



May 2018 Director's Report

Given that a great deal is happening within AHFE and the JOHS, and we have limited time at this month's meeting, I am providing this Director's Report. We will have time set aside at the Coordinating Board meeting for any questions arising from the report and I welcome emails or phone calls with inquiries.

SHELTER TRANSITIONS

Winter Shelter

As we moved into April, our winter shelter capacity began to close down. This includes the Columbia Shelter, operated by Transition Projects, which has been sheltering women, men and couples in the old Shleifer Furniture Building, and the Family Winter Shelter at Congregation Beth Israel. Both shelters have been fully utilized this winter. With help from the State Legislature's emergency shelter funding allocation, we were able to work with Portland Homeless Family Solutions, which operated the Winter Shelter, to transition all 22 of the families to either an alternative shelter or to housing.

As described below, three additional winter shelter sites were slated to close but will be kept open to address the imminent closure of the Hansen Shelter.

Year-Round Shelter:

Because of facilities challenges, we have set a deadline for closing the Hansen Shelter on June 15, 2018. This shelter serves 200 women and men (about half of whom are in couples) each night and is open 24/7. We are committed to not losing this capacity in the system. With that in mind, we have an interim strategy to add at least 200 beds for men and women and couples elsewhere in the system. We will continue the 5th Avenue Shelter (75 beds in the Mead Building downtown that were slated to close) and Transition Projects has already converted the population to women and couples. In addition, we will maintain the winter beds at the Do Good Multnomah Veterans Shelter, and add capacity there, bringing that shelter up to 40 beds. We will also continue 35 women's winter shelter beds at the Salvation Army Female Emergency Shelter (SAFES) for as long as necessary. With one additional 75+ bed shelter we are currently working to open, we will more than cover the capacity we are losing at Hansen.

Long-term, the Foster shelter, which we hope will be ready to open by late fall, will provide 120 of the beds we are losing at Hansen. The Hoyt Street shelter in Old Town was planned to provide the remainder of the replacement capacity for Hansen. However, in light of the Oregon Harbor of Hope proposal to open a 120-bed shelter just a few blocks from that location, we are no longer moving forward with the Hoyt project. If the Harbor of Hope project is a success, it will represent the additional capacity that is needed downtown and allow us to expand shelter and/or housing placement capacity elsewhere in the community.

The Harbor of Hope project is benefiting from a contribution of land by Prosper Portland - a parcel just north of the Broadway Bridge on the west side of Naito - and a large modular bathroom/shower/kitchen unit owned by the City of Portland. It also received a generous \$1.5 million donation from Tim Boyle to fund the acquisition and construction of an innovative Sprung structure proposed for the site.

The supporters of Harbor of Hope have also committed to raising the operating funds for the shelter. At a meeting with Old Town/Chinatown and Pearl District neighbors and stakeholders on Tuesday, May 1, Harbor of Hope said it had raised a quarter of the \$2 million it needs in operating funds and said it hopes to open as soon as mid-fall.

Harbor of Hope has stated that they plan to put out a request for proposals for an operator in the coming weeks. The Joint Office will continue to provide technical assistance and look for ways to align our community resources with the shelter to help ensure that people in the shelter are able to transition as quickly as possible back into permanent housing.

See below for an update on year-round family shelter.

Alternative Shelter

Over the past several months, thanks to a joint City of Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI)/JOHS position, we have been engaging more actively with all the alternative shelter/“village” communities around improving their connections to services. Discussions are also ongoing with all three of the alternative shelter communities that are facing the possibility of needing to move in the relatively near future. A vote is slated with the Kenton Neighborhood Association to seek a one-year extension for Kenton Village. There is also ongoing work to determine the best strategy for supporting the alternative shelter models through the zoning, building, and landlord tenant codes. The JOHS is currently circulating an Letter of Interest (LOI) for an operator for a program that would recruit faith institutions to host car and RV campers on their property, similar to a program in Eugene. The JOHS budget request included an additional \$550,000 to enhance supports for these alternative shelter strategies.

Family Shelter

The year-round family shelter system is in transition. Since the closure of the Family Center, Human Solutions has been providing shelter services to families through two east-side motels. Both the County and Human Solutions are conducting capital needs assessments of the Family Center building to determine potential future uses of that building. At the same time, the JOHS, through a commercial real estate firm, has a solicitation seeking owners of motels and apartment complexes who are interested in master-leasing and/or selling their properties for use as shelter.

Given the lengthening stays in shelter for families, our providers agree that we should be moving away from large congregate family shelters toward a model where all families have greater privacy. In keeping with this, Portland Homeless Family Solutions is also in the process of acquiring a new, larger building, that will allow them to triple the number of families they serve and provide each family a private room. The new location in Lents is also much closer to where the majority of families seeking shelter are from, and where their children are in school. Overall, we expect to have at least 270 beds of year-round family shelter capacity following this period of transition.

