

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
GEORGE WASHINGTON REGIONAL COMMISSION**

August 21, 2017

The Robert C. Gibbons Conference Room
406 Princess Anne Street, Fredericksburg Virginia

MEMBERS PRESENT AND VOTING: Chair – Matt Kelly, City of Fredericksburg; Caroline County: Jeff Black & Nancy Long; King George County: Ruby Brabo & Jim Howard; Spotsylvania County: Greg Benton; and Stafford County: Laura Sellers

MEMBERS ABSENT: Meg Bohmke, Paul Trampe, & Billy Withers

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Tim Baroody, City of Fredericksburg; Emily Stock, DRPT; Meghann Cotter, Micah; Kim Lally & Eric Watkins, Thurman Brisben Center; Chuck Johnston, Citizen, Planning Director; & Cindy Shelton, Citizen, County of Stafford

STAFF: Tim Ware, Executive Director; Paul Agnello, Nick Quint, John Bentley & Colin Cate, FAMPO; Kate Gibson & Samantha Shoukas, CoC; and JoAnna Roberson, GWRC

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Kelly called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with a quorum present; which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF GWRC MEETING AGENDA: Upon motion by Mr. Howard and seconded by Ms. Sellers, with all concurring, the agenda was approved as submitted.

APPROVAL OF GWRC MEETING MINUTES (June 19, 2017) - (Action Item)

Upon motion by Ms. Brabo and seconded by Ms. Sellers, and all others in consensus, the minutes from the June 19th meeting were approved as submitted.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT - None

DRAFT FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. Ware advised that the Financial Report is included in tonight's agenda packet. Mr. Ware advised that the Commission's preliminary July report reflects a positive balance of approximately \$194,000. Mr. Ware stated the agency is financially sound and the available balance continues to grow.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT- None

OLD BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS

a.) Regional Homeless Plan– Ms. Kate Gibson

Ms. Gibson advised that a Continuum of Care (CoC) is a federally-mandated network of organizations that work together to prevent and end homelessness in a given region through a strategic planning process. Ms. Gibson advised that the Fredericksburg Regional CoC covers Planning District 16 and GWRC serves as the lead agency. Ms. Gibson advised that PD16 has 40 partners in the community that work together to support the CoC.

Ms. Gibson advised that there are three definitions that describe those who are literally homeless versus those who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless. These classifications are as follows:

1 – **literally homeless** – these are the citizens who are sleeping outside; sleeping in cars, tents, abandoned buildings, or emergency shelters

2 – **imminent risk of homelessness** – these are the citizens who are fleeing from domestic violence; those temporarily staying in hotels, staying with family/friends; those exiting from hospitals, jails or other institutions; and those being evicted within two weeks – these citizens have nowhere else to go

3 – **chronically homeless** – this category of citizens is defined by HUD and is a very specific sub-set of the literally homeless population; this group of citizens has a long history of homelessness that has been continual for at least a year or has had 4 occurrences in a 3-year time span that totals a year or longer; this citizen population also has a disability (physical or developmental disability, serious mental illness, chronic health condition, substance abuse, etc.)

Ms. Gibson advised that the CoC will have ended homelessness when paths for obtaining permanent housing have been achieved. The four principles involved in ending homelessness are as follows:

- 1- **identify**- a CoC needs to identify all citizens who are homeless
- 2- **shelter** – a CoC needs to provide immediate shelter
- 3- **rehouse** – a CoC needs to ensure that those who become homeless are given an opportunity to return to permanent housing within 30 days of becoming homeless
- 4- **prevent** – CoC needs to prevent new episodes of homelessness as often as possible

Ms. Gibson stated that all four principles mentioned above need to be in place and coordinated amongst all partners. Ms. Gibson advised that the homelessness response system involves the following: coordinated assessments; homelessness prevention; emergency shelter; rapid re-housing; & permanent supportive housing.

Ms. Gibson advised that all requests for assistance go through a coordinated assessment process so that the community can match the most appropriate resources to each household. Partners try to divert households from the homeless services system whenever possible by helping them problem-solve and connecting them to other resources.

Ms. Gibson stated that emergency shelters are for those who are literally homeless and need a safe place to stay while they work toward moving back into permanent housing. Rapid re-housing is a short-term form of assistance to help households move back into housing quickly by providing upfront assistance in paying security deposits, first month's rent, etc. as well as case management and support services.

Ms. Gibson advised that permanent supportive housing is for those who are chronically homeless that are not able to sustain permanent housing without ongoing assistance. Persons in permanent supportive housing pay 30% of their income toward rent and receive ongoing case management and supportive services.

