



HOUSING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY February 17, 2017

Disclaimer: A good faith effort was made to summarize the notes as presented. Please review and provide any clarifications and corrections to Debra McLaughlin at debmc@opioidtaskforce.org as it is important to capture all the good ideas and rich discussion accurately.

ATTENDANCE Note: All names are listed in alphabetical order by last name by category. If you do not see your name or if there are errors, please email tess@opioidtaskforce.org as we would like to get your name and affiliation correction. Thank you!

OTF Co-Chairs

Chris Donelan – Franklin County Sheriff; and **John Merrigan** – Register of Probate

Panel Moderator and Guests

Maureen Cavanagh – Magnolia New Beginnings; **Ben Cluff** – DPH, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services; **Shawn Hayden** – GAAMHA; and Dr. **Ruth Potee**, Valley Medical Group

Housing and Workforce Development Committee Members

MJ Adams – Town of Greenfield; **Sarah Ahern** – End of the Stigma; **Emily Ballard** – RECOVER Project; **Penelope Davis**; **Jenna Day**; **Dan Finn** – Greenfield Housing Authority; **Devon de Korver** – Firebird; **Alyssa Larose** – FRCOG; **Eric Fay**; **Marisa Hebble** – Executive Office of the Trial Court; **Michael Lewis** – RECOVER Project; **Helen Lincoln** – Service Net; **Jerry Lund** – Learn to Cope; **Justin McNary** – BHN; **Tracy Miner** – Franklin County Regional Housing Authority; **Helen Lincoln** – ServiceNet; **Linda Sarage**; **Emily Mortimer** – Western MA RLC; **Kereen Rennis** - Two Rivers Center for Women; **Sandy Sayers** – United Way of Franklin County; **Heather Taylor** – RECOVER Project; **Don Wright** – Pond Street House

OTF Staff

Debra McLaughlin – OTF Coordinator; **Tess Jurgensen** – Administrative Coordinator; **Deb Neubauer** – Treatment and Recovery Coordinator; and **Peggy Vezina** – Community Resources Coordinator

1. Welcome and Introductions – Debra McLaughlin, Coordinator, Opioid Task Force

McLaughlin welcomed the group in her new role as the Opioid Task Force Coordinator. The goal of today's meeting is to explore why sober housing matters and listen to those who have been doing this work for lessons learned and best practices. McLaughlin turned it over to Dr. Ruth Potee.

2. Overview – Why Sober Housing Matters – Dr. Ruth Potee, Valley Medical Group

Dr. Potee said that of the advances that has been made in the region to address the impact of the opioid crisis, sober housing remains a challenge for the community to address. She has seen people who have been successful in their recovery but become at risk of relapse or do relapse because lack of sober housing is available to them. Dr. Potee is aware of community resources, such as the Housing Rehab Program, offered by Sheriff Donelan through the Franklin County House of Correction but barriers exist to identifying available housing stock that can be rehabbed.

The panelists gathered today will provide insight into the challenges and opportunities in creating sober housing; lessons learned and best practices for our region to consider.

3. The Challenge and the Opportunity in Creating Sober Housing – Lessons Learned

Benjamin Cluff, Veterans' Services Coordinator, DPH BSAS

- Frustration around implementing sober housing has been intense state-wide
- Oxford model is an example of "self-sustaining housing"
- Finding the right number of folks in recovery at the same place, same time while real-estate is available has been an ongoing challenge
- BSAS has developed guidelines of common elements that usually exist in quality sober house (i.e. structure, informal sponsorship, staff oversight) – **Ben can share more info upon request**
- Involving lawyers who can advise about tenant-landlord law is critical
- Legislation passed several years ago that charged BSAS with overseeing voluntary certification of sober houses (see handout)
 - Visit www.MASHsoberhousing.org for more information.
 - Second portion of legislation discusses the role state agencies must play in referring to certified sober homes

