

Front End Committee – 10/6/22 Meeting Notes

Participants:

Victoria Burton-Harris

Rev. Jeff Harrold

Tish Lee

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Ashley

Des

Aubrey

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Vera:

Angie

Shahd

Jen

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Alex

NOTES ON FINDINGS

Member

- Grant that the county has for reentry services – this is a 4 year grant, would be up in 2023; there isn't something named that's next
- Access to footage – what are the protections, what are the oversight options? Ann Arbor Housing Commission
- 911 calls –
 - o It says this covers 92% of the county – what covers the rest?

Member

- 2017 report on 911 calls
 - o We have a really high police presence in one part of our county – are they really mostly for animal calls? Member responds that there was a contract with the Humane Society around that time,
 - o On its face it makes no sense on this

Member

- o A more detailed breakdown of 911 calls for Ypsi township – through local partners – road patrol services – Open Meetings Act

Member

- Police chiefs are not reporting to the towns or any other oversight bodies, 911 calls but beyond
- Question – if the dispatchers are not able to respond to “behavioral health” – more than just mental health – then it can't be just the mental health crisis response team. Is this because there aren't emergency medical needs? If there is illegal activity, HVA and others always want police there. Clarify what we are talking about here.
- What is the “alternative” in the Sheriff's office? Is this their role?

Member

- Concerns that the police would be the ones to respond to a BH issue.
- Doesn't leave room for people who would not call 911 because of fears of police or of involuntary commitment
- Should we highlight non sheriff focused options
- Say someone is walking down the street and the cop tags them, and instead of arresting them for something like paraphernalia, we've had them get disorderly conduct – some of these charges are quality of life charges
- Officer discretion matters a lot in determining what is a validated call for service

Member

- What do we mean by juvenile issues, for 911 calls? The recommendation should be to unpack what this means

Member

- A young person who is suicidal gets reclassified as a medical
- Can we look into proactive policing versus reactive – when a patrol is initiating the arrest versus someone calling. Who is “verifying” these encounters?

Member

- For now let's put a pin in this issue for the recommendations – not just call data but what are they saying for patrol

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expand affordable housing
 - Member suggests updating the CZB report – it has some inaccuracies
 - Member: The report doesn't account for the resources – like public transportation – and then this pushes for policies to reduce housing in Ypsi if it already has “a lot”
 - On college-educated people moving to Ypsi, there are other structural barriers, such as the YCS debt which impacts our school district's ability to reinvest in the school district rather than sending money to the state. This affects housing. We should say that this is holding back the community.
 - Member: yes, update the report. The impact of covid – inequalities have drastically increased because of covid. In the last six months or so we've seen dramatic increases in costs across the board. We are making Ypsi more “livable” very slowly but there is also the gentrification problem. There has to be a regional approach. For example, revenue sharing – why shouldn't that be an option for the entire county?
 - Member: let's take time to figure out what to bolster from the CZB report. Under all of these bullets we have to say something about housing-first models.
 - Significant county investments were coming under the category of housing that are not related. Somewhere we do need to uplift the housing-first framing throughout. – e.g. “in alignment with housing-first principles”

- Member: U of M needs to grow their actual student housing as well as non-student housing, and the county should say so.

2. Reduce housing

- a. Member: How much impact can we have on MSHDA? Local advocacy can help. Say instead that PHAs should remove lookback policies.
- b. Member – the list of restrictions from MSHDA is very long, very exclusionary. They are building new housing, will this apply? That should be addressed
- c. Member – can 2b be stronger, especially for the private housing market? Private housing providers who refuse section 8 vouchers?
- d. NEW RECO: The whole county should adopt source of income verifications, like what Ann Arbor and Ypsi have these ordinances but other townships don't
- e. Member - Brighter Way is trying to fill a gap – trying to do subsidies with grant money. For local organizations, could vs should. It's a funding and resource issue. What is galvanizing reentry organizations to tap into housing resources? Feels more useful to build a network of resources around housing, to tap into each other's resources, not to give one-off grants of short term solutions. Structural solution for the funding limits that local orgs have. Orgs are showing up here without knowing everything that's available.
 - i. Member – what is the county's role here? Move resources, simplify the information. Make it not "choose your own adventure" approach.
- f. Member – we have places to do housing access but not everyone knows what/where these are. The help is not there in the local congregation but people go to their pastors/imams. How do you help people navigate options? We might need to expand what local organizations are, to help people know what to do. People have old school impressions of clergy that they can pick up the phone and make something happen. This applies to returning citizens as well.
- g. Member – comment on landlord accountability
- h. Member – the systems failed during covid, they can't call to get intakes, it's such a backlog to get verification of homelessness, you have to go through HAWC. They did not hear anything from us when we asked for money for hotels, vouchers.
- i. Member – a network of trained navigators throughout the county
- j. Member – some people are afraid to call for support if they are homeless and have kids because they are afraid of CPS
- k. Member – they are not supposed to be calling CPS for people who are homeless
- l. Member – people are turning themselves in on warrants to go to jail in the winter as a default housing option
- m. Member – we need to update the analysis but also attach funding to this to build more housing
- n. Member – there is so much discretion for people working in HAWC, CMH, police – people think that if a family admits they are homeless they should do a CPS referral. We should make sure this is safe for families. A CPS referral should not be triggered. Potential recommendation – make a formal policy that this situation should not trigger CPS calls in any way. There is fear about this. Member validates this.