UNITY CENTER & MEETING MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

The JOHS has been working closely with the Multnomah County Health Department to expand the housing resources available for people transitioning out of the Unity Center and other emergency mental health care facilities. As part of that effort, we have recently converted what was a HUD-funded transitional housing program for families into a permanent supportive housing program that includes set-aside units and support services for people with severe and persistent mental illness. The County also recently executed a master lease on a 24-unit motel off Barbur Boulevard that is being converted into a transitional supportive housing setting for people exiting Unity Center. While we continue to look for a shelter site that can be dedicated to people with severe and persistent mental illness, we are launching a mobile mental health support team that can assist with meeting the needs of people with severe mental illness who are in our low-barrier shelters.

SUPPORTING PARTNERSHIPS FOR ANTI-RACIST COMMUNITIES (SPARC)

Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities (SPARC), a national initiative led by the Center for Social Innovation, launched in Multnomah County three weeks ago with a series of community events, trainings and focus groups. Thank you to those of you who were able to attend these events. We will have a more thorough debrief of the SPARC process at the next Executive Committee meeting.

In terms of next steps, the most important recommendations coming out of the week were the “structural change objectives” identified by a group of community leaders. These include rethinking our continuum of care governance structure through the lens of representation and authority for people of color with lived experience of homelessness, reevaluating how we offer funding from the perspective of organizations the specifically serve communities of color, and committing to using human centered design in all of our system planning processes to ensure that people of color with lived experience of homelessness are shaping the systems and are engaged in the continuous quality improvement of those systems.

FAMILY SYSTEM PROCUREMENT

The JOHS, with help from AHFE and multiple community volunteers, recently completed the RFPQ process for the homeless family system. This included qualifying non-profit organizations to provide information and assessment services, shelter services, and housing placement and retention services. Following the qualification of potential providers, the JOHS made allocation decisions, awarding currently available funds to the agencies that best aligned with the identified needs of the system.

The outcome of this process was an expansion of culturally specific information and assessment services, focused on providing in-person intakes (rather than phone assessments) through agencies that work with communities that are less likely to access services by phone. In addition, two new agencies were added to the Mobile Housing Team, one providing culturally specific services to Latinx families and the other serving Native Americans, with a focus on recovery services.

ADULT SYSTEM PROCUREMENT

When it was formed, the JOHS received a two-year exemption before it had to re-procure the funds dedicated to serving homeless adults without children under County rules. Most of these funds came from the City of Portland and, under City rules, had not been subject to procurement for many years. While the exact timeline remains to be finalized, the JOHS expects to issue an RFPQ for all information and referral, adult outreach, shelter, housing placement, supportive housing, diversion, and employment services by the end of this summer. In developing the RFPQ, we will be working with the AHFE work groups and engaging with current and prospective service recipients, especially from communities of color who are experiencing disparities in rates of homelessness. The results of the RFPQ and subsequent allocation processes will shape contracting for the FY 2019-20 contract year.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

The JOHS continues to convene PHB, Home Forward and the Health Department around the development of a local plan to create 2,000 units of supportive housing within 10 years, nearly doubling the current number of available supportive homes. The local process has included active participation from OHCS, OHA and Care Oregon, as well as a stakeholder advisory group made up of local nonprofit leaders involved in housing development and the provision of support services. The local plan is due to come to the City Council and Board of County Commissioners in July. Prior to finalization, the draft plan will be brought to the Coordinating Board and Executive Committee for consideration and comment. The final plan will also come to the Executive Committee for adoption.

The local planning work is now complementing the regional supportive housing planning work that is funded by Meyer Memorial Trust. A steering committee for the regional work has been convened, and a consultant is on board to develop and implement our community engagement strategy. We are also representing the supportive housing conversation within the Metro Regional Housing Bond conversation.

JOINT OFFICE OF HOMELESS SERVICES (JOHS) BUDGET

We will have a detailed presentation of the Chair's and Mayor's proposed budgets at the May Coordinating Board meeting. Both include full funding, with a COLA, of the JOHS' existing service level. Both proposed budgets also make significant additional investments in homeless services, including substantial additional funds for homeless families, capital to open and improve shelters, and new short and long-term rental assistance to move hundreds of additional people out of shelter and back into permanent housing.

WEBSITE UPGRADES

We have significantly reorganized ahomeforeveryone.net in order to provide context and make information easier to locate, including plans, reports and studies, quarterly outcome data, and media coverage of the work of ending homelessness in our community. That work is by no means completed, particularly around engagement and education opportunities. If you have suggestions for further improvements, or content that you'd like to see included, please email <mailto:denis.theriault@multco.us>.