



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes - Draft

Human Services Commission

Tuesday, April 9, 2024
7:00 PM

Regular

Department of Public
Health and Human
Services
Training Room 1
1005 W. Worley St.
Columbia, MO 65203

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ford called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Present: 8 - Stacy Ford, Joy Cook, Alexandria Teagarden-Monk, Elijah Thorn, Michael Nguyen, Barbie Banks, Lisa Spear and Melissa Clarke

Excused: 2 - Kimberly Getzoff and Rachel Cooper

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Thorn moved to approve the agenda, and Teagarden-Monk seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Teagarden-Monk moved to approve the minutes, and Cook seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

7:09 Nguyen arrived meeting

IV. PRESENTATION

Attachments: HSC_2024-04-09

Executive Director of the Voluntary Action Center Ed Stansberry presented on the Opportunity Campus. Stansberry said VAC was approached by Room at the Inn, Turning Point, and Loaves and Fishes to lead the creation of an 'opportunity campus'. VAC agreed to lead the effort and signed MOUs with Room at the Inn, Turning Point, and Loaves and Fishes in January.

The city's planning contract facilitated the implementation of the project's plans, including a resource center to assist homeless individuals. Various community partners have provided letters of intent to offer services on-site, such as healthcare, life coaching, budgeting, a community garden, employment services, and shelter beds for both people who are homeless and their pets. The VA had contracted with Phoenix Programs for emergency shelter beds for Veterans, but the contract was relinquished after Burrell acquired it. Welcome Home is currently the only contracted agency for veterans' shelter beds, but VAC is working on getting more beds. VAC is in conversation with Welcome Home, and they appreciate VAC being a part of this.

Stansberry discussed the Opportunity Campus site layout at Bowling Lane and Business Route 70. The site is approximately 5.5 acres and contains two buildings: the shelter building (30,000 square feet) and the resource center (23,000 square feet). The resource center will have leasable tenant space for community partners and a medical clinic. In contrast, the shelter building will have kennels, a dining area, laundry facilities, a pet exam room, and quarantine rooms. The buildings will be made of durable materials, and the RATI space will have natural light.

Thorn inquired about security, and Stansberry informed them that the site would have security, but it would not be openly noticeable to patrons.

Stansberry went over the rendering of the shelter building and its facilities, including parking, dining, sleeping, laundry, showers, kennels, computer lab, mailing services, and secure storage. He also mentioned the case management piece, which will have a robust staff at the opportunity campus to develop relationships with our neighbors experiencing homelessness to take full advantage of the services offered, including employment services. The Resource Center will be accessible from the north, while the shelter facility will have its primary entrance on the south and west side. Additionally, the medical clinic will be open to the entire community, allowing clients to receive medical services as well. The courtyard is built in the center of the Resource Center and accessible to the medical clinic and VAC staff for meetings with clients or team meetings.

Stansberry provided an update on the funding for the Opportunity Campus. They have raised 66% of the funds, which includes a \$6 million state contract. They have also received private funds and a matching grant for the Resource Center. They have pending requests for just under \$7 million. The total cost of the project is expected to be \$18.16 million, with \$10 million for the shelter and \$8.1 million for the Resource Center.

Stansberry discussed the progress of a building project and the challenges faced during the process. They had to obtain additional permits and faced opposition from the community, which they could resolve through a Zoom meeting and a written agreement. They continue engaging with the neighborhood and recruiting for their campaign steering committee. They are also launching the public phase of their private capital campaign to raise \$18 million to build the project. The construction costs are about \$15 million, and they have \$12 million of the \$50 million needed to build it. Site work began in February, and the pads for both buildings are being established. The board and staff have stepped up to 100% participation in the capital campaign.

Stansberry discussed the opportunity to create a comprehensive and collaborative project to help unsheltered people in the community based on housing-first principles. Although there are challenges with affordable housing in the area, there are projects in the pipeline, and the city and county are working to encourage developers to create affordable housing.

