

**Social Services Roundtable
Wednesday September 22, 2021
Town Office Meeting Room 2**

Present: L. Riell, L. Maguire, S. Furry Irish

Call to Order: 6:35 pm

Note Taker: Linda Riell

Citizen Participation: Lee Krohn, Meghan Tedder, Paul Dragon, Ann Cousins, Susan Stock, Betty Jean Bogue, Georgene Grover, Tracey Shamberger, Jessica Brumsted, Rachel Petraska, Aaron Noble, Mike Ashoo, Pam Brangan, Miya Drake, Steve Crawford, Susan Grimes, Jhana Piche, Emily Fleming, Jacob Leopold, Joyce George, Tom and Sarah Tompkins, Maria Horn

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION:

Sue invited folks to this meeting to discuss current food and police/rescue concerns at The Days Inn and Harbor Place due to covid housing for the homeless and VT State Policies regarding extending the transition time to more permanent housing. Ground rules stated: the purpose of the meeting is to learn more about the current situation in Shelburne, to share experiences, keep a positive perspective and to entertain possible solutions to problems.

Rep. Brumsted share some of the background as to what is happening in Montpelier. There are 7 Shelburne motel/hotels that were funded by The American Rescue Plan, whereby the state paid \$100 per night for rooms for the homeless during the covid pandemic. The state just extended the plan for another 30 days (for the second time) and The Days Inn has signed up again to house the homeless who are disabled, over age 60 or are families with children. Harbor Place is already full and continues to participate in the program.

The state plan was that while people were temporarily housed at the hotels, housing would be built providing more opportunities for people to live in their own homes when the pandemic eased. This has not happened. Thus the extensions at the hotels.

During the time that there was a stay at home request, the state was providing to have food dropped off at the hotels because they wanted people to stay out of the grocery stores. There were problems with people hoarding food, or not liking the food, lack of refrigeration etc. and food went to waste.

Currently there are 580 people, 80 families, between Days Inn and Harbor Place, needing to receive food assistance. Organizations such as local churches and the Rotary have been strategizing in order to deliver the most useful kinds and quantities of nutritious food items needed. Several workers in the hotels have also been working with families and individuals to assist them in figuring out how they can get food as many of them are on 3 Squares Assistance. They also need help with learning how to use the Shelburne Food Shelf.

Other types of assistance needed at the hotels are learning how to get transportation, how to take the bus, schooling for children, help with disabilities, as well as physical, medical and mental health care. There are social workers who help with some of these needs once per week. It is not enough.

Discussion followed Jessica's update. Below is a summary of points made:

- Transportation: families lack transportation to get to the grocery store, it is too hard to get to the store with kids, people do not know how to take the bus, people are averse to the bus.
- Hotels could give out the Food Shelf phone number and the Shelf will call them back. The Food Shelf does make some deliveries.
- SCS Food Service Coordinator is assisting families with children to meet their food needs.
- Food Shelf sign ups via the Genius can be challenging so it's fine to call the Food Shelf. Appointments need to be made for a time to go in and shop.
- Harbor Place has a Food Train (from the church) that delivers on Fridays.
- Harbor Place tries to connect families with children to the school. There are 10 families there now, one family has 16 people. Some of them are homeschooling.
- Guests prefer meals made by families, nice home cooked meals, individually packaged. Comfort food is good, meals with protein is needed. The community meal train has slowed down.
- Foods that are especially appreciated: PBJ sandwiches, cheese sandwiches, hearty canned soups, ravioli, cereal, almond and rice milks that aren't refrigerated till opened. Items like apples or tomatoes not so much!
- Transportation suggestion: many folks receive 3 Squares assistance but don't use it due to difficulty getting transportation. Would it be possible to have school buses, SSTA buses or Green Mt. Transit make regular trips from the hotels to the grocery store?
- In the past GMT has had people assist those who need help learning to use the bus. Bus Buddies?
- Food items such as milk and cereal can be purchased at Kinneys. Do hotel guests know this?
- Suggestion from Age Well: they have 1200 volunteers who could potentially be of assistance at the hotels. They could help coordinate care; for individuals and families, self neglect referrals, use of medicare etc.
- Although the numbers are ever changing, we should know who is at which hotel in the area, not names per say but how many individuals and families reside there and who they are are. If we don't know who they are and what their needs are, they are likely to lose their housing and be back again.
- Wrap around services are NOT being built into the places where they are housed.
- Harbor Place is moving over to Days Inn.
- People who are leaving the program will receive \$2500 but there is no housing for them!
- CVOEO is asking for temporary housing to be extended to end of December. Advocating to use FEMA funding.
- CVOEO has a new street outreach program. If we know where people are camping (living outside) we can let them know and they offer help. Feeding Chittenden is part of the help.
- CVOEO asks what are we going to do as a state to find places where people can live with respect. We have funding and it's time for us to work together to create permanent housing.
- Some residents want Gov. Scott to visit the Shelburne hotels and personally see the situation. He needs to meet and see people there. Write letters to him. Invite him to the October meeting.
- Police issues with the hotels: frequent calls, substance abuse and mental health issues. They try to bring the Howard Mental Health worker with them to defuse situations or they bring hotel guests to the ER. This is very costly to the town. There are federal funds to help these folks, ways to get them help rather than just making it a police response.
- Rescue response: these calls, mainly for de-escalation, take a serious toll on both police and rescue. The state must consider investing in transport to primary care providers or bring physician services TO THE HOTELS . It's an accessibility issue for most.

- Rescue continued: consider developing community para-medical services using ambulance when off service. It could be like an Urgent Care and would likely reduce 911 and police calls and most certainly reduce frustration. Great ideas for possible solutions!
- Community Health Center goes to Harbor Place once per month.
- No social workers visit regularly at the hotels.
- Lee Krohn, Town Manager perspective: there is a high concentration of people with behavioral issues at the hotels and responding to calls is exhausting. These are calls that just can't be talked down by a social worker. Enormous strain is put on local rescue and police services. We really need to look at the bigger picture, no state staff is placed at the hotels to deal with these issues.
- The hotels need trained staffing who are capable of defusing situations before calls for help are made to local services. Staff needs to be placed there BY THE STATE.

DISCUSSION CLOSES

- This brainstorm session has provided us with some interesting solutions.
- Sue clarifies that the job of the Social Services is to receive requests for funding so if anyone present at this meeting comes up with solutions, they should write up a request for financial help that would get things moving.
- Pam Brangan will work with Feeding Chittenden. Miya will contact Pam to determine what days would be best to provide meals at Days Inn and will also contact Harbor Place.
- St. Catherines will work with the Food Shelf to determine what types of food are needed and which days food is needed.
- Jessica will summarize the feedback which applies to the state level and bring it to both her committee and to her contacts at the Agency of Human Services.
- The meeting we hope to schedule for October will include local representation from those here tonight as well as state level players.

THANKS TO ALL FOR ATTENDING, LISTENING AND PARTICIPATING!

ADJOURN @ 8PM