



MINUTES
Ad Hoc on Homelessness & Solutions
Tuesday, February 28, 2023 @ 3:30 p.m.
City Council Conference Room, 10th Floor City Hall

CALL TO ORDER

Council Member Brown called the meeting to order at 3:30pm

PRESENT

Council Member Jeffrey Brown, Chair
Council Member Adam Hussain, Vice Chair
Council Member Patricia Spitzley, - excused

OTHERS PRESENT

Renee Richmond, Council Staff
Lisa Hagen-Lawrence, OCA
Matt Staples, OCA
Jennifer West, LSD
Rose Taphouse, LSD
Belinda Fitzpatrick
Jason Gray, Seventh Day Homelessness Outreach Advocates
Ulices Rosa – 54A District Court Advocacy
Jody Washington
David (guest)
Daniel Arnold,
Gabriel Biber, Haven House
Tamera Carter, Lake Trust CU
Tessa Reeves, Lake Trust CU
Julie Reinhardt, Downtown Lansing Inc
Linda Appling
Gail Sawyer

MINUTES

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER HUSSAIN TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 24, 2023, AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED 2-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Arnold introduced himself and is attendee to listen and take information back to the streets.

Ms. Carter stated she works at Lake Trust CU and have members that encounter roadblocks and experiences with landlords and is attendee to listen and share information.

Ms. Washington stated she brought a guest to share his story and that she intended to bring guest to future meetings as well so the committee could hear their stories.

David stated he is nervous talking in front of groups but has gone from tent to tent, been homeless on the streets, and in shelters and now has a place and goes to the doctors at CMH or New Hope, but they cancel his appointments repeatedly. He doesn't believe the agencies are there to help, it takes 4-6 weeks to get a return call, adding that he feels he talks to someone different each time and has to start all over again. Ms. Washington asked him to speak on his transportation issues. David stated he can't get a bus pass because he needs the bus to get money, they say they will help him but he said they don't.

Councilmember Brown thanked him for sharing and asked what he would say is causing his struggle, is it not working. David said he is not working and the agencies don't seem to want to help him and I have to walk. Councilmember Hussain thanked David for sharing his story and for being nervous said he did very well.

Mr. Biber stated he is from Haven House in East Lansing and wanted to listen to the presentations and see how they could help.

Ms. Appling stated she lives in the City of Lansing in Eaton County and urged the Committee not to forget those that are in Eaton County. She continued that everyone always talks about Ingham and not Eaton. Ms. Appling mentioned that assisting people and allowing them to put money into escrow may encourage landlords into doing repairs, as well as adding that legal representation for those being evicted is needed.

PRESENTATIONS

PRESENTATION – Lansing School District

Ms. West stated she has been with the LSD for 23 years and a resident of Lansing for three decades on the southside, Ms. Taphouse stated she has been with LSD for 28 years. Councilmember Brown asked that they explain what their program is. Ms. West spoke on the following and handed out cards with the information and a QR Code:

The Families Overcoming Rough Times (F.O.R.T.) Program is a new program that assists Lansing School District students who are living in temporary or inadequate living situations.

The F.O.R.T. Program assists qualified students with:

- transportation to and from school from wherever the student is living
- access to the free meals programs at the school
- uniforms and clothing necessary for the child to attend and participate in school
- school supplies to the student
- cap and gown so they may participate in graduation commencement
- enrolling students within 24 hours even when the student does not have birth certificate and other vital record
- & many other needs that the student may need so that they may fully participate and achieve at school

Ms. West continued that in a typical they see maybe 500 cases in a full year, but into February already of 2023 and it is between 500-600 already in temporary or no housing. They are seeing a lot on the streets and try to get them connected with hotels, or like the Advent House. They are doing summer camps to build resilience to the trauma they see, education support, and mental health support for students as well as staff. Ms. West referenced a large packeted, stating that even to access free mental health they have to read all this first and that is a barrier along with transportation, bus passes, clothing, food, etc. the list goes on.

Ms. Taphouse concurred and added that the program gives them a chance to graduate, go to college, and be successful. Laundry is also a hurdle because hotels don't have access for that, some families don't speak English or read and the communication is difficult so we've started providing cell phones when we can.

Ms. West talked about families losing their house and being red tagged, losing jobs, domestic violence, and the older siblings are couch surfing and then the absences rise and even just missing two days a month is astronomical with a child. Councilmember Hussain spoke that the numbers are catastrophic and they see it in his school district but not to that extent, there is a need for affordable housing and to take this regionally as well as in the city. Ms. West indicated they are doing gas cards when they can, the best outcome is if they can stay in the district they started even if they temporarily move out so they don't have to make new friends, adjust to different teaching.

Councilmember Hussain informed the group that the committee's intention for the first few months is to listen to the presentations and then maybe locally through ordinance, budgetary, or community partners come up with a solution and report out to Council in September.

Ms. West continued that they are probably under reporting the amount, and Ms. Taphouse added that they have the opportunity to identify those at risk but parents are protecting their kids and finding shelter on their own and then are no longer eligible for assistance. Ms. West finished that at the end of the day they are an education entity and are doing everything they can to remove barriers, they do not hire mental health professionals but are contracting those services. Councilmember Brown asked Ms. West if they could send that list of providers to them, and they agreed.

PRESENTATION – Seventh Day Homelessness Outreach Advocates

Mr. Gray started the homeless outreach in 2017 with Greg Pratt, he was discharged from the Army and after two years got addicted to pain medication, hit rock bottom, and then found Christ. He had everything to be happy about, wife and kids and then was homeless, saying it can happen to anybody. He continued he is a vet and has trouble getting mental health, if the VA says they don't have the resources, then who does.

Councilmember Brown as an advocate on a typical week what services and obstacles do you see. Mr. Gray responded they handout sleeping bags, food, wood, call ahead for shelters to get beds. One struggle recently during the code blue is turning people away. He indicated he went 'under cover' and Holy Cross denied him and then dodged his calls when he followed up. Councilmember Brown asked if they had beds available during the code blue, and Mr. Gray said they told him no. Hotels aren't any options for homeless so they end up in red tagged homes, under bridges, in parks all places they can't be, and that he is currently trying to get tents but they are expensive.

Councilmember Hussain thanked Mr. Gray and stated that himself, Councilmember Brown, and Mr. Pratt sat down and discussed a few things. Speaking generally he is wondering what the biggest issue is, whether HMIS, mental health services, service providers, etc.

Councilmember Brown thanks Mr. Gray for coming and speaking to the committee.

DISCUSSION/ACTION

DISCUSSION – Committee Intentions

Councilmember Hussain asked if items for the next meeting have been determined. Ms. Richmond indicated that Sparrow Hospital and Cardboard Prophets have confirmed and McLaren is still pending. Councilmember Brown mentioned the next meeting is March 14th, and the schedule is the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month.

OTHER

Ms. Reeves spoke that this is dear to her heart and that she was homeless at one point, a teenage single mother and still hearing the same problems of no resources. Councilmember Brown asked what her biggest barriers, Ms. Reeves stated judgement that people had toward her and transportation as she would need a job near the bus route and sometimes had to take three different buses.

Councilmember Brown lastly questioned what training of soft skills are being done for the providers, everyone gets burnt out and it leaves a negative impact, are they just processing the numbers.

ADJOURN

Adjourned at 4:53pm

Submitted by

Renee Richmond, Recording Secretary

Lansing City Council

Approved by the Committee on March 14, 2023