Ms. Gibson stated that 33% of the homelessness response system annual funding is received through collaborative applications, where the CoC submits one application on behalf of the community. Ms. Gibson advised that a CoC must be active and operational in order for the community to receive both state and federal funding.

Ms. Sellers asked for clarification as to what the HUD Continuum of Care funding is used for. Ms. Gibson advised this funding is used for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), GWRC's planning activities, and Micah's supportive housing program.

Mr. Benton asked if the citizens classified as being homeless include those who panhandle up and down State Route 3. Ms. Gibson stated that panhandling does not necessarily mean that a citizen is homeless.

Ms. Sellers asked why citizens are homeless. Ms. Gibson stated that homelessness results from a variety of reasons; however, many citizens just need help getting back on their feet – i.e. they have jobs but have had financial setbacks due to illness, job loss, etc. and need upfront assistance with security deposits, one-to-two months of rent paid up front; catch up on utility bills, etc.

Ms. Gibson advised that the CoC is currently working with the University of Mary Washington on a FUSE (Frequent Users System Engagement) study. Ms. Gibson stated that this type of program has proven to be successful and less costly in other areas across the nation. Data has proven that it ultimately ends up costing a region more for someone to remain homeless than it does to provide resources for permanent housing. The local cost breakdown shows the following costs per day per person:

- \$20.00 a day to provide permanent housing
- \$30.00 a day to provide emergency shelter
- \$68.00 a day to provide cost of citizens incarcerated
- \$1400 a day to provide cost of emergency room services due to medical issues that have been previously ignored

Ms. Gibson presented a preliminary strategy for the CoC to address unsheltered homelessness by raising funding for new rapid re-housing and permanent supporting housing resources. Ms. Gibson stated these efforts are not designed or proposed to result in re-allocations of funding currently being expended to other agencies but instead the consideration would be asking localities for additional financial support and funding.

Ms. Gibson advised that the Thurman Brisben Center Board has passed a resolution in opposition of the unsheltered homelessness effort. Ms. Gibson stated that the CoC is scheduled to meet with the Thurman Brisben staff and board members this week with the hope that both agencies will be able to resolve concerns surrounding the unsheltered homelessness effort moving forward.

Ms. Sellers asked what the vote count from Thurman Brisben was and what were the concerns surrounding the unsheltered homelessness effort. Ms. Gibson stated at this time she did not have answers to these questions; however, deferred the question from Ms. Sellers to the Thurman Brisben staff who was in attendance at tonight's meeting.

Thurman Brisben staff stated their vote in opposition was a unanimous 9-0 count and their main concern is that even though the funding request is asking for additional funding and not a re-allocation of existing agency funding that potentially down the road money allocated to this effort would be off-set from the existing agency funding allocations.

There were multiple comments, questions, etc. expressed by the commission members and they are as follows:

Mr. Kelly stated that in order for the unsheltered homelessness effort to be successful that it not only has to look at cost savings but also needs to look at the additional services the region needs. Mr. Kelly asked if information could be gathered from other CoCs around the State/nation on

housing challenges – i.e. how much revenue has been received; how the revenue has been generated to decrease homelessness; how much additional staff time/maintenance the program requires, etc. Mr. Kelly stated that he felt having this information available at possibly the upcoming September/October meetings would be helpful to the members and this could be an item to be discussed further at a future meeting. Ms. Long concurred that the unsheltered homelessness effort sounds beneficial but she too would like to receive information from other CoCs.

Mr. Kelly stated that he felt this was actually a two-fold endeavor – one to provide additional funding from each locality to support the elimination of unsheltered homelessness within the region; and secondly, to determine the current CoC structure, its future needs, etc.

Ms. Sellers agreed with both Mr. Kelly & Ms. Long and asked if this could be brought up again at the September meeting. This would allow each locality to talk with their respective Boards. Ms. Sellers stated that she personally (not speaking on behalf of the Stafford Board of Supervisors) feels that all funding received to prevent homelessness should be allocated to the CoC and then it is up to the CoC to disperse funding to the appropriate agencies. Ms. Sellers stated that it is hard to get and maintain funding authorizations to private agencies now and that with each budget session the Board spends a large amount of time determining what agencies are going to be supported; by how much; and for how long. Ms. Sellers stated that she feels it would be more efficient for the Board to approve/not approve one consolidated agency request rather than multiple agency requests. Mr. Kelly asked if the existing CoC is organized enough to handle additional duties. Ms. Gibson advised that currently the CoC has only two employees so additional staff maintenance would be needed.