Clark asked about requirements to set goals to improve their situation, instead of being a landing place for drunk people on the streets. Stansberry informed that the project has a 90-day limit for staying. Stansberry discussed the difference between low-barrier and no-barrier shelters. The Opportunity campus will be a low-barrier shelter. A no-barrier shelter was moved from Wabash to Wilkes Boulevard Church. Participation in other programs will not be required to have shelter at the Opportunity Campus. While this project is not the end-all solution for homelessness, it is an important piece of the puzzle and can make a huge difference for the community.

Stansberry talked about the operational side of a facility for pets and the policies and

procedures that need to be implemented for it. He talked about how best practices can be implemented to ensure the safety and welfare of the animals. He also discussed the challenges of helping people with substance abuse and mental health issues and how to approach the topic from a primary care setting to form a relationship with the person and guide them towards a path of success. He acknowledged that it may be difficult to reach out to some individuals, but eventually, they may start to see the benefits of the facility and take advantage of the services it offers.

Stansberry acknowledged the Opportunity Campus may give rise to issues like trash, vagrancy, and loitering. However, they have had discussions with the police department on how to deal with these problems. They believe that it will require community will and leadership to clear homeless camps and offer resources for them. Now, when they clear a camp, they can redirect people to the Opportunity Campus rather than the camp just relocating to a new wooded area where they feel secure. The police force needs assistance to tackle this problem, and it is everyone's responsibility to help. The Opportunity Campus is nearby, and the community should know it is available to fill this void.

Stansberry discussed transportation services for the Opportunity Campus; He stated RATI has requested another van as part of their ARPA request. VAC is considering how to handle transportation assets as they come on board and has spoken with the Humane Society about transportation resources for injured animals. The city bus has also created a bus stop for Ashley Street that will move down the hill to the Opportunity Campus location.

Stansberry and the commission discussed various aspects of the facility. These included possibly having an exercise room, a family-friendly room, and a smoking location. They also talked about how meals would be distributed and to whom. Stansberry shared information about the current smoking policy and procedures that RATI uses and suggested adopting similar procedures. He further explained that while they initially planned to have an exercise room as part of the sleeping area, it was no longer feasible. Stansberry said that meal options were still being discussed with the Food Bank and Loaves and Fishes. Currently, the only meals available to the public would be dinner from Loaves and Fishes. Finally, Stansberry assured the commission that additional policies and procedures would be available once they have a better idea of the final construction and opening dates.

V. OLD BUSINESS

Hollis provided an update on the RFP process, including the timeline and services. The plan is to issue the RFP on Monday, July 15th, followed by an info session on Tuesday, July 16th. Letters of intent are required to be submitted by August 28th. Staff will again review proposals for completeness. The process is pretty standard and they have not rejected any proposals for being non-responsive in over 10 years. Hollis outlined the timeline for a proposal review process. The process involves commissioners reviewing proposals, conducting site visits, and making recommendations for contracts. The process begins in July with RFP issued, then site visits scheduled based on letters of intent. Commissioners review proposals in September and October and conduct site visits in September. They discuss their findings in October and make recommendations in November, with contracts and renewals going out by the end of the month. The deadline to return contracts is at the end of November, and they are sent to the City Council for consideration by mid-December.

Hollis discussed new services to be included such as adult literacy programs, English language learning, credit building, and social capital development. He said there are

concerns about the capacity of the public schools to provide adult literacy programs. Credit building and social capital development are deemed necessary, with the latter being an opportunity to develop soft skills. Out-of-school programming will be included based on commission feedback.

