vermont hard to count, many don't meet literal definition that HUD wants, might be couch surfing
- Justin: There are 30 VISTAs in VYT program. VYT wants to know what dates VISTAs can be trained. We need to know what type of help and if CoCs want VISTAs. Sent out an email to CoC contacts and have heard back from some who are interested, but don't know yet details. PIT meeting is scheduled for September 17
 - Sara: What happened to Service Point this year, why didn't we get report?
 - Jeanne: Have talked to Marcy about what report will be look this year, so many changes this year
 - There was a report, not on Helping to House.
 - Brian: People need to understand Daniel waited to get numbers, people need to get numbers in
 - Sara: Where can we find PIT Report, why isn't easily obtainable?
 - Justin: Right now old website is still up, I have emailed Richard about switching the domain name, if I had the old login I could at least sent up a redirect. The information on the website is from 2011, and no one sees the wordpress site right now. Hope getting the website up and updated will be a project I can work on. Will put PIT report on website.
 - Sara: In a month if I go to website will PIT report be there?
 - Justin: Yes – I will send out an email on the mailing list as well.
 - Justin: We need to get CoC contacts to PIT work group meetings to prepare for 2014 count.