

# Cowlitz Housing First! Coalition

Lower Columbia CAP ~ Altrusa Room

March 16, 2011

1:30 – 3:00 PM

## Meeting Summary

---

---

### Members Present

Ilona Kerby  
Alex Perez  
Jack Keolker  
Jeni O'Neil  
Sheila Thomas  
Dennis Meyers  
Pam Howe  
George Robertson  
Diane Perron  
Marilee Hertig  
Chris Pegg  
Susan Peterson  
Sandra Junker  
Jo Ann Heinrichs  
Capt. David Davis

### Representing

Lower Columbia CAP -- Chair  
Longview Police Department – Vice Chair  
Citizen, Kelso – Secretary  
Cowlitz County (Corrections)  
City of Kalama  
Lower Columbia Mental Health/PATH  
Lifeworks  
FISH  
Cowlitz Habitat for Humanity  
Work Opportunity Center - Goodwill  
Longview Housing Authority  
Family Health Center  
Head Start  
City of Woodland  
Salvation Army

### Members Absent

Steve Watters  
Jerry Sivil  
Deb Whitney  
Sherrie Tinoco  
Mike Kerins  
Jack Reilly  
Martin Franke  
David Williams  
Ken Botero  
Claudine Walker  
Debbie Thompson

Youth & Family LINK  
Drug Abuse Prevention Center  
Longview School District  
Emergency Support Shelter  
City of Kelso  
City of Castle Rock  
WA Dept. Corrections  
Homeless Advocate  
City of Longview  
Center for Behavioral Solutions/PeaceHealth  
DSHS

### Others Present

Debbie Garvin  
Michael Torres  
Dan Smith  
Ray Van Tongeren  
Melissa Taylor

Cowlitz County Drug Court  
Lower Columbia CAP  
Citizen  
Citizen  
Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG)

### I. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Meeting participants introduced themselves.

## **II. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

None.

## **III. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Approve Meeting Summary**

It was M/S/A by Jack Keolker and Dennis Meyers and approved by the group to accept the minutes of the January 19<sup>th</sup> and February 16<sup>th</sup> meetings.

### **B. Announcements**

Melissa Taylor announced several upcoming meetings of interest and distributed a flyer listed these events. She also indicated that the Annual Report to the State on the use of document recording fees is under development, and that many agencies represented around the table will need to participate in the reporting process.

### **C. Elections – Voting Membership**

Pam Howe reported that the Nominating Committee recommends consideration of Cindy Helms Jarrell as a voting member in the At-Large category; Doug Harvey as a voting member in the Business category; and George Robertson as a Steering Committee member in the Faith-Based Organization category. An additional Steering Committee nomination is pending. It was M/S/A by Chris Pegg and Pam Howe to approve the slate of nominations by unanimous vote.

### **D. Preliminary Point In Time Count Results**

Melissa Taylor referred to a preliminary report on the unsheltered population provided last month, indicating that around 45 persons were unsheltered. Since then, the sheltered populations have been entered into the system. There is still some updating to the data fields necessary to get an accurate count, but it appears as though our count this year will be about 13% below the 2010 count.

distributed a preliminary count of the “unsheltered” populations, as required by WA Department

## **III. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

There were no questions from the monthly Committee Update emailed prior to the meeting.

## **IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **A. Ten Year Plan Update – Implementation**

1. Work Group Status – Melissa reported that she hopes to schedule initial meetings with work group members over the next few weeks.
2. Longview City Council Workshop – A workshop is scheduled for late April to review the Ten Year Plan Update with council and to explore the potential for coordinated planning and implementation.
3. SOAR Training – Melissa has secured 3 slots for SOAR training in Tacoma later this month. She will attend at the request of the workshop sponsors, along with two member agencies (CAP and LHA) who provide direct services. There was some discussion about the roll out of a new SOAR agreement with Social Security, DSHS, and other players this year. It is hoped that this new formalized agreement will truly expedite access to disability benefits.
4. Dennis Meyers asked if SOAR would truly make a difference in having Social Security Administration (SSA) “be there” for people who need it. He has heard promises on this program before, but has yet to see it operate as described. SSA needs to agree to this. Melissa added that the new agreement is intended to resolve these problems; stay tuned!
5. .01% Behavioral Health Tax –The Early Learning Coalition presented a proposal to the

Cowlitz County Board of Commissioners to pass the non-voter tenth of one cent sales tax that would be earmarked for eligible uses, including mental health treatment, chemical dependency treatment, housing for people in these programs who are homeless, and drug courts. The Early Learning Coalition is concerned about mental health funding for children. Funding for school programs will expire in the next two years. Melissa also appeared at the Board meeting to provide information about the Ten Year Plan Update and the use of the .01% tax, as well as data from cost-benefit studies. The commissioners indicated they would prefer a broad coalition representing an array of interests to present a multi-faceted plan.

