

# HEALTH, EDUCATION, HUMAN SERVICES AND HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

January 15, 2008

4:30 P.M.

Councilwoman Robinson, Chairman, called the meeting of the Health, Education, Human Services and Housing Opportunities to order, with Councilmen Benson, Pierce, Rico, Gaines, Feely, Page, and Franklin present. City Attorney Randall Nelson and Shirley Crownover, Assistant Clerk to the Council, were also present.

Others present included Matt Lea, Richard Beeland, Dan Johnson, Daisy Madison, and Mayor Littlefield.

## HOMELESSNESS BLUEPRINT

**John Dorris** was present to give an overview of the Blueprint to End Homelessness, 2007 Revision. He introduced Karen McReynolds and Claire Sawyers, both of the Steering Committee, who were present today.

Mr. Dorris went over nine recommendations: (1) Expand Permanent Housing Opportunities; (2) Increase the availability of transitional shelter units that move people to permanent housing; (3) Provide Permanent Special Needs Housing and Alternatives; (4) Reconfigure case management to be assertive, coordinated and focused on placing and maintaining homeless people in permanent housing. Prioritize funding both for case management to homeless people and continuing case management and supportive services to formerly homeless people placed in permanent housing; (5) Improve the effectiveness of outreach and engagement of homeless people living in public spaces; (6) Link homeless and formerly homeless people to mainstream services and resources; (7) Establish an organization or give the responsibility to an existing organization for *Blueprint* Implementation which will include promoting prevention of homelessness and providing quick assistance to families and individuals at risk of homelessness; (8) Help at-risk households remain stably housed by providing emergency assistance, maximizing their incomes and improving access to supportive services; and (9) Prevent people from becoming homeless when they leave institutional care, such as jail, prison, shelter, hospitalization, treatment, foster care, by developing permanent housing plans prior to release and establishing clear responsibility in the community.

Mr. Dorris next discussed a mechanism for planning and coordination. He mentioned that one revision and major component from the original Blueprint was that they went from “chronic homelessness” to “a Blueprint to end homelessness”. He showed a picture from the original Blueprint that looked at a house. He pointed out that obviously what was not in this picture was a “door” to the house. He explained that they added a “door” to represent community re-integration. He explained that for a homeless person to be treated as a member of the community we have to have a door so that there is not an “artificial separation”, so they had included community re-integration. He also noted that all of the icons were the same size because they wanted to focus on the whole area of homelessness, including the “working poor”. He noted that veterans with traumatic injuries are put at higher risk of becoming homeless. Mr. Dorris stated that he was trying to keep this brief.

In discussing the Planning/Coordination mechanism, he noted that the 2007 Homeless Blueprint mechanism has a narrower scope than the original Blueprint. He stated that they wanted to make sure there was no confusion about which group did what.

Mr. Dorris talked about the Homeless Blueprint Oversight Committee or HBOC, stating that they had a very limited scope. The mission of HBOC is to ensure implementation of *The Blueprint*, promote consistent performance standards, provide a forum for community-wide collaboration and help promote public awareness of homelessness (and progress toward solutions). He stated that HBOC holds all the accountability to make sure progress is made; that the Homeless would be clients who become members of the community on an equal footing with everyone else, emphasizing that they would be members of the community.

He also explained that the 2007 Blueprint developed an Implementation Plan using “inclusionary zoning” to encourage more affordable housing.

At this point Councilwoman Robinson asked what the use of inclusionary zoning meant? Mr. Dorris responded that John Hayes was really the expert on this—that basically the idea is that more housing will be made available and some link to this percentage will be affordable housing.

He next pointed out Key Revisions: (1) Solicit additional private funding for use by managers; (2) Develop a central intake point for accessibility to all housing; (3) Develop an improved follow-up systems; (4) Improve homeless peoples’ access to transportation and day care; and (5) Establish emergency temporary housing for people leaving institutional care between the hours of 6 and 8 P.M. and on weekends.

Councilman Feely asked about the central intake point? Mr. Dorris responded that they were really saying a process of doing central intake; that when people show up, they will be helped, and there will be some manner with consistency.

**Karen McReynolds** stated that they were having increased calls from churches; also people being discharged from Erlanger when normal agencies are closed at 5:00 P.M. She stated that for the last four years the Homeless Coalition had asked for a focus group—that it could be one particular agency or could be passed to several agencies. She stated that they would teach the people in the community how to do it; that this was being done all over the country.

**Claire Sawyers** stated that this would also provide help to Law Enforcement, who have no choice but to take someone to jail—that if they had an access point it would help.

Councilman Feely asked if this access point would be HBOC for consistency or the Homeless Coalition? Mr. Dorris responded that the Homeless Coalition is designed for this.

Ms. McReynolds added that we are at a key moment to make constructive changes; that she had been with the Homeless Coalition over 11 years, and they were dealing with the same issues.

Mr. Dorris mentioned that the second component is a Quality System Process; that we need to make sure we document this and track the performance.

