

Manchester Initiative for Supportive Housing

Minutes of October 18, 2007

Attendees: Joan Dower, Jay Stoppelman, Peg DeForge, Edith Gerber, Boris Gerber, Ken Harley, Jody Wynn Rodiger, David Blackwell, Dianne McPherson, Kathleen Grover, Anne Carr, John Gibbs, Tony Bonetti, Rev. Karen Fedorchak, Tim Woods, Sr. Frances Randall, Katie Martin, Betsy Crum, Geoffrey Naab, Tom Stringfellow, Gary Sweet and Sue Hadge.

Temple Beth Sholom hosted our meeting. Jay Stoppelman talked about tzedakah, the Jewish word for charity, and the manner in which charity is to be dispensed. Nothing should be done that might shame the recipient.

Upon motion duly made and second, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the MISH meeting of September 20, 2007.

David reported on the October 9 meeting of MCHC. The group as it is evolving has decided they would like to retain a consultant - Betsy Crum of Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development. The Board voted unanimously to retain a consultant.

Upon motion duly made and second, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the MCHC meeting of October 9, 2007.

David reported that he has heard from the IRS and MCHC is recognized as a tax-exempt organization under 501(c)(3). Once we receive the official letter from the IRS, we can start the process of changing our name to MISH.

David met with the students at MCC who will help us construct a web site. We need some contact people to meet with them. Rob De Sesa, Peg DeForge, Dianne McPherson and Edith Gerber have volunteered to help.

Community Awareness effort:

- We had a successful campaign culminating with the Forum in March. It's important to go out again and renew this effort - to keep spreading the word.
- Katie Martin of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness offered to help the Community Awareness Committee by keeping our data "fresh."
- The Manchester Road Race was mentioned as an event where we could promote MISH. It was also suggested that we check with the Road Race Committee about applying for a grant. Joan Dower offered to find out who we contact.
- Tony Bonetti said the Coalition is organizing a Greater Hartford Forum to raise awareness of the ten-year plan and is looking to hold it here in Manchester in early January. A major component could showcase the work that MISH is doing.
- Jody mentioned inserts in church newsletters with updates on MISH. She offered to send out the next one she does to everyone for those who want to use it in their bulletins or newsletters.
- John Foley had left a message suggesting specific churches and people we might want to contact. This would be a way to bring some diversity to our group. Gary Sweet noted we should have an ad hoc subcommittee, a Diversity Committee. Gary offered to work on it and talk further to John Foley.

David then introduced Betsy Crum. Betsy said the Women's Institute has been around for about 25 years. It started in Boston, primarily as a real estate development organization focused on women and families, and evolved into affordable housing and housing with supports. They opened in Connecticut about 3 years ago. The Women's Institute is working on 15 or 16 development projects around the state; of those projects all but two involve supportive housing.

She said they have worked with groups that didn't have a clue how to proceed all the way through site identification, pre-development, identifying financing, working through occupancy, and working with asset management. One of the other things they have done is design One Step Beyond, a supportive housing training institute. It gives groups a chance to come together to figure out what they want to do and how to proceed.

Betsy recommended that we start with what we really want to do. We should have a vision of who we'd like to serve: single vs. family, people who are chronically homeless or folks experiencing homelessness for a reason, rehab or new construction.

Kathleen Grover, Chair of the Services Committee, said they had a meeting last week. They reached a consensus that the Services Committee would like to see a project that works for a varied population of families and singles with a focus on single adults who are chronically homeless - those hardest to find help from other agencies. They'd like to serve a mixed population.

Betsy said in research they've done, homelessness presents differently with singles than it does with families. Chronic homelessness for singles comes along with mental illness, HIV, chronic health conditions. For families, it's more about chronic poverty, domestic violence and different sorts of trauma. The package of services for singles includes more traditional case management; for families, it's assistance in developing living skills, after school programs, etc. Betsy noted when services are on site - that's when magic happens - where the service provider can engage the tenant in a natural way.

Betsy suggested that the most important thing is to figure out what areas we all agree on. She said it is hard to go forward until you have a project or a project idea. If we agree that we want to serve a community that has families and singles and homeless and not homeless, then we can proceed with identifying a site. If we identify sites, she or Wendy could research them at Town Hall.

Gary Sweet asked that any ideas on sites be sent to him at glsweet@sbcglobal.net.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, November 15 at 7pm, location to be confirmed. Our December meeting will be at MCC.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: To adjourn.

Submitted,

Dianne McPherson
Secretary