



CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE - SUB-COMMITTEE on Eviction Crisis Plans and Protocols 4/12/2017

Public Safety Subcommittee

Re Eviction Crisis Plans & Protocols

April 12, 2017

Minutes

Public Safety Committee Representative: Councilor David Hartnett (DH)

Additional City Staff: Richard Haesler (RH), City Attorney's Office

Also Present: Donna Walters (Wharf Lane); Sandy Baird (Caroline Legal Clinic); Laura Wilson (Cathedral Square); Sarah Russell (BHA); Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid); Corrine Yonce (VT Affordable Housing); Trine Bech (Attorney); Nadine Scibek (Attorney); Lacey Smith (Street Outreach); Sandra Steingard (Howard Center); Susan Ainsworth-Daniels; Shawn Burke (BPD)

At 5:12 p.m. Councilor Burke commenced the meeting. The attendees were invited to introduce themselves. As scheduled the meeting has been set for presentation by BPD Deputy Chief Shawn Burke and Tammy Boudah of Street Outreach relating how they interface with Housing personnel, their tenants and social service providers in stress and crisis situations. Ms. Boudah being unavailable, Deputy Chief Burke indicates that Ms. Smith is present and will assist.

1. DH: Agenda – Sandy Baird (SBa) moves, DH seconds. Agenda passes unanimously

1. Minutes. Individuals indicate that they were unaware of how to access the minutes on the City website.

DH moves to continue this item to next meeting.

Motion passes unanimously.



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1. Public Forum – no member of the public elects to speak at this time.
2. Committee Discussion – Police and Street Outreach

Shawn Burke (SBu) – describes role – typically now calls for police involvement come in situations where there has already been a significant and demonstrable effort to engage in a plan involving a network of social service providers – and that has now failed in some manner – that’s when we are called.

Laura Wilson (LW) Acknowledges that she has been defiant around use of the title of this committee as focused on eviction – she says evictions are invariably about crisis and/or non-compliance.

SBu: Crisis is where the intersection of Police/street Outreach & Housing Entities occurs.

Jessica Radbord (JR) – How often are you called for welfare check versus violation of law/conflict with others?

SBa: And how often do the welfare checks result in eviction?

SBu: We don’t evict.

SBa: Understood – but I mean is there a link?

SBu: Most of our work is trying to reorient crisis which is not emergency treatment eligible. Note that the lion’s share are not crimes

Sara Russell (SR): street Outreach serves as an excellent bridge – but what are we going to do now without Justin Verette.

SBu: Well Justin was great but he got a better job – but we still have five excellent members and the program will continue to excel.

SR: Just to be clear – when we cal, we are calling to head off potential escalation – eviction is not the goal – prevention is the goal

Lacey Smith (LS): additionally please note that a great majority of disputes between tenants have no criminal element, they



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are just disputes, and we are mediating, trying to keep things from escalating. Frequently they call us because they think we can help.

SBa: And eviction occurs when?

SR: Well sometimes when there is violence – fights; but often after chances and escalation – yes, that can result in eviction

LW: There are warning issued for violating the lease; we try to identify who initiated the conflict – who was responsible – and that person can be issued a warning – sometimes both are.

Trine Bech (TB): How often are child welfare checks initiated by disputing parties?

SBU: No one denies that there are frequent instances of people trying to call the police and make false allegations in order to gain leverage in a personal dispute – it happens in all kinds of situations – and I think we are all trained to try to identify when that is happening – we all want to get it right.

TB: How do we identify the right people – the people who can help – when people are mistrustful it is important to get the right person to be the contact

DH: So this raises an issue that has been bothering me – the Property Managers? What kind of training do they have? Why are they the point of contact for people in crisis?

SR: The Property Manager will take the complaint and refer it to the social worker

DH: But why go to the Property Manager – why not straight to the Social Worker? Also when things are particularly stressed, is there a way to be giving some sort of heads up to BPD?

LS: Outreach does that. Serves that roll.

DH: How often do you give BPD a heads up?



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LS: Can't really say but where we can, we will provide some sort of heads up – that they have a potential situation – and need to involve street outreach if they hear there is a problem

JR: different types of situations – melting down in isolation versus melting down and lashing out.

Donna Walters (DW): We have not figured out how to deal with many of our people when they are in crisis – and I want to point out something about SASH (support and Services in the Home) their postings for job vacancy go unanswered – they cannot fill the positions,

Sandra Steingard (SS): One – there are certain people we just don't know how to help – it's difficult to admit and acknowledge but its true – and there are reasons why we can't fill the positions – not least because the work is hard and the pay is too low.

TB: Maybe what we are not being is effective – example – calling child services – can be an easy way of not dealing with trying to solve the problem – housing retention specialists are not all=ways necessarily helpful

DH: Sarah Russel – that is your job correct? Any response?

SR: I think Housing Retention Specialists are essential for helping these families. I think the goal is always to try to maintain the residency. And if that goal is failing then we are trying to minimize damage – positively working for best outcome.

LW: Yes – some better fit placement – maybe without eviction – so that eviction is never recorded.

DH: How many Housing Retention Specialists at BHA?

SR: Three – partially subsidized by CHT and Cathedral Square and other outside service providers.

DW: Trying to find the right fit

SS: So what we are hearing is a mix of stories where efforts are made and some things work and some things don't



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DH: Seems like three Housing Retention Specialists are not enough

SR" We'd love a City funded position – there is a direct cost saving to keeping people housed

Nadine Scibek (NS): Are you able to get where tenant gets terminated by Section 8 simply for failure to complete certification

SR: Yes – We shifting to social intervention there instead of just administrative – i.e. just sending a form

TB: The paperwork is intimidating

DH: I want to transition – what happens when it has all failed? So let's talk about the 12 or 15 or whatever people who end up getting evicted and they are going to be hitting the streets – Is there a plan? Can we contact Rita Markley at COTs? What?

Losing their vouchers> What can be done? Do they get put on some sort of radar? Does BPD get notice that they are going to be out there?

This is where I want us to pick up next time. Brief discussion of that scenario and then we should start moving to suggestions for proposed findings/best practices/recommendations.

1. Other Business

The group discusses next meeting – agrees that the 27th instead of the 26th will work best and then a final meeting on May 10. 5 to 6:30 for each. RH to find time and send notice.

1. Adjournment

DH motion. Unanimous.





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Meeting Adjourned at 6:31