Councilman Pierce asked if this *Blueprint* was to serve the City of Chattanooga, Hamilton County, or the Region? Mr. Dorris responded that it was to serve the Region. Councilman Pierce asked about funding? Ms. McReynolds responded that the Coalition is regional—that is why it is important to have a *Blueprint*, because it affects funding. Councilman Pierce maintained that if this is regional, why would they just bring the *Blueprint* to us to approve—that the County should also be asked to approve it. Ms. McReynolds talked about the Coalition Funding, mentioning federal funding. She stated that by and large applications came from Hamilton County. She went on to say that they asked for more permanent housing vouchers and did not get them through CHA; that all of the housing was through a Federal Loan Bank and was not counted as new money. She mentioned over a million dollars with a 15% increase, and we are on target this year for over \$2 million dollars to come into the City and \$1.3 million in leverage dollars. She went on to say that they would be working with HBOC—that the Homeless Coalition was the only agency doing this, and they would go county-wide; that we have to have strong applications federally and have to have some cohesiveness. She stated that she was excited about the new things in the *Blueprint*.

Mr. Dorris stated that as a follow-up that from failure they hoped to find success; that we have to learn from our mistakes and then celebrate our success.

Councilman Page stated that he would like Mr. Dorris to say something about the oversight committee and where certain things go; that he was interested in the Oversight Committee and how their plans will help in resolving standing problems. He stated that we needed some kind of process.

Mr. Dorris responded that the *Blueprint* has been revised and was now about developing implementation.

Councilman Pierce questioned if the City approves this, can we sell this to the County and the County commissioners? He stated that we needed a partnership because this *Blueprint* is for Hamilton County and is regional. He questioned if Chattanooga would be burdened with the bulk of this Plan with no other municipalities approving this Plan and questioned why it would be this way.

Mr. Dorris responded that more rural counties were involved; that a lot of people in rural communities are homeless, even though the County Mayor says there are none; that the homeless are there, and it is in their best interest to approve this—that it is very important financially, citing looking at the cost to the County Jail System if we are not committed to service. He stated that this goes on everyday and is the big dollar item that the *Blueprint* is talking about.

Ms. McReynolds noted that the County was represented there when they unveiled the Plan, including Bradley, Rhea, McMinn and Meigs and that the Homeless Coalition goes to their meetings. She stated that they are buying in to what we are doing. She mentioned that SETHRA goes to the county, and they needed more City support to see that this is something to be involved in.

Mayor Littlefield added that this is a regional undertaking already, mentioning that the Food Bank and Community Kitchen are county, and the Health Department is also county; that we are talking about SETHRA and also talking to people in Georgia. He mentioned that a group would be going to Dunlap tomorrow, which is regional, and there are people with special transportation needs. He stated that the City is by no means the only contributor; that in fact we are not contributing as much as others; that in revising the *Blueprint* coordination is the key and getting everyone to work together with a central service point; that we learned from Katrina that when we are faced with homeless individuals we can put them in houses; that we need to follow through with this service and do the same thing with our own homeless; that the *Blueprint* is a working document to enable the community to work together better.

Councilman Pierce mentioned people being “comfortable” with the Homeless “thing” and handed out a Wall Street Journal article that is made a part of this minute material. He stated that we had been dealing with this for ten years, and the homeless situation was not getting any better; that he could see this City left with the burden. He asked Mayor Littlefield to be good enough to get the County to buy into this and asked that the County be asked to adopt this Plan before the City adopts it.

Mayor Littlefield explained that the Plan did not have to be adopted—that it is a working document.

Ms. McReynolds agreed that the original Blueprint had gone to HUD, and they were working with this; that we are trying to go back and get checks and balances and update what is happening locally. She stated that anyone could see what we have done and that she was excited about this; that they would be working with the Implementation Plan, and there was nothing that anybody had to adopt; that we are just continuing to work on the Plan.

Councilwoman Gaines asked Ms. McReynolds if she could tell her if they had started to place people in permanent homes? Ms. McReynolds responded “yes”. Councilwoman Gaines wanted to know how long they had been doing this and was told since 2004. Ms. McReynolds stated that at the last count, there were 800 families in permanent housing. Councilwoman Gaines stated that she had one more question. She asked if Ms. McReynolds could give her a figure on the thousands of people who had been placed and where was the location? Ms. McReynolds responded that most of them are through CHA, and it is public housing. Councilwoman Gaines still wanted to know what area?

Mayor Littlefield responded that most of these are Section 8, and they are all over town, with Councilman Pierce saying “not in East Brainerd”.

Councilwoman Gaines stated that this was not really an answer and wanted a more specific figure, mentioning a certain community of people with certain conditions.

Councilman Pierce questioned “tent city” and empty houses.

Chairman Robinson stated that this dialog is great and enlightening; that there is more to be heard and learned; that we need another meeting as quickly as we can—maybe next week—to continue this discussion. She asked Mr. Dorris and others to please come back and that we do have alternatives in Chattanooga.

Mr. Dorris ended by saying that between 2004 and 2007, we have learned a couple of things; that we are looking at all the homeless and not just one segment; that we are moving towards a better system for linking the homeless to services and also to follow this up so that they can become self-sufficient.

At this point Councilman Page mentioned that Jeff Claxton had a matter to present to the Council but that he was not present at this time—that his matter will be postponed until next week.

The meeting was adjourned.