Autism Commission

Housing Sub-Committee meeting Minutes

January 11, 2016, 1:00pm – 3:00pm

500 Harrison Avenue

Members present were: Dan Burke, Carolyn Kain, Chris Supple, Jane Ryder, Nan Leonard, Kevin Barrett, Lea Hill, Victor Hernandez, Karen Mariscal, Leo Sarkissian, Joseph Valley, Cathy Boyle, Janet George, Ayana Gonzalez, Judith Ursitti and Dianne Lescinskas

There were no members accessing the meeting remotely.

Dan Burke, the Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:05pm and welcomed the members to the meeting of this Sub-Committee. Mr. Burke stated that the meeting was subject to the Open Meeting Law and the minutes from last meeting were reviewed. Chris Supple asked for a change to the draft minutes and Carolyn said she will make the change. Minutes were approved with Cathy Boyle abstaining from the vote. Dan read the redraft of the charge out loud. Nan asked if one sentence could be added to the end of the charge – “based on this review the Housing Sub-Committee will recommend a plan of action.”

Carolyn talked about the role of the sub-committee and the issue of the state budget process, including that the budget of state agencies was a distinct process from the subcommittees making recommendations to the Commission. She also mentioned that it would be beneficial for recommendations to be unanimous and not exclude members of state agencies who would be unable to support recommendations on the state budget. Leo felt that we should be able to take votes with state employees abstaining from the vote. He also said he appreciates that it is early in this process and would like to move forward and get on with the business ahead of us. He said we all know it will take funding to move things forward but we should table this discussion for a later date.

Dan asked if there were any updates. Carolyn said that they are moving forward with the housing survey with TAC and she asked for 3 representatives of this sub-committee to be part of a committee to assist in creating the survey. Leo said it would be great to have a representative from DDS. Carolyn said the discussion with TAC should revolve around the scope of the project. Leo said that he worked with TAC and they are a great group – good choice. Chris asked for clarity on the survey. Is it for physical housing or the need for housing? What is the current stock of housing – there is not a lot out there. Cathy responded that getting the answer to those questions is tricky. Carolyn said we want to identify the levels of housing currently available in the current housing landscape, and what can be expanded to encompass the needs of individuals with ASD.

Leo said we could frame it as follows:

* What do we have now?
* What do we have access to now but are not using?
* What do we need?

He said he would like to extrapolate the information to get to future needs. We would need data on the growth and could get this from DESE, EI, DDS and MassHealth. Carolyn responded that she has been collecting data from EI, DESE, MassHealth and DDS. The newly eligible numbers from DDS is a good start regarding the adult population. Leo said we may need to get a statistical clerk for TAC – maybe UMass has one. Cathy Boyle was mentioned that in Florida they did an assessment of homeless and mental health and found 11% to have ASD. We could then presume Massachusetts to have at least 11% (mental health issues and homeless). A study could be done with a sampling of a discrete group to assess for ASD. Carolyn said that we are also looking at the homelessness issue as it was also raised in the UMass report.

Karen asked how we can assess the current state of housing stock. Ayana said that this is what we need to decide – how to move forward.

Leo said that we need to have a baseline number for low income people and have TAC tell us what percent of people with disabilities they have currently. You can then build around that number and then also look at the growth of ASD and also homelessness – it will be compelling to see the numbers and will provide us with information for long term needs. Carolyn said that she is meeting with the Homeless Alliance and will ask some clarifying questions. What trainings exist in shelters, and how do they connect people with the different state agencies. DMH does go into the shelters and teaches some classes, so using DMH to assist with this process is also a possibility. Ayana responded that DMH is going into shelters to bring in services – they can also look at the needs for people with ASD.

Cathy said that the AQ10 questionnaire (Autism Spectrum Quotation 10) is an interesting screening tool and you can download it for free. Janet said that we should also look at families and homeless shelters. Due to the disruptive nature of some ASD children, families will lose housing and end up in shelters.

Dan asked if there were 3 sub-committee members interested in being on the housing survey committee. Carolyn and Ayana will be on this committee and Nan Leonard, Cathy Boyle and Kevin Barrett volunteered to join the committee.

