



TOWN COUNCIL  
Committee to Assess Homelessness in the Town of Barnstable

Selectmen's Conference Room

January 2, 2018

6:00pm

MEETING MINUTES

**I. BUSINESS**

**A. Roll Call:**

**Members present:** Chair of Committee Councilor Jennifer Cullum; Councilor John G. Flores; Councilor Debra Dagwan; Member at Large, Deb Krau; Councilor Britt Beedenbender; **Others in attendance:** Paul MacDonald, Chief, Barnstable Police; LT Jeanie Challies, Barnstable Police; Mark . Ells, Town Manager **ABSENT:** Vice President of the Council, James H. Crocker Jr.

Chair of the Committee opened up the meeting at 6:05, welcoming Mr. Yunits from the County. Chair of the Committee asked for public comment, seeing none, Chair of the Committee opened up with discussion regarding the homeless issues in Hyannis. Chair of the Committee asked Mr. Yunits about the plans of the County and how they may be addressing the homeless population. Mr. Yunits stated this is not a problem that has an easy fix. The County has a Coordinated Entry Program, so that we can identify these individuals and get them the services they need whether it is on Cape or off Cape. Mr. Yunits described the programs that the county uses for placement, and a lot of the time the placement is off Cape and not here. Paula Schnepf is the coordinator for the entry placement and the Coalition, the continuum care from the State is still coming in and do not expect the amount to go down, in fact he expects it will go up. Mr. Yunits described when he was in Brockton and when he noticed himself the problem start in the 1990's when the State shut down their mental health facilities and opened the doors and let these individuals out with nowhere to go, that, he believes is when this started, and with no facilities to go to today, and the lack of communication between the agencies that are providing the help, then you end up with the problems we have today; Mr. Yunits agrees with this Committee with regards to getting all the other communities on Cape Cod to join forces and combat the problem together, because you are correct in saying that this is not just a Hyannis issue and your shelter in Hyannis should not be the only one taking care of these individuals, the answer is not an easy one, however he, as a County Administrator will reach out to the Cape Cod Commission or getting someone from the State level to listen to us.

Chair of the Committee asked if there was any sort of a commitment from the County on this problem; Mr. Yunits stated we want to help in this area and want to make it happen, but we need suggestions from you all to find the solutions, we welcome any ideas. Mr. Yunits stated that Falmouth has a Coordinator, Duffy seems to be coordinating those from the Outer Cape areas that do not have easy access to services, but he understands they are coordinating that effort, so possibly a consideration of the Town partnering with the Duffy Center to do some sort of outreach with them might also help your efforts.

Chair of Committee Councilor Jennifer Cullum stated that the current model of the Duffy Center is one that actually draws the individuals to Hyannis, and that is what this Committee is trying to fix; out of all the services we have, it is a business model that is if you want more funding, then bring more customers. Ms. Nelson has been here to this Committee much like yourself, to discuss the very same

topic that is being discussed tonight, and the business model is bring more here, you will receive more funding.

Ms. Krau stated that one of the challenges she has and actually issues with the whole issue is an actual phone number that is operating 24-7. One of the biggest challenges here on the Cape is the Social Services are a 9 to 5 operation Monday through Friday, there is not any accountability on weekends and holidays past 5pm or Monday through Friday for that matter after 5pm, there is no number to call to say, I have a person in crisis; we then have to rely on our police to take that call after 5; Other areas in Massachusetts in a Coordinated Entry system have that resource, which actually sends an alert out to other agencies in the same area, that an individual needs help. Mr. Yunits asked our current system does not have that, Ms. Krau stated no, after 5 there is no one to contact. Ms. Krau would like to see one number to call for individuals. Mr. Yunits will see what he can do to get that started and make sure there is one place. SGT. Ellis stated she would love to see that as well, seeing that our shelter here is at its capacity and there is no more room currently, but we still receive calls and still need places to send these individuals when needed, we as police officers should not have to dig into our pockets on a very cold night when we have someone who needs shelter to put them up in a hotel for the night so they do not freeze to death, we should be able to call a number and get a bed somewhere, and right now we can't do that. This is a Regional problem that needs Regional funding and a Regional plan put in place, this should not be the Barnstable Police problem, this is Cape wide, but they are brought here for us to handle and fix. It is way beyond the Police department. SGT. Ellis also stated that the Homeless not Hopeless is just a statement, and sees nothing that any of these Agencies who receive funding for this issue are stepping up and helping anything, they just call us, we as the Police are not the Social Service Entry Coordinating system, we are taxed and spread out too thin as it is now.

Ms. Krau also had concerns when she heard that the Social Service agencies called our Town Manager regarding expanding the Homeless Shelter here in Hyannis, the answer is not expansion, the answer is open up another facility somewhere else besides Hyannis. Mark Ells, Town Manager explained that particular phone call and his okay to do that, it was on a very cold night and there was nowhere for some of these individuals to go, so we have to do the right thing and consider it at the time, it was not going to be a permanent expansion discussion, however we as a Town have to do the right thing when it comes to cold and human life. Ms. Krau agreed and stated that is what she would like as well, and did not want others to think that she was not being supportive of the situation.

Ms. Krau asked the question again about the number because she had concern when it was mentioned that during the day it is covered; during the day it is not covered so to speak, because it all comes down to whichever officer comes upon or has someone who needs help during the day hours it is who that officer knows, or they call SGT Ellis and say who do you know we can call to get these people help, so there really is not a number that anyone can call during the day hours, and that is what she would like to see, is one number when there is an individual in trouble, and that ne number and the call placed gets the ball rolling in the social service agencies to have them coordinate the help and not our police. Town Manager Mark Ells liked the idea and offered any help to Mr. Yunits to get that started.

Mr. Yunits asked if that one number would help the police out at all, Chief MacDonald answered yes, tremendously. Hair of the Committee stated we have a lot of social service agencies just in the village of Hyannis, but the problem is they are all splintered and chase the same grants and the same funding source for the same pool of money, none of the efforts of coordinating happens, that is one of the main reasons that this Committee was formed to be able to get a Coordinated position together to coordinate all that we are talking about tonight. Mr. Yunits asked if anyone else has been here from any of the Social Service agencies to meet with you folks and get everyone on the same table. Chair of the Committee Councilor Jennifer Cullum stated, yes we have had Beth Alberts in here to talk about this issue as well, and we have had Ms. Nelson from the Duffy Center, and we have had Catholic Social Services here, so there have been a number of agencies represented at these meetings, but never a mention about coordinating all their efforts into one effort.

Councilor Flores asked about the calendar going forward in 2018, what is this Committees plan, and we need concrete results, so if we can drill down to a goal on what we want for 2018 would be very

helpful. Councilor Flores asked about the last time we did a survey of any kind to find out where some of these individuals arrive from, all they all from the Cape?

**ADJOURN:** 7:00pm

**NEXT MEETING:** December 18, 2017 at 6pm Selectmen's Conference Room