

HEALTH, EDUCATION, HUMAN SERVICES AND HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

December 11, 2007

4:30 P.M.

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

Others present included Dan Johnson, Daisy Madison and Richard Beeland.

HOMELESSNESS BLUEPRINT

Chairman Robinson turned the meeting over to **John Hayes, Chairman of the Blueprint Committee**. He stated that he met with the Council on the 20th of November and related that they were about to finish up, and they had released this report (which is made a part of the minute material) on November 30th. He stated that there was also a copy on the web site. He went on to say that they had a Public Hearing on the 7th to begin talking about the major issues; that they wanted to make sure the Councilmembers had a copy and to get their feedback; that once they obtained their feedback, they would make revisions to the Blueprint; that they would like to have the copy finalized by next Tuesday.

Councilman Pierce stated that the Blueprint was long and the Council could not review this in three days; that it would have to go into next year.

Mr. Hayes emphasized that they really wanted the Council's input and would talk to them about significant things. He stated that it was critical that the Council tell their constituents to call 211.

Mr. Hayes began by stating that he remembered a mentor of his talking about "Shoulders of Giants"; that we would see further that he was standing on the shoulder of giants who had come before him, which was the original Blueprint Committee. He stated that we needed to stop the revolving door; that he had been working on this since 1979, and we had just been putting band-aids on the issues; that the 2003 Committee was a shift and what needed to happen to address the needs of chronic homelessness. He noted that there were also other needs within a community and mentioned the work of Councilwoman Bennett and Paul Brock with their committee, stated that he had built on these findings. He told about design charettes and that all of this was on the shoulders of those who came before them.

Also within this context, Mr. Hayes stated that we had come to understand better the issue of homelessness within the community; that the numbers had shifted to two to three times more homeless people; that on any given day there were more homeless people than shelter beds, and this was why we had tent communities. He mentioned 4,094 homeless people during the year, which included a large number of children. He stated that this does not “tap” the full gamut; that a lot of them are doubled up living in hotels; that we had seen some shift in Federal Government’s guidelines.

Mr. Hayes stated that they had met with schools and some of the schools are talking about one-half of their kids move two to three times a day; that his wife is a teacher and says that kids live in hotels and motels and that they move about; that how we address this population is shifting in the way we address homelessness; that we look at the ones who are near homeless who do not meet the criteria of chronic homelessness.

He stated that within this context there were 40 people who represented a broad spectrum of our community, including architects, service providers, homeless people, and other participants who participated in this effort, making well over 60 people participating in this. He stated that they had been very positive, mentioning one Blueprint committee that was headed up by Phyllis Cassavant. He also mentioned Karen Quinn from the Hamilton County Health Department who headed up a committee on services. Claire Sawyer, who was present, also headed up a committee. He mentioned John Dorris and Karen McReynolds who headed up planning and coordination. He stated that he, himself, headed up the Housing Committee, as well as people who dealt with transient housing such as Mary Ellen Galloway and Jim Sherrill. He stated that he would like to have each of the Committee Chairmen talk about their committee and then take the recommendation to come back after the New Year. He asked the Council to please e-mail them.

Councilman Page stated that he would like to ask a question because Councilman Pierce had indicated that he needed to leave; that his question concerned getting input and the Council giving their input; that the Council had the Blueprint and were asked to give input, and they got caught in the decision making; that what he would like to have between now and next year was for us to be able to come back and give this some thought—that if the Council adopts this Blueprint—how will it be administered? He stated that this was a life-death decision; that he would like to make this plea, if others agreed, that the committee come back with a recommendation for implementation—that there was a body of knowledge that the Council did not have.

Councilman Feeley stated that he might could help in a small way with the Blueprint—that he worked in Brainerd and East Lake and brought people to the door. He noted that the question was how do we make sure this is implemented and that there is a group working together and who will be this group? He noted that the chosen group would wield the accountability and what tools will be used and people will have to play by the rules or else; that we need to make sure because two years from now we can't afford to go through this again; that we need to set the pace, and this is the City Council's decision; that there needs to be someone from the City for folks to answer to—that the question is “Who will be the Homeless Czar”? He questioned whether this would be the United Way or the City—that it would all fall apart without accountability.

Mr. Hayes noted that the original Blueprint set up some accountability controls, and the Mayor was to deal with it, and it fell apart; that we had to make sure it did not fall apart again.

John Dorris spoke next, stating that he was fortunate with their committee—that Councilman Rico was one of the members, as well as Merry Mai Williamson, Karen McReynolds, and Charlotte Boatwright. He stated that the issue that Councilman Page had brought up was central to Planning and Coordination; that they had developed guidelines and after they are finalized that only then will there be a fully developed implementation plan. He stated that completing this Blueprint was a milestone and that the Implementation Plan would follow on its heels; that with an Implementation Plan they would have to have enough details concerning funding sources; that right now the mission of the HBOC (Homeless Blueprint Oversight Committee) was to ensure implementation of the revised *Blueprint*, promote consistent performance standards, provide a forum for community wide collaboration and help promote public awareness of homeless problems (and progress toward solutions). (This is on page 88 of the Blueprint). He urged that we not let this stay on the shelves, noting that their concern was well-founded.

Councilman Feeley stated that HBOC would be the group for accountability.

Mr. Hayes agreed that the Homeless Blueprint Oversight Committee was on target in providing frequent reports so that this would stay in the forefront.

Chairman Robinson asked if this committee had the power and the people that they needed? Mr. Hayes responded that they were constructed for this purpose; that they were appointed by the Mayor. Chairman Robinson stated that we needed to make sure that this group was equipped—that there needed to be someone who would pick up the phone and answer questions and delegate. She asked who would administer this and would there be an office and a telephone number?

Mr. Hayes assured that that special person or organization would come forth—that it would be an operative of the Council; that it could be directed by one person or a committee; that accountability would be with the Homeless Blueprint Oversight Committee; that this would become realistic according to the level of resources.

Councilman Benson stated that he believed in the Golden Rule—“He who has gold, rules”! He questioned the people funding this and asked if the City would be funding this? He asked if there would be contributions.

Mr. Hayes responded that what he would like to see happen with the City is that they see that every agency who needs funding stays consistent with the Plan; that he would hope before a decision is made about funding or services that the HBOC Committee sign off on this; that any agency can ask for support, but they would need to go through a series of steps before anything goes out of here for funding. He stated that he could not promise where the funding will come from, but he wanted to make sure it would be consistent. He went on to say that he would like to see the foundation and some statement from HBOC that they would be able to make this work.

Councilman Feeley agreed, stating that this would encourage Best Practices.

Councilwoman Bennett stated that she considered the Farmers’ Market as money and a public resource; that the Re-Act Board did not survive a change of administration; that she would like to see this be apolitical so that it would be able to survive on its own. She stated that she had spent two hours reading this and was half way through; that she wanted time to talk about this.

Mr. Dorris stated that the Planning and Coordination Committee wanted to “zero” in on the implementation piece and learn from the Council; that the Planning and Coordination committee focused on the core tasks they wanted to be doing to make sure this happens in a narrow scope.

Mr. Hayes stated that there were a lot of concrete recommendations such as inclusionary zoning—that there had been innovative things done; that there was some talk about CDBG dollars to develop their limited subsidy program; that they were also looking at the source of funding coming out of foundations—that all of the funding was not in one pocket. He stated that they would talk more about this later.

Chairman Robinson stated that we would limit our conversation this afternoon—that there was not enough time—that the Council had their assigned reading during Christmas and asked that the Council be allowed a month to read this.

Mr. Hayes urged the Council to let them know which issues they needed to know about and to let them know ahead of time.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.