Mr. Kelly asked if each locality could forward to GWRC the current funding and agencies supported in regard to the homelessness efforts. Mr. Kelly asked if these could then be forwarded to commission members so everyone can review them before the September meeting. Mr. Kelly also asked if the CoC would begin sending out notices to commission members in regard to upcoming CoC meetings. Mr. Kelly stated monthly meetings occur and committee members have been included to participate in the past; however, to date, other than him attending and representing the City of Fredericksburg, that no other localities have had representation at the monthly meetings.

Ms. Sellers asked if additional HUD grants are available that are not being utilized by the region. Ms. Gibson advised that to date no additional HUD grant money is available that is not being utilized. Ms. Sellers stated that she felt it is an important issue and feels a regional discussion at an upcoming meeting needs to occur in regard to homelessness.

b.) GO Virginia Update – Mr. Tim Ware

Mr. Ware advised that the GO Virginia Economic Growth & Diversification Plan draft for PD16, the Northern Neck and the Middle Peninsula regions is expected to be approved at tomorrow's

meeting. Once approved, the draft is submitted to the State for its approval as well. Mr. Ware advised the draft will be submitted to the State in September. Once the plan is approved by the State, the Regional Council can begin taking requests for projects. Mr. Ware stated a preliminary project list should be available for committee review within several months. Mr. Ware also relayed that at a future upcoming GWRC meeting the consultant will come and brief the Commission and provide presentation updates.

Ms. Brabo stated that the King George Board of Supervisors has received complaints that there is only one representative from King George County on the GO Virginia Regional Council. Mr. Ware stated that the Regional Council membership is capped at 25 members. Mr. Ware stated that the Regional Council has to have representatives from all three regions, PD16, Middle Peninsula, & Northern Neck so additional representation from King George County is likely not to occur. Mr. Ware stated that he & Ms. Brabo can discuss more specifically King George County's current representative after the close of tonight's meeting.

c.) DC2RVA Update – Ms. Emily Stock, DRPT

Ms. Stock advised that the DC2RVA high rail transportation study began in 2014. Ms. Stock stated that DRPT is conducting the study; however, the project will be administered by the federal railroad administration. Ms. Stock relayed that a draft EIS is expected to be released to the public in early September. Once the draft has been released, there will be a 60day public comment period in place. All comments received during this 60day time period will be included into the final EIS report. Ms. Stock advised that the study is to be completed and recommendations provided by December of 2019. Ms. Stock stated the project will encompass a total of 123 miles on the I-95 corridor coming from Richmond to DC and has been broken into 6 different regions.

Ms. Stock relayed, even though not officially adopted by FRR, DRPT as an agency has made recommendations along the corridor. Other than the town of Ashland, which is being re-studied as a separate entity, improvements to the remainder of the corridor are focusing on adding a third track to the existing system (4th track in some locations that already have a 3rd track in place) is the recommendation being made by DRPT.

Ms. Stock stated that even though DRPT's recommendations could not be accepted by FRR, even though highly unlikely, at the present time the original potential eastern by-pass project going through or around Fredericksburg has been completely dismissed as a potential project recommendation moving forward.

Ms. Stock stated that “unofficially” the release date for the EIS draft is September 8th and the public hearing for the Fredericksburg region is tentatively scheduled to be held on October at the Dorothy Hart Community Center at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Stock stated the website information is available and listed in tonight’s presentation and those interested can check regularly to see if the dates above remain as scheduled.

d.) Other New Business

Mr. Ware advised the Commission that he would be retiring from his position as the Executive Director of GWRC effective July, 2018. Mr. Kelly stated that the Commission would follow the same protocol that was in place when Mr. Ware was hired which includes advertising the position and having someone hired prior to Mr. Ware’s departure so training could occur while Mr. Ware is still on staff.

Ms. Brabo stated that in regard to the Harry Nice Bridge repair project, the current recommendation in place is to take off the shoulder and bike lane improvements as part of the improvement project. Ms. Brabo relayed that the King George County Board of Supervisors will be endorsing a letter in opposition of the current recommendations. Ms. Brabo stated the letter will be adopted on Tuesday at the upcoming Board of Supervisors’ meeting and will be sent to both the governors of Maryland and Virginia. Ms. Brabo also asked that GWRC submit letters of opposition as well. There was unanimous consent from the Commission to endorse letters of opposition and asked that the adopted letter by King George County be forwarded to GWRC

ADJOURN GWRC MEETING–The August 21st GWRC meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m. The next meeting will be held on September 18, 2017.

Respectfully Submitted,
Timothy Ware, Executive Director
(Minutes prepared by JoAnna Roberson)