Banks moved to approve the RFP. Teagarden-Monk seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

None

VII. REPORTS

A. Housing and Community Development Commission Representative Report

Nguyen said the Commission is discussing the reallocation of unspent 2023 Community Development Block Grant and H.O.M.E. funding. They hope to get an extension from H.U.D to spend the funds and Nguyen will be a part of the reallocation meetings if approved. The funding needs to be used or it will be lost, but typically they can find big enough projects to use it. One example of how they could use it is reallocating to the opportunity campus

B. Staff Report

Hollis said he met with Rebecca Thompson, the City's new Housing and Neighborhood Services Department Director. They had a focused conversation about building a true partnership rather than just going through the motions as co-City departments.

Hollis discussed affordable housing and the homelessness Summit 2.0. They are considering using the pending housing study to inform the discussion. Hollis emphasized the need to now shift new efforts from shelter and harm reduction to affordable housing to prevent warehousing people in the Opportunity Campus. They believe that without addressing the housing crisis, the 90-day stay at the Opportunity Campus will stretch to over 900 days.

Hollis discussed the pallet shelters and clarified that they are not a substitute for proper housing but instead a temporary shelter solution. They cannot be connected to vouchers. Preparing the Ashley Street Center for use of the pallet shelters will require significant infrastructure work which could take around a year to complete. During this time, the City will be heavily involved in the Opportunity Campus Project. The City of Columbia received a proposal from RATI to operate the pallet shelters at the Ashley St. center, as requested by City leadership, and the estimate cost was \$600,000 annually, which they believe is too expensive. However, if the City were to operate the pallet shelters, it would require at least seven employees and that would be a similar or even greater expense. As a result, Hollis wrote an email to leadership suggesting that the funds should be invested in affordable housing instead.

Utterback shared information about her visit to Eden Village in Springfield, which is comprised of tiny homes in a former mobile home park for people experiencing homelessness. The organization provides 400 sq ft homes with food prep, sleeping, and bathing spaces. The community is unapologetically biblical and promotes #God'sproject. They have a community building with a commercial kitchen and shared laundry facilities. The community does not currently take housing vouchers but would be eligible. Utterback prepared a report for City leadership after her visit.

Subsequently, a group of City leadership, including Utterback and the PHHS Assistant Director, visited Eden Village. Eden Village claims to follow a Housing First model but, in reality, only accepts those who they say are ready to be good neighbors, maintain a drug-free and crime-free lifestyle, and pay \$325 monthly rent. The tenants are a mix of people who are either on disability or work part-time, and the program sometimes accepts donations to help tenants in need.

In 2016, the tiny homes at Eden Village were being built for around \$40,000 each. However, the cost has now increased to about \$75,000 per home. The neighborhood is only walkable and does not have any roads for cars. There is a gate to allow emergency vehicles to enter the area. The community encourages people to be good neighbors and help each other out.

Utterback said the organization has committed to opening five more neighborhoods in Springfield and plans to 3D print homes out of concrete. These homes would be fireproof and floodproof and operate as individual tornado shelters. Each 3D-printed home costs around \$100 per square foot, but the 3D printer costs over a million dollars. The company claims to be able to build a 400-square-foot home in about 24 hours if they have the right people on site.

Utterback informed the commission about Project Homeless Connect event happening on July 11th, 2024 at First Baptist Church.

Hollis said a referral module for the Divert program has been integrated into the police RMS system which allows officers to easily refer people to the program. Homeless outreach officers and school resource officers completed training on the module last week. The number of referrals has increased significantly in the pilot phase of the module. A media event is being planned to introduce the Divert program and the homeless outreach team to the community. Hollis stated that CPD is redirecting its downtown officers to be a dedicated homeless outreach team.

Utterback provided an update on the Shower to Empower pilot program. The program ran for ten days and provided between eight and ten showers each time it was open. Due to the success of the pilot, the program will be operated more permanently in 2024 from April - October at the Ashely St. Center. An agreement with CoMo Mobile Aid to operate the program is being developed.

Hollis said the process for improvements the Ashely St. Center is ongoing.

VIII. GENERAL COMMENTS BY PUBLIC, MEMBERS AND STAFF

None

IX. NEXT MEETING DATE

October 8, 2024

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:33 p.m

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