Shawn Hayden, Chief Operating Officer, GAAMHA

- GAAMHA is a 501c3 non-profit in Gardner, MA
 - www.gaamha.org
- GAAMHA Transit
- Operates Pathway House and Pathway Supportive Housing
 - For adult men with case manager on staff
- Own a for-profit corporation called "homeless?) *look up
 - Many employees are in recovery
 - Allows GAAMHA to self-fund and provide additional opportunities
 - Contract packaging assembly company
 - Employees receive benefits and make a sustainable living wage
- GAAMHA sober-housing model: have two open facilities (10 beds each) typically serves as a post-graduate model
 - Over last two fiscal years people who entered GAAMHA sober housing 83% had a year's sobriety

- Long-term effective tools we have (social connections, physical health, peer connections, MAT) are critical but none of them act as light switches. These therapies take time to gain true effectiveness
 - Sober-housing can be the opportunity to create this window, life experiences are key
 - These can become added challenges for people in recovery
 - Peer-support and stability are incredibly important during transitional phase
- Working on establishing first female sober-house in Gardner
- Recently purchased historical building in Gardner (12 studio apartments for people in recovery)
- GAAMHA models try to encourage permanent, affordable sober housing while allowing participants to progress in other life goals (i.e. having a job, etc.)
- Community connections are key to the success of sober-housing
- Individuals enrolled in GAAMHA programs receive support to connect to outside providers (behavioral health providers, community health centers, employment, etc.)
- BSAS guidelines are important to adhere to
- Get creative in terms of finance and social enterprise – allows avoiding reliance on state funding (i.e. working in historical building, seeking outside funding, grant funding, etc.).
 - Shawn and Ben can generate list of places to inquire in terms of creative financing
- How can we transform existing vacant housing in Franklin County?

Maureen Cavanagh

- Founder of Magnolia New Beginnings
 - www.magnolianewbeginnings.org
- Magnolia New Beginnings offers support, information and advocacy (any supports for families or individuals in recovery)
 - Used closed and open Facebook pages
 - 26 separate state groups (some open, some require acceptance) – based on peer support. Groups allow participants to communicate, vent, ask questions
 - Grandparent groups, information about Section 35 – enormous amount of information
- Financial purpose is to give scholarships to people for first month of sober-housing
 - Barrier: how do you come out of 60 day halfway house with no job and pay for sober housing?
- Partner with treatment centers, case managers and clinicians who write letter accompanied by letter of client – letters go to head of male/female family funds (currently have 4 families who have individual funds)
 - Letter explains about clients life and why this is their shot
 - Applicants must have no financial means but must be ready, able and willing to get a job
 - Person is then placed in sober-living house, existing relationships allow for waiving of fees, etc. (all are on MASH housing list)
- Everyone benefits from this model (treatment centers, sober-houses, clients, families)
- All volunteer-based
- How can we work towards including sober-housing in insurance?
- Without safe, supportive place to live all other challenges in life are too great to overcome – must have roof over your head

4. Audience Q & A – Facilitated by Dr. Ruth Potee

- Justin McNary: Investments are critical aspect of solving Housing and Workforce Development Issues. How can we help young adults with no previous employment experience get jobs?
 - Continuum of care is essential (it's all connected)
- Peggy Vezina: Oversight of recovery homes is complex, exacerbated for women in recovery with children (reunification, don't qualify for certain apartments) housing for women with children is a barrier
 - Ben: From BSAS perspective – there is money provided to various agencies for case management, women and children in subsidized apartments (currently in Worcester, Pittsfield and Holyoke) must have been homeless and be in recovery and have income eligibility
 - They do exist but there aren't enough. Central intake to apply for such homes 617 661 3991 ask for Community Housing (subsidized housing for women and children), will lead to IHR
- Devon de Korver: services for single women in treatment, looking for transitional housing is barrier
 - Firebird 5k tries to address this gap
- Sarah Ahern: Why is the Mass Certification Process voluntary? Is there a move to make it mandatory?
 - Ben: Voluntary nature is so that BSAS doesn't have to worry about monitoring all sober-housing in Commonwealth i.e. encouraging self-selection
 - Numbers of sober homes in Massachusetts is constantly changing
 - If insurance doesn't reimburse for certain homes, this is a red flag (insurance becomes own screening method)
- Eric Fahey: Cash to get started is the problem (can't move forward without cash to build from). MASH has certified 140 homes in less than one year. Self-funding is important because it creates sustainability
 - Insert NARR website here
- MJ Adams: Mayor's office has been working with folks in recovery to address sober housing – has several efforts already happening but we need to increase our efforts
 - Mayor's office keeps track of housing units in Greenfield that are underutilized. Would love to find efforts for non-profits to find ways to use these units (we have housing stock, need working group to make this bridge)
 - City Hall plays huge role in this
- John Merrigan – we need GAAMHA here, unless directors and agencies take this effort on it's not going to happen
 - It's going to take agency with experience, effort and fire to get it done (bigger organized entity to take lead)
- Devon de Korver: Firebird is working with Sage Housing – applying for CCRI grant
 - Race is on June 3rd visit RunReg.com and insert Facebook page
- Don Wright: How do we create safety net for people in the meantime?
 - Guy from Greenfield Housing : Property on Deerfield Street, other properties that might be able to be used as a step-up program
 - FCRHA: Encourage legislators to continue to support RAFT program - <http://www.mass.gov/hed/housing/stabilization/residential-assistance-for-families-in-transition.html>
- Heather Taylor: Staff in treatment/half way houses are not supporting participants in application process