3.
 - a. Member – we have a homeless response sector, a centralized entry point, a risk mitigation fund, a landlord resource center. This is under-resourced but it does exist. When we built something from the sheriff's office, we did it through the coordinated entry process. Say something here about coordinating with the infrastructure.
 - b. Member – what does it look like to simplify and remove some of these barriers? Push for a stronger recommendation here.
 - c. Member – how can we strengthen the system/infrastructure and make it work with local orgs? Not every org should be doing everything, stick with their area of expertise
 - d. Member – coordinated entry system should include specific populations (in jail or coming home from prison) – that system is also doing prevention, etc. It's a subset (lower than 30% AMI people). Public funding should not be going toward housing related subsidized services if it is not in alignment with housing first principles. A disproportionate level of people are on the list, excluded, but we prioritize the chronically homeless. But last night the county provided millions to housing projects that will exclude people who are using substances. I want us to say very concretely that anything publicly funded – ARPA, Millage – it should be in line with housing first.
 - e. Member – have they even made a recommendation that everything should be housing first at the county level, as a lens for all policies?
 - f. Member – Talking about recommend representation for eviction cases – often tenants don't have representation. Member – no right to counsel for eviction. The organizations are totally under resourced at the "counsel" – just talking for 15 mins. It's hard to do this work, moves very quickly. RECOMMENDATION – adding funding for attorneys on this – right to counsel. Resource it.

4. Surveillance
 - a. Member – this is already in place, also with regard to license plate readers. More clarity on the policies of when the police can access video information.
 - b. ADD: strengthen the process and oversight for law enforcement access to surveillance.
 - c. Who should be leading this conversation? If you put law enforcement, then the sheriff will lead this and we don't want this. Shouldn't be there.
 - d. How do we make the access harder?
 - e. Member – the sheriff just hides those surveillance –
 - f. Member – make this recommendation be resident-driven – all the housing providers have surveillance cameras. What do residents want, not what the police want?
 - g. SUGGESTION: recommend an Internal policy clarification/ development from each housing entity related to surveillance cameras in housing areas? We need checks and balances.
 - h. Member: the recommendation should be about increased community input and decision making on cameras. Spell out what you mean – law enforcement presence, or cameras, or something else like license plate readers.

5. Employers
 - a. Member: Shift the order of the recommendations, so that the onus is on the employers first, with county emphasis, and then the vouchers by organizations as the last thing.

There should be a program to formalize how the encouragement to employers happens on the front end

- b. Protections for workers so they are not considered second class employees
 - c. Might be easier to implement elsewhere given that the county does exist on this
 - d. Member – another report that came out that said that employers were more willing if they had subsidies for workplace insurance costs
 - e. Member – “vouching” for people is amorphous and possibly a dangerous recommendation. Not everyone has these kinds of relationships, you don’t want to burden organizations with this. The pressure should be on employers and landlords, not on people and orgs who are under-resources. This creates the risk of inauthentic recommendations that discredit the whole process.
 - f. SUGGEST: cut references to personal vouching as part of the recommendations
 - g. Member: What about having organizations with sway provide a “blueprint” for private employers to take the box off? The City of Ann Arbor – if the job does not in any way involve what you went to jail for, it doesn’t matter. Or put time constraints on this. This could be scaled up. Take the pressure off individuals to vouch for people.
 - h. Member: is ban the box in Ann Arbor for just jobs or also housing? Can this policy be expanded to rental applications? Aubrey – yes.
6. Criminal Records
- a. Member – this is currently happening, there are fairs and things. Is this for the county ?
 - b. Member – collect info about who attends the expungement events, so we can figure out who isn’t there and reach out to them, across agencies. We could come together and figure out the gaps in dissemination, especially through non online channels. We went down to the Ypsi bus terminal and just handed out snacks and info, we set up a table. Recommendation should be to beef up this kind of stuff.
 - c. Member – a lot of people are rightfully frustrated – they know they are eligible but are unsure of next steps, but there aren’t attorneys to help us. Are we helping people to understand they are eligible and get records pulled if there is a bottleneck for attorneys? The list of volunteers has dwindled. We can do all the steps short of a P number. More county funding for attorneys? To help close out.
 - d. Member – we have 2-3 full time attorneys plus a legal assistant working on expungements in Washtenaw County. We had thought we could rely on pro bono but we can’t. We need the resources.
 - e. The requirements are statutory. Member – all the expungement organizations are county level – we just need more lawyers. We get people partway through and then they get stuck.
 - f. Member – I think if you did the outreach and pulled in all the people, this would be full time work for 4 more attorneys. We previously had to close our intake, used to be online. It requires administrative help as well. Prelim groundwork for the initial steps. We have a grant for some of this administrative work. Each conviction has to be dealt with separately.

ALTERNATIVES TO POLICE

1. Edits to the “repair harm” one – drop it
2. Drop the reference that the sheriff should dialogue on alternatives; sheriff should have no role

