

MINUTES

Housing and Human Services Advisory Board
Tuesday, February 19, 2008 6:00 – 8:00 PM
110 N. 4th Avenue, 1st Floor Conference Room

Members Present: David Blanchard, Barbara Eichmuller, Robyn Konkell, Soni Mithani, Teresa Myers, Ned Staebler, Margie Teall, Laurie Wechter

Members Absent: Stephen Rapundalo, Kristine Martin, Anthony Ramirez, Stephen Pontoni

Staff Present: Candace Cadena, Jennifer Hall, Mary Jo Callan

Guests: Keta Cowan, Laurie Lutomski and Charlene Johnson, Synod Residential Services; Lindsey Bishop and Chuck Kieffer, Washtenaw Housing Alliance; Stephanie Hartshorn, Corporation for Supportive Housing; Wendy Carty-Saxon, Avalon Housing; Otto Willis & Alex-Michael Skott, Delonis Center

I. Convene Meeting

N. Staebler called the meeting to order at 6:11 pm.

II. Approval of the Agenda

N. Staebler moved to approve the agenda with the addition of introducing the new member; S. Mithani seconded. Motion Approved as amended, 6-0 (Konkel, Mithani, Myers, Staebler, Blanchard, Wechter Aye, 0 Nay).

III. Introductions

The newest HHSAB member, Laurie Wechter, MSW, introduced herself. She previously served on the Community Development's Waiver and Review Board and currently serves on the Hoarding Task Force and the Mortgage and Tax Foreclosure Taskforce.

IV. Approval of the Minutes

S. Mithani moved to accept the minutes from January 22, 2008; D. Blanchard seconded. Motion Approved 6-0 (Konkel, Mithani, Myers, Staebler, Blanchard, Wechter Aye, 0 Nay).

V. Public Comment

None

VI. Discussion Items

A. Public Hearing on Former Y Site. N. Staebler noted that the weather impacted the turn out at the public hearing. The hearing will be televised. Do others believe an additional public hearing is needed? S. Mithani suggested that the public can also make comments before every HHSAB meeting. She also stated that it would be

helpful to see examples from other communities that have 100 units serving extremely low-income households in one location.

- B. Corporation for Supportive Housing Presentation. S. Hartshorn gave a Powerpoint presentation on the principles of permanent supportive housing (PSH), which includes: permanent housing (a landlord/tenant relationship not transitional), client-centered support services that are not a condition of living in the unit, and maximum independence. Studies around the Country have showed that providing housing with support services helps keep people housed who have experienced homelessness and reduces emergency room visits, incarcerations rates and detox services.

She showed examples of successful PSH housing in other communities. Successful PSH must have affordable rents, housing and service roles are distinct, tenants must have personal control and autonomy, and services are recovery-oriented.

PSH can be multi-family in one site, several sites, or scattered sites through tenant vouchers. Acquisition and Construction financing typically includes multiple sources: Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, State and/or local HOME funds, Federal Home Loan Bank grants, foundation grants and private loans.

PSH tenants report that they want safety and choice in their housing. Consequently, a front desk gatekeeper helps provide a safe environment. PSH tenants tend to have extremely-low incomes and the rent that they can afford does not cover the cost of operating the unit. Therefore, a critical financial tool is tenant rental vouchers, and especially project-based Section 8 vouchers. The vouchers will cover the difference between what the tenant can pay and the rent needed to cover operating costs.

D. Blanchard asked when transitional housing is the best housing type? S. Hartshorn responded that youth and people who are the most stable and are having a temporary economic problem. S. Mithani asked if the housing should be targeted to one type of household? S. Hartshorn responded that it really depends on the organization's mission and the number of units. R. Konkle asked how agencies separate privacy issues and providing services? S. Hartshorn responded that ideally property management should be provided by a separate agency than services and the property management only gets involved in housing issues.

- C. Synod Residential Services

L. Lutomski explained that many of the former Y residents were some of the most difficult to serve clients. The housing and support services provided at Tuscan Creek helped stabilize many of them, and some said it was the nicest place they had ever stayed at. The support services were provided 24/7 and included monthly health and safety inspections, medication reminders, advocacy, transportation, and

life skill classes. If they had more staff, they would have liked to do more group services, payee services, distribute meds, and increase security.

A scattered site model can work, but if you are able to build a single-entrance model it would be safer and more efficient for staff. Ideally the entity that collects the rent would not also provide services because then people avoid you because they think you are trying to collect rent. The VA population was the most difficult because they only stayed a couple days and used up a lot of staff time.

The other tenants at Tuscan Creek was diverse and included many families. The Y tenants were treated well by their neighbors who also often stopped by the Synod offices to talk. Tuscan Creek was a good bridge to self-sufficiency for many residents because of this interaction. After they left Tuscan Creek, 75% stayed housed and many took their services with them.

VII. Adjournment

S. Mithani moved to adjourn the meeting; B. Eichmuller seconded. N. Staebler adjourned the meeting at 8:07 pm.