5. How Can We Do It Here? Small Group Work – Facilitated by Debra McLaughlin

McLaughlin said the next 30 minutes would be devoted to small group work. Each group is to work on the question **“How can we increase the supply of sober housing in the region?”** Each group would have a note taker and a facilitator. After 30 minutes, each small group would share their top priority item with the larger group.

Listed below is a summary of the discussion and suggested action items for each of the four working groups.

HOW CAN WE INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF SOBER HOUSING IN THE REGION?

GROUP 1

Small Group Attendees: Emily Ballard, Penelope Davis, Tess Jurgensen, Dr. Ruth Potee, Don Wright + two people that need to be identified

Note Taker: Tess Jurgensen

Discussion Notes:

- How can we find landlords who are willing to undertake these issues? Social enterprise is huge
- *Meridian has expanded to include more than developmental issues – we need to daydream and then figure out how to make it a reality
- Who has to be at table to build GAAMHA like organization? (need someone with money, someone with ideas, someone who can manage logistics)
- Bring CDC in Franklin County to the table
- CEOs of all Service Agencies – who in your companies is housing and employment person? (CSO, CHD, ServiceNet, BHN, Community Action, CDC, FRCOG, Greenfield Housing Development, Hampshire county, Mayors office, community element)
- How can we capitalize on what is already here? (Historical Building)
- How we can not only create a sober home, but create neighborhood
- Put it out to public that this is an issue and that it can't be ignored
- Use My Turn in Greenfield Recorder about issue of sober housing to put the idea out there
- Who has case management for sober living to get this up and running?
- Housing specialist is available at RP

Potential Action Steps:

- Doing it all ourselves from scratch and getting folks like GAMMA to come here
- Notion of multiple Oxford homes that are MASH certified (20-30 in county working together) more room for mistakes (*interim action while more long-term housing options are being explored)
- Research how to better access BSAS case management \$\$ for sober housing
- Sponsor meeting: Sheriff, Housing Authority and Mayor and heads of 3 banks, heads of 2 or three real estate companies and FRCOG – how do we get this to happen?
- Confirm leadership of Housing and Workforce Development Committee

GROUP 2

Small Group Attendees: Dan Finn, Shawn Hayden, Deb Neubauer, Kereen Rennis, Sandy Sayers, Heather Taylor

Note Taker: Deb Neubauer

Discussion Notes:

- GAAMHA's first step started with an idea; there was an old, abandoned apartment building in town, someone saw it, and went to the bank and said: "We want that building." The bank said "How much

do you want to pay for it?" They said nothing. Anyway, to make a long story short, they made the ask of the bank, and shared their vision.