### **Single Point of Entry/Coordinated Access - Discussion**

Captain Davis observed that we are working on a “single point of entry” and that non-profits are “huddled” in one area of town. City of Longview has expressed interest in de-centralizing services, and asked how a single point of entry could be accomplished, given this perspective. There was discussion about what a single point of entry could look like, as well as the upcoming requirement for coordinated assessment of people entering the continuum of care, and the full implementation of HMIS (homeless management information system to track clients through systems of care). There was also discussion about the feasibility study for a Crisis Response Center, still underway, and how this concept impacted each of these functions. Melissa added that we need to be able to offer missing services as we increase access, or it will not be effective for many.

Alex Perez shared that LOVE, Inc. has a single point of service for needs. The churches will perform an audit of churches that provide services. A toll-free number will be used to connect with a dispatch center and walk them through evaluation and then refer for services. Ray Van Tongeren asked if LOVE Inc. could be invited to the meetings, or considered for membership. Alex emphasized the ministry aspect of their organization, which it needs to maintain. Melissa added that funders realize this issue, and most simply prohibit proselytizing in the delivery of the funded service. Larry Russell has been hired as the new Executive Director. Diane Perron added that the organization now has a dedicated location for administration of their programs.

Pam Howe suggested that we create some database to understand the criteria for accessing various services within our continuum of care. Melissa added that this was the idea that Axel Swanson had given vision to in the form of a building that would house many local social services. She added that it would require a significant resource investment on the part of local government as well as non-profits.

Mike Torres referenced the Columbus, Ohio YWCA as an example of single point of entry that has received national recognition. George Robertson suggested that CAP should be the designated point of entry. Dennis Meyers added that HMIS coordination is critical, as well. He added that a single site would help end the Longview-Kelso juggling that many clients make daily. He believes such a facility should be able to leave people with a sense that they have actually accomplished something with their visit to the Response Center, and this would be accomplished through greater collaboration. Ilona Kerby stated that CAP has offered space for people to meet with “specialists” or case managers in a particular discipline. This is even more important with the 2:00 PM daily closure of the DSHS offices.

There was discussion about the difficulties in getting HMIS implemented system-wide, at the same time. Ilona Kerby stated there are several barriers, including:

- Domestic violence survivors need protection from cyber-stalkers;
- Clients with behavioral health issues often also have HIPAA issues making sharing of

information more difficult; and,

- Many agencies already have to perform duplicate entry of data into more than one system, and HMIS would add one more, which further burdens staff time.

**B. State Legislative Advocacy/Local Communications Team** – Melissa indicated that some volunteers are needed to support advocacy efforts at the local and state level. If you are interested, please get in touch with her. Chris Pegg and Captain Davis expressed interest.

## **V. ROUNDTABLE EXCHANGE & DISCUSSION**

Jeni O'Neil – The Corrections Department spent four months setting up a DAPC treatment class for offenders currently in the jail. The class meets two times per week for 12 weeks, and they can transfer to DAPC upon release. Currently there are 9 males and 7 females enrolled. There are 16 eligible people, as part of their judgment. They will see if they can extend the program after release.

Jeni described a potential grant opportunity for Clark and Cowlitz counties to serve ex-offenders and/or non-custodial parents with employment services. Dennis Meyers suggested the program needs a housing component. CAP is also interested, as they are one of few nation-wide selected for funding to present financial literacy to non-custodial parents,

Marilee Hertig – Goodwill Work Opportunity Center is serving out-of-school youth, ages 17-22 years, through the Workforce investment Act (WIA), mentioned earlier by Jeni. Many are homeless and couch-surfing. It is hard for them to maintain a job or get training when homeless. It is a two year program with case management. Dennis Meyers added that two have received 90-day rent assistance through WA Corrections. They have 20 clients currently; not all are homeless.

Debbie Garvin – Debbie described Drug Court, which is currently rich in services (but not housing) due to a \$1 million grant she was successful with last fall. Many clients can go to Oxford homes, but they have no funds for deposits or the first few months rent. Many clients are asked not to work for about 90 days following treatment, as this adds to their stress level. A source of rental assistance would be very helpful. Debbie is very interested in the HPRP program that offers prevention and rapid rehousing assistance. They have used TBRA (tenant-based rental assistance) and currently have 6 families with LHA and 2 with KHA, funded by Longview-Kelso HOME Consortium, but that program seems to be going away. KHA did not request any TBRA dollars this year. Drug Court clients actually need short-term rental assistance and deposits more than long-term assistance. The program offers a substantial amount of case management, which would complement a housing program.

Ilona Kerby - Asked members to get in the Disclosure Surveys (Conflict of Interest). She indicated that a Reader Commentary response to the chronically street homeless should run in The Daily News next Sunday. Pathways 2020 is unveiling the new Community Report Card for 2008-2010 on April 19<sup>th</sup>.

## **VI. Adjourn**

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 2:45 PM. The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, April 20th at 1:30 PM. in CAP's Altrusa Room.**

***Respectfully submitted,***  
Jack Keolker, Secretary

