Autism Commission

Housing Subcommittee meeting Minutes

December 2, 2020 1:00p.m. –3:00 p.m.

Via Zoom

Members present: Dan Burke (co-chair), Bronia Clifton (co-chair), Carolyn Kain, Dianne Lescinskas, Victor Hernandez, David Kaplan, Kathy Ohman, Michael Scarelle, Leo Sarkissian, Colleen Mulligan, Lea Hill, Lauren Solotar, Catherine Boyle, Joe Vallely, Michelle Harris and Chris Supple

Dan Burke called the meeting to order and welcomed the members to the meeting of this Subcommittee. Mr. Burke stated that the meeting was subject to the Open Meeting Law and that the Subcommittee members would need to vote to approve the remote participation. Remote access was approved unanimously.

**DDS Update on Projects**

*Presentation by Forward at the Rock*

Forward at the Rock is located in Dennis, MA, is a duplex (2 homes) on 5 acres and each home has four adults and is staffed by Cape Abilities.

*Highlights*

* The homes are currently occupied and 8 residents moved in September/October 2020
* Project began 7 years ago
* This project began with land, given by the Town of Dennis and it took several years to get certifications from DDS – lessons learned – better to go to DDS initially, then get the land
* Housing Corp. helped with grant funding
* Raised more than one million dollars from 6 CPC’s across the Cape
* 2018 received one million dollars in state grants through DHCD
* The lease language allows for future buildings
* Total cost was $2.7 million
* A large portion of the cost went to infrastructure – very long driveway with piping added to the cost

*Details*

* Each home has 4 bedrooms and 2.5 bathrooms
* Shared bathroom but each bathroom has two separate sinks and 2 linen closets
* Office is in the front of the home with glass doors and clear views to back of the home
* Mudroom with cubbies at the entrance
* Wainscoting throughout home -added soundproofing and wall protection
* Each bedroom has its own HVAC for temperature control and extra insulation for noise control
* Large closets with shelving and automatic lighting when doors open
* Wall hung toilet
* Flooring is tile but looks like wood to add warmth to the home
* Materials used do not have much contrast – neutral colors - so transition between spaces is not abrupt
* ADA compliant
* 600+ feet of fencing around the home
* Walking trail around the property and additional walking trails nearby
* One mile from Dennis Village where there is shopping, theatre, ice cream shops, grocery stores.
* A few miles from Rt.6 where there is a shopping plaza
* During planning phase, they reached out to community to establish relationships

 *Presentation by Cape Abilities*

* Two separate group homes with 2 managers
* Each home has their own staff
* One home is occupied by younger individuals and the other has individuals with some mobile challenges
* ALEC training for local first responders – 2 hour training at the local police station

**Other potential projects- Dan Burke**

* Working with Greater Boston Area Office on a 2 family home in Dedham with 2 bedrooms in each apartment for ages 22-26 young autistic adults
* Using some of the same ideas/materials as the homes in Dennis
* Not a 24 hour supported home but 15-25 hours per week of support

**Affordable Housing Update- Bronia Clifton**

*Eviction Resource Update*

* The state stepped in to divert more funds to prevent homelessness
* Mass 211 line for individuals falling into homelessness 877-211-MASS
* The phone line is for individuals in crisis and they will get referred to the correct agency for assistance
* RAFT - Residential Assistance for Families in Transition – court summons for eviction – an individual can get up to $4,000 in assistance – this was expanded in mid-October to up to 10,000 in assistance
* This could potentially serve up to 14,000 families and is used for cases where the eviction is caused by COVID situation (lost job etc.)

*Tenancy Preservation Program*

* Preserve tenancy related to a household with individual with a disability and emergency assistance for frail elders
* Assistance in Housing Court
* 12 million designated for legal assistance
* Federal relief is needed in every state to help prevent homelessness

Ms. Clifton will email this information to subcommittee members and it was asked that it be added to the DDS Support Center websites. Mr. Hernandez has added the Eviction Aversion Initiative information to the DDS website.

**Status of Subcommittee Goals**

Mr. Supple asked if subcommittee members could focus on data – to calculate the number of ASD individuals under age 22 to then help forecast who may need affordable supportive housing after turning 22. DDS has a priority system based on needs and we need to look beyond residential placement but also the 688 process so we do not understate the need of affordable supportive housing.

* DESE data (from 2003) had been previously sent to subcommittee members with primary and secondary diagnosis of ASD
* Subcommittee will revisit data and statutory charge of the Autism Commission and discuss at the next meeting

*Outreach and Data for Homeless Population*

* Due to COVID the Point in Time Count will not be done this year but will continue in 2022 – deeper dive into this survey next year
* Connect with staff from shelters and look at the impact of COVID

*Status of Hogan*

* DDS will give an update at the next meeting

**Next Meeting**

* Implications of pandemic on designs for future construction – ventilation, filters, more outdoor space, additional bathrooms (or shower in half bath) to assist with isolation if someone is sick and they only have a shared bathroom
* Alternative models to meet the needs at Hogan - Hogan was hit hard during the pandemic

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.