- Hayen's advice was: You have to start talking with the banks and making concrete asks. Ask them what incentives, low interest loans, etc., they can provide
- Explore state wide economic development funds that could be tapped. Maybe we can find one that can do a low cost financing arrangement
- Dan Finn stepped said that he has two properties already that are ready to be developed, which could be habitable by summer. The Greenfield Housing authority got these properties for what the town was owed for back taxes. The homes that GHA has could become sober housing units. Time is of the essence before they become affordable housing units
- Identify barriers to revamping the list of abandoned properties that the Mayor's office has into sober housing. Make the list, and start chipping away at them
- United Way could fund the development of 501 3C that could runs the sober home, providing oversight and accountability
- Finn has the ability to provide inventory, we need an entity to own this project, and break down the silos between the different players in our community that are working on this
- John Howland at Greenfield Savings Bank was identified as someone we should talk with to get no interest loans for development
- Hayden from GAAMHA also mentioned if you get Historical building's, you can get tax credits, but this could be a barrier because of the paperwork involved that accompanies the tax credits
- If you get loan from banks or Mass. Economic Development agencies, you have to work with an official contractor
- Hayden suggested that we ask our Legislators to adapt the Tenant Landlord Law to account for sober homes. Add this to the list of "legislative asks" to provide education about how sober housing can be funded
- Create an incubator where new ideas and lessons learned can be collected and shared as a "one stop" resource

Potential Action Steps:

- Identify an agency to take this on; that agency would consolidate efforts and services, info and resources under one umbrella agency
- Talk to our local banks and the Chamber of Commerce about financing
- Get the list of abandoned and foreclosed on homes from the Mayor's office
- Bring GAAMHA out here, or road trip to GAAMHA to get more concrete info as a first step
- Reach out to Mark Zecchio, a private developer in our area
- Resource: Greyston Model explained:
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5oLfB3tlyHM> Identify ways to bring the GAAMHA model to Franklin County

GROUP 3

Small Group Attendees: MJ Adams, Ben Cluff, Marisa Hebble, Michael Lewis, Jerry Lund, Linda Sarge, Peggy Vezina

Note Takers: Michael Lewis and Peggy Vezina

Discussion Notes:

- Get local developers on board; identify developers are would be interested in historic tax credits (e.g. Jordan H. Zazzhio)
- Explore zoning regulations for micro homes including trailer homes
- Create sober neighborhoods
- Set aside certified sober units in housing sites

- Build public support by through city and town leadership throughout the region
- Engage the region's landlord association (e.g. FRLA)
- Conduct outreach
- Create relationships with individual landlords
- Work with programs to identify available housing
- Promote what it means to be a "good neighbor"

Potential Action Steps:

- Inventory existing sober housing stock
- Rehab housing stock and create new housing stock as sober housing units
- Explore zoning to increase micro/trailer homes as options for sober housing units
- Outreach to interested developers, landlords and banks
- Bring landlords and services providers to the same table to discuss issue
- Approach the CDC and Harmon to increase social enterprise opportunities
- Create a smaller working group to pursue this options

GROUP 4

Small Group Attendees: Sarah Ahern, Maureen Cavanagh, Devon de Korver, Jena Day, Eric Fay, Alyssa Larose, Tracy Miner, Debra McLaughlin

Note Taker: Sarah Ahern

Discussion Notes:

- Acknowledge that turf battles may be an issue
- Increase supply and affordability of sober housing in the area; consider subsidized housing
- Address the risk/liability issues in developing sober housing
- Increase partnerships to help develop sober housing stock
- Acknowledge and address the stigma that comes from sober housing
- Identify the different levels of sober housing that are required (e.g. Level 1, etc.)
- Promote education about different funding models for housing
- Determine how different properties could be acquired

Potential Action Steps:

- Identify ways to bring the GAAMHA model to Franklin County
- Create a "think tank/incubator" where others can see how sober housing can be created, funded and supported
- Create models where vocational training and social enterprises are incorporated into sober housing models to ensure success
- Increase police presence on community streets implementing a community policing model
- Create online forums where information can be more easily accessed and exchanged

HOW CAN WE INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF SOBER HOUSING IN THE REGION?

Summary of Small Group Themes across all Four Groups

- Create smaller working group(s) to work on sober housing using the GAAMHA model
- Consider other models, such as the Oxford Model, to provide housing in the interim
- Create smaller working group(s) to work on social enterprise models and vocational training
- Identify players to become part of these smaller working groups (e.g. developers, city, landlords, Sheriff's office, Harmon, CDC, Housing Authorities, etc.)
- Consider ways to increase sober housing stock (e.g. rehabbing houses, zoning for micro houses)
- Create an incubator or think tank to pilot these new approaches, collect and disseminate best practices for others to use