

MEETING MINUTES

**Town of Waynesville
Task Force on Homelessness**

Thursday, December 3, 2020

5:30 PM—7:00 PM EST

**Locations:
Zoom Meeting (held online in
accordance with CDC and NC
guidelines)**

Meeting Facilitator:	Amy Murphy-Nugen	
TOW TFH Members Roster		
✓ Police Chief David Adams or appointee *Lieutenant Trantham present	Bob Cummings	Neese Morris
✓ Juleah Berliner	✓ Patsy Davis or Brook Smith as proxy	✓ Amy Murphy-Nugen (Chair)
✓ Wanda Brooks	Commissioner Kevin Ensley	✓ Joslyn Schaefer
✓ Dale Burris	✓ Keri Guidry	Alderman Anthony Sutton
✓ Nathan Cartwright	✓ Mandy Hathicox	✓ Brandon Wilson
✓ Sheriff Greg Christopher or appointee	✓ Jon Lynn McDermott	

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen opened the meeting at approximately 5:30 pm, welcoming everyone and conducting the roll call.

Approval of Minutes, October 8, 2020

A motion was made by Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen to approve the meeting minutes from the last meeting on November 5, 2020. Mandy Hathicox made a motion to amend the November 5th minutes to include the involvement of First Methodist, Grace Church, and Churches in Canton in the Cold Grace plan. It was confirmed that the Cold Grace flyer does have the correct information on it with all participating partners. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen will amend the

November 5th meeting minutes and present them for approval at the next Task Force meeting on January 7th, 2021.

Review of Task Force Charge and Timeline

The charge of the Task Force, as defined by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen, was reviewed. The charge of the Task Force is as follows: 1. Research the demographics of persons who are homeless in Waynesville and the causes of homelessness; 2. Examine stigmatization, criminalization, and discrimination associated with homelessness; 3. Conduct a gap analysis to identify needs, existing community capacity, and additional resources necessary to prevent and respond to temporary and chronic homelessness and; 4. Developing a collaborative community action plan to fill system gaps and improve system programs. The guiding principles were presented. The timeline for the Task Force work was reviewed. Through November, December, and January the work groups will continue to collect assigned public data. A research design and protocols are being developed by Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen and MSW intern Hannah Minick; this will mostly involve surveying and interviewing persons who are homeless. Precautions are being taken to protect people who will be involved in surveys and interviews. In January, February, and March, it is anticipated that data collection and listening sessions will continue, moving into gap identification. In April, May, and June, the Task Force will start reporting findings back to the community and receiving feedback. Having data collected and community engagement/input by this time will allow the Task Force to begin drafting the action plan that will be provided to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen in July and August of 2021.

Chair Summary

A detailed summary outlining Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen's activities has been provided to all Task Force members via email. Summary highlights were reviewed during the meeting. Between the last meeting on November 5th and the December 3rd meeting, intensive efforts were made to complete the application for the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services grant for serving justice involved individuals. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen reported that when all the budget numbers were collected, it was realized that it was not feasible to move forward with the grant application. A contributing factor was learning, through the application process, that if only one of the grant strategies was applied for and not both, which is what fit the community's needs, the maximum request was limited to \$250,000 per year as opposed to \$350,000 per year. After getting all information together from community partners, it became clear that it was not feasible to pursue the grant and meet the budgeting requirements of \$250,000. A Task Force member asked what process lessons

could be learned from this experience. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen stated that gathering numbers from agencies prior to writing the narrative for the application narrative was a lesson learned. A positive take-away identified through the process is the fact that multiple people and agencies are interested in collaborating in efforts such as these, paving the way for future opportunities.

Resident Listening Session Summary

Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen reported on the first listening session facilitated with people who live in close proximity to people experiencing homelessness, who have reportedly experienced challenges related to homelessness. The summary of the listening session was sent out to participants who had a week to provide feedback. There were no responses from participants to amend the summary provided. The summary of the listening session was also sent out to Task Force members via email. Highlights from the listening session were reviewed by Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen. Eleven people attended the listening session, not including MSW intern Hannah Minick, Alderman Jon Feichter, and Amy Murphy-Nugen who facilitated the event. Every person who attended the listening session, except for 1 person, was a resident of Hazelwood and/or Waynesville. The listening session began with a question eliciting feedback from participants on what they enjoyed about living in Waynesville and what that looked like. A lot of the initial feedback provided by participants focused on infrastructure issues that did not have to do directly with homelessness. Concerns of residents included dilapidated buildings, roads bring run down and needing maintenance, etc. Particular concerns expressed around homelessness included lack of mental health and substance use services in the county and the lack of inpatient beds available for people who need inpatient treatment. The concept of jails being a place that people could attain sobriety and receive support for substance use issues was discussed by participants. Concerns about the pre-trial release program were also expressed and discussed by participants. Suggestions to include work requirements to hold people "accountable" were also made. Participants also shared concerns regarding composition of the Task Force. Participants expressed concerns that they believe the Task Force is heavily occupied with service providers. Participants were also asked about solutions to challenges, as related to homelessness in our community. One solution that was shared was having a centralized location for people who are unsheltered to be able to go, which is not located in town. Opposition to low-barrier shelters was expressed. Questions about oversight of not-for-profit organizations were also raised. A connection between service providers and 'attracting people who are homeless' was also discussed and a solution identified by the group was to decrease the number of services being offered. Keri Guidry asked why Task Force members do not attend the listening sessions and stated that she thought that it would be better if Task Force members were present. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen clarified that the listening session was designed to elicit feedback from participants and was not intended to be a back and forth conversation, and that a conversation or follow-up conversation including Task Force members is a