Nan said that in terms of low income housing we need to drill down to find out what is available. Ayana said that we should ask TAC what is available in terms of housing. Janet said we should look at the gap of affordable and supportive housing. Dan responded with it is a supply and demand issue – what is the commission going to ask for in terms of the need. Leo said that TAC will help with the survey of need then do a second tier assessment for level of support. We need to know the level of support that is needed, and that varies by individual with some need periodic support and others requiring on-going support services. Cathy said yes we need to know the level of support and let them know what can be provided. Leo agreed that there needs to be support services of some kind and we also need to know how to get at long term needs of housing. Leo said we need to ask TAC what they can do in terms of a survey. We need to look at the definition of supportive housing. Cathy said it should be a housing stock survey and then take the survey and tweak it for the support question. Leo said we need to find out how much stock is out there and TAC can help us figure that out. Based on that response, we can look at the type of housing needed.

Janet said that SSI will have some data but it doesn’t mean it is the basis of why they receive SSI - it is not a clean data set. Carolyn said that MRC has data but it could be an overlap from the DESE numbers.

Cathy said that we also want to capture the population that is employed and can hold down a job but may not be able to work a full week. They still need affordable housing. We also need to know the number of families in shelters. Karen asked if we could see the data that we have currently and can we put it all together. Leo said that he was willing to look at the data with Carolyn. Carolyn asked if any other members would be willing to help with that analysis.

Ayana said that they are working on the Olmstead process with TAC and they are gathering data and analyzing it. We can pull the data we currently have and give to TAC for analysis. Carolyn said she would share the data she has with TAC at their meeting.

Leo said that the sub-group of this subcommittee could meet with Carolyn to walk through the data and look at the source of data as well as the growth. Carolyn said she has the DESE data from 2003-2015 and could use some help analyzing it. Leo said we could walk through the data and then give it to TAC.

Janet responded that no one data set is clean and it will have duplicates. Cathy asked which data set has the largest number of ASD – MassHealth.

Victor said that we are creating more work here and with Olmstead we are developing the questions first for the survey and it will cover most disabilities. Ayana said the Olmstead survey is going to state agencies and the questions are about demand and capacity. Leo said that this could be a good way to go after our survey.

Cathy said if we look at the DESE data, the numbers the cleanest numbers are at age 17, after graduation the numbers go down. We could look at the data by age instead of grade level; we may miss people but it is a large number. Leo responded that you can do both – look at the data number and propose questions like in Olmstead planning. We could try one data set and assess what makes sense and then move forward. Chris said that the statute says we need to determine the stock to meet the needs and then come up with a plan of action.

Janet said as for data we know the prevalence and the trend and you know there is a diversity of need. It is a funding problem. We can find out how many are in intensive situations coming out of school districts. Leo responded that the information could come from Turning 22 – you will get a sense of who you will have to serve and then figure out the simplest way to get data on the rest.

Cathy said there are three buckets here:

* Intensive needs
* Homelessness
* Middle

We know the data for group one but not group 2. We can make and inference on group 3.

Ayana said that there is a danger in making this too complex – we need to get the survey done. As the housing person on this committee, I want to know what we need to build, where and the design – we are not talking about these points. Currently we have sensory units in our newer developments. If we show the demand it will get done.

Ayana gave an update on HUD811 – the draft is done and the new language with autism has been approved by EOHHS.

Cathy gave an update on the Home Loan Modification Program – they met on Monday to discuss the language. The change in the language will make it explicit for the use of accessory units and will also say that up to 10% of grants will be given to landlords to make necessary changes. Ayana said that the guidelines are not written yet and the grant will be tied to homelessness and families. It still has to make it through your local zoning (town). Janet asked that if this passes could people use the home loan modification to help pay for some of it and Ayana responded yes.

**Think Tank**

Cathy Boyle gave an overview of the draft white paper report on the Think Tank. (See attached)

Dan asked if everyone saw the UMass Medical report that Carolyn had sent out. There is a section on housing that this sub-committee should review prior to our next meeting and then we can discuss.

The next meeting was scheduled for March 15th from 1:00-3:00pm and will be located at 500 Harrison Avenue. Carolyn will reach out to TAC to schedule a meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:00pm.