

# MEETING MINUTES

**Town of Waynesville  
Task Force on Homelessness**

**Thursday, January 7, 2021**

**5:30 PM—7:00 PM EST**

**Location:  
Zoom Meeting (held online in  
accordance with CDC  
guidelines)**

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

## **Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen opened the meeting at approximately 5:35 pm, with welcoming everyone and roll call. The charges of the Task Force and guiding principles were reviewed. The timeline outlining the remaining work of the Task Force was reviewed and defined. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen acknowledged the timeline may be subject to change due to extenuating circumstances related to COVID-19.

## **Approval of Minutes from November 5th and December 3rd, 2020**

A motion was made by Dale Burris to approve the meeting minutes from the November and December meetings. Commissioner Ensley seconded the motion. All voted in favor of approving the minutes and the meeting minutes were approved.

## **Work Group Reports:**

### **Community and Social Connection Work Group**

Keri Guidry reported that the group has not met since the last Task Force meeting due to the holidays. She stated the group has completed a housing resource list, which will be reviewed by the group at their next meeting. The group had no questions about their tasks/charges and/or the work they are doing. The group does not have another meeting scheduled at this time and Keri reported they will be meeting soon.

### **Economic Stability Work Group**

Joslyn Shaffer reported that the group has met once since the last Task Force meeting. Joslyn reported that over 60 responses have been received from the business survey they distributed. Eighteen respondents indicated that they would be interested in having a follow up meeting. About 40 surveys were fully completed. The team feels confident about the number of respondents they have had so far. Interviews are going to be scheduled and conducted with people who said they are willing to have a follow up discussion, providing qualitative data in addition to the qualitative data from the survey responses. Joslyn noted that few respondents reported they had issues with unsheltered people interrupting their work/business. Some respondents did indicate business issues related to people who are unsheltered. The group is still compiling information from the surveys and working to get the data together. Joslyn stated the group spends a lot of time informally discussing why affordable housing is such a challenge in this area. It has come to the groups attention that it is hard to qualify for certain federal grants as a rural community because many grants are specifically for urban centers. Joslyn stated that the group sees a need for community education about why it is so hard to get federal money as well as advocating at local and state levels for rural areas to get more federal funds. The group is developing an affordable housing list. The group recognizes a need for advocating to make Section 8 regulations more feasible for landlords. Joslyn discussed decoupling criminal behavior from unsheltered people. She raised the question: is the intention to help people who are unsheltered, or do they [the town/community] want to reduce criminalization? The group is advocating for another Point In Time count conducted by Task Force in warmer weather. Joslyn reported the group is interested in listening sessions with law enforcement as well as with people who work at not-for-profit organizations. Commissioner Ensley stated that Mountain Projects is working to build affordable housing through the Smoky Mountain Housing partnership. Patsy Davis shared information about Smoky Mountain Housing partnership with the Task Force. One of their objectives is to set up a housing counseling center. Patsy also discussed the goal of converting Section 8 vouchers to homeownership vouchers. Patsy

identified the need for education around homeownership because sometimes an affordable mortgage may be less than paying rent. Patsy stated there is lots of potential through this partnership. The costs of construction and low-income tax credits for affordable housing was discussed by the Task Force. Patsy stated that the first low-income tax credit housing project in Waynesville was on Lee Road. She stated the regulations at that time mandated the units had to be located 3 miles from local amenities. Today, for the same amount of funding, the distance has changed from three miles to one mile, making it very difficult for rural areas. The Task Force discussed difficulties that rural communities face in terms of gaining funding for projects, such as housing projects.

### **Education Work Group**

Patsy Davis reported that she and Bob Cummings have not met since the last task force meeting. She stated that the group is at a standstill in terms of recommendations for the Task Force. Patsy stated that she is going to compile a final report on the group's findings.

### **Eviction/Foreclosure/Crisis Response and Winter Preparation**

Keri Guidry provided an update on Cold Grace. She stated that it has been going as expected. Keri reported that they are able to accept 5 people at Pathways for Cold Grace. Pathways has had between 1-4 individuals sheltering each night; one night they had more than 5 individuals show up and were able to accommodate everyone. The United Methodist Church in Waynesville has sheltered a family who needed it. Helping Hands of Haywood has also been able to help shelter people for Cold Grace through funding hotel rooms. Many hotels in Haywood will not accept Haywood County residents, making it more challenging to find hotel rooms in Waynesville/Haywood County for Cold Grace nights. There are a couple hotels in Waynesville and another hotel in Candler that work with agencies involved with Cold Grace to shelter people. Keri stated that the agencies who provide funding for rooms through Cold Grace have a preexisting relationship with specific hotels/motels that they work with.