possible option for the future if that is something that people are interested in. Wanda Brooks stated she thought there was 'much more emotion' at the listening session and mentioned that 'there is much more emotion' that does not come across in summaries. Joslyn Schaeffer asked the question about how to have community conversations that are balanced and being able to talk to one another without the 'heated emotion' at times, as we do our best thinking when we are not in hyper emotional states. Joslyn asked if there was any information/education provided around the low-barrier shelter to participants at the listening session. Joslyn stated learning about the benefits of low-barrier shelters for towns and business owners has changed her personal perspective. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen acknowledged that one charge of the Task Force through the working groups is to educate the community about the housing continuum from low-barrier to high-barrier shelters. Community education around housing related issues was discussed. The concern of the Task Force not accurately representing 'residents' was stated. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen stated that she is scheduled to share at the next Board of Alderman meeting on Tuesday December 8th. The Chair will be reporting updates on the grant application as well as summarizing the resident listening session. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen stated that she will be sharing the feedback provided, including the thoughts around the charge of the Task Force not encompassing resident concerns.

Information Sharing on Town Website

The next item on the Chair Summary was an update on the option to use the Town of Waynesville website Task Force on Homelessness webpage to provide updates from the Task Force and share information related to the Waynesville community as related to issues of homelessness. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen stated that it has been approved to use the Town webpage to post and share information, including blogs and short videos. Task Force members were asked if anyone was interested in forming a small task group to enhance communication through the county website. Joslyn Schaeffer volunteered to be a part of a group to update information/provide information on the website. Many Hathicox volunteered to help Joslyn and others get information on the webpage. Lieutenant Trantham stated he will also help get information distributed.

Point in Time Count / Police Data Report

Information regarding the planning meeting for the Point in Time count was shared. The planning meeting is scheduled for December 11th. Meeting information for the planning meeting was provided for Task Force members who can volunteer to participate if they would like. Lieutenant Trantham is continuing to provide data to the Task Force, pulled a week at a time. Lieutenant Trantham pulled numbers from the week of November 17th to November 24th. According to the report, 89 encounters with 49 people happened during this week. These numbers are up slightly from the report in October. Calls for both service and

'pro-active' enforcement were made. Out of the 49 people, 23 were convicted felons, 8 were on probation, there were 0 registered sex offenders, 35 people had pending charges, 28 individuals were homeless, and 0 were from out of town. Ten individuals included in the November report were also encountered in October when the same report was pulled. It was highlighted that zero individuals were from out of town, providing preliminary evidence that people who are experiencing homelessness are from our community. Lieutenant Trantham stated that most people he encounters who are currently homeless in Waynesville/Haywood County became homeless while in Haywood County. He reported often hearing from people that they have unmet mental health, physical health and substance use needs and end up unsheltered. Lieutenant Trantham stated that an 'anti-services' approach does not seem to be the answer. Pre-trial release was discussed as it relates to people experiencing homelessness, as well as problems experienced by residents.

Mandy Haithcox raised the point that many of the people experiencing homelessness, such as mothers living in cars with their children for example, are not reflected in the information provided by the Police Department. Mandy stated that if the focus of the Task Force is homelessness, then conceptualizations of who is experiencing homelessness needs to be broadened and include people beyond the 20 or 30 people that are interacting with law enforcement. Joslyn Schaffer raised a question around the Task Force's charge of addressing homelessness versus focusing on decreasing criminality. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen stated that she would provide a summary of these discussions when she speaks to the Board of Alderman on Tuesday December 8th at the board meeting.

Vicky Gribble asked for an update on the Cold Grace plan and Mandy Hathicox provided an update. A summary of the Cold Grace plan was sent to the Task Force and community members via email. Vicky Gribble inquired about where people can go to get warm during the day, even if only for an hour. Keri Guidry stated that the Bethel Resource Center may be a place that people can go for a short amount of time to get warm. It was acknowledged that with the library and Open Door closed, there are few places for people who are experiencing homelessness or do not have permanent shelter, to go to get warm during the day. It was noted that First United Methodist Church has options for showers and food pantry's on certain days and people may be able to stay there for a while.

Work Group Reports Tabled Until January

Given that the Task Force's discussion and agenda ran long, it was decided to review work group reports at the next meeting, January 7th. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen reported on her next steps, which include having a meeting scheduled with the Economic Stability Work Group and Alderman Sutton to begin analyzing the data collected by business owners. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen will also be working to get surveys approved with the hopes of possibly interviewing people who are experiencing homelessness during Point in Time count.

An update was provided by Mountain Projects at the end of the meeting. Patsy Davis reported that 77 people are currently on the Section 8 voucher waitlist who are families. One of Mountain Projects priorities is assisting homeless families. Patsy Davis stated that they are currently overwhelmed with applications and have requested to increase the number of vouchers. Patsy reported that they are concerned about the waitlist and are working on continuing to prioritize people at risk of homelessness and elderly families.

Dale Burris made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Joslyn seconded and the meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Actions Between Now & Next Meeting

Working groups continue to meet, collect, and upload data, and work with Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen regarding any questions or concerns.

For TF members interested in volunteering for the Point in Time Count, mark your calendars and attend the planning meeting on Friday, December 11 at 2:00 PM.

Prepare for Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday January 7, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

Working groups will continue to meet and collect identified data.

Please upload group notes into the shared folder online or send to Chair Murphy-Nugen to post.

Additional Information:

The Task Force on Homelessness is committed to providing opportunities for community feedback.

Community members: Please feel welcome to provide feedback here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TFHSept3Feedback>



Minutes respectfully submitted by Amy Murphy-Nugen on December 10, 2020.