### **Health Work Group**

Juleah provided an update from the health work group. The group has met twice since the last Task Force meeting. The group has spent time looking into what health (mental, physical, substance use) resources are available in Waynesville/Haywood County. The group has had providers from Vaya, Appalachian Community Services, and the former Director of the Haywood County Health Department attend meetings and present about their programs/services offered. The group has also asked each provider what they perceive as barriers to accessing services for people who are experiencing homelessness. The group has identified some service gaps. They are going to synthesize and compile their findings at their next meeting on January 18th. The biggest gap that is apparent to the group so far is a lack of dental care services. There are minimal dental resources for people without health insurance in Waynesville/Haywood County. Juleah reported another gap is a lack of primary

care services that can be accessed in the moment. Juleah reported there are few services, outside of urgent care and the emergency room, to meet the acute/immediate needs of people who may need to access services. Challenges in accessing resources through the phone have been identified, for example not being able to talk to a live person, long wait times, having limited minutes on a phone, poor cell reception, among others. Juleah noted that transportation is also a major barrier for people in accessing health services. Juleah reported the group has learned that there are also a lot of health services in Haywood County. It was reported that Meridian and Appalachian Community Services both offer walk in services. Juleah reported 80% of adults that Meridian serves, and 70% of adults that Appalachian Community Services serve have no insurance. The agencies rely on state funding to serve people without insurance. State funding for these services has continually been cut. Juleah stated that people without insurance can have a more challenging time accessing services. The group has learned the importance of people knowing and being connected to a provider who has connections with other providers. These connections are helpful for people needing to access services. Having a single point of entry for people accessing services or designated point persons to help navigate/access resources has also come up as a suggestion by multiple health providers the group has spoken to. The group is curious to see the survey results from people who are experiencing homelessness and the results of those listening sessions. So far, the group primarily has information from a provider's perspective and does not have the perspective of people experiencing homelessness. The Task Force discussed the availability of inpatient beds and the Sheriff Department driving people to Winston-Salem for treatment. The services that Haywood County does have and the systems by which placement is made was also discussed.

### **Chair Summary**

Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen reported that she has attended both the economic stability and health working group meetings since the last Task Force meeting. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen stated that the communications team for the task force has also been created, consisting of Lieutenant Trantham, Joslyn Shaffer, Mandy Haithcox and Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen reported having met with the Assistant Town Manager, Jesse, to discuss the communications plan for the towns website and to ensure a clear understanding from the administration about what they expect from the Task Force. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen has provided an update to the Town of Waynesville administration on progress/anticipated work of the Task Force. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen also stated she has shared results from the resident listening session with the Town of Waynesville. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen has attended the NC Homeless Coalition meetings and is involved in planning for the January Point In Time count. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen has also been involved in sharing information/resources for those facing eviction/foreclosure. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen will be working with economic stability team to analyze the business survey data that has been collected. Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen is currently

preparing the Internal Review Board (IRB) human subjects protocol for the survey that will be conducted with people who are experiencing homelessness. Chair Amy Murphy Nugen asked work groups to think about key stakeholders to invite to the remaining listening sessions. An article regarding homelessness and the Housing First model was assigned for all members to read before the next meeting in February.

### **Additional Considerations**

Towards the end of the meeting, Jon Lynn raised concerns about activities around and police response to Bethel Resource Center. Due to the time constraints of the scheduled meeting, Chair Murphy-Nugen asked if the discussion could be revisited at our February meeting. She also indicated she would follow-up with Lt. Trantham to get more information about possible calls to the location.

Dale Burris made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Jon Lynn seconded and the meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

### **Actions Between Now & Next Meeting**

Task Force members have been asked to think of key stakeholders to invite to the remaining listening sessions. Task Force members have been asked to read a brief article provided by Chair Amy Murphy-Nugen about Finland's Housing First model and how they "ended homelessness". The group will have a discussion at the next meeting. Work groups continue to meet and synthesize data collected up to this point.

January 27<sup>th</sup> is the Housing and Urban Development Point In Time count. The Point In Time count is a coordinated effort and involves some training of volunteer participants. If anyone has interest in participating, please contact Amy Murphy-Nugen or Keri Guidry for more information.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021 from 5:30 p.m-7:00 p.m and will be held on Zoom. Meetings are scheduled for the first Thursday of every month February 4<sup>th</sup>, March 4<sup>th</sup>, April 1<sup>st</sup>, and May 6<sup>th</sup> beginning at 5:30 p.m.

### **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 January 14, 2021.