

Hartford Ad-Hoc Committee on Emergency Shelter

12/09/21 - Meeting Minutes - 5:00 PM

Committee Members present: Bryan Luikart (Chair), Ally Tufenkjian (Vice-chair), Simon Dennis (Secretary), Scott Sablan, Jon Chaffee, Tom Peltier, Michael Redmond,

Special Guest: Tracy Yarlott-Davis

Community Members present: Vassiki Chauhan, Gail Ostrout, Heidi Duto.

Brian called the meeting to order at 5:08 and reviewed the agenda.

Ally moved passage of the HADCES minutes of 11/18/21. Simon seconded. The minutes passed without objection.

Emergency Sleeping on Public Lands Policy

Bryan welcomed the Town Manager, Tracy Yarlott-Davis to the meeting and invited her to speak to the discussion around the Oakland, CA, ordinance regarding the legality of unhoused individuals sleeping in public spaces.

She said that one of the things that would be really helpful from this Committee would be getting buy-in from other Committee's whose work is related, such as the Parks and Rec Committee. She gave some examples of other instances where committees were interested in going to the Tree Board or the Resilient Hartford.

Bryan discussed the sheltering on public lands ordinance that was implemented in Montpelier and Burlington.

Simon asked for the clarification of the topic of the ordinance being the decriminalization of sleeping on public lands.

Ideally, a mechanism for keeping space clean would reduce public comment.

Ally inquired whether Camron from Montpelier has any sense about the connection between allowing folks to shelter on public land and the ability to access public services. It was questioned whether there is a sense that people in Montpelier were helping people move onto public land, helping to move people away from private land. We are all figuring this out together.

Jon Chaffee asked if there was any sense if it had made any positive impact in Oakland. Tracy said that the problem in Oakland had become so severe that improvement would be hard to recognize because the system is both flooded with individuals and underfunded.

Jon Chaffee volunteered to reach out to the Parks and Rec. Ally Tufenkjain volunteered to reach out to Resilient Hartford, for whom she serves a Selectboard Liaison.

Vassiki asked if the Parks and Rec were still looking for public comment about the use of the public parks. It was discovered that the commend period had closed.

Simon asked how the discussion with the Police or Fire Departments would unfold. Tracy mentioned that she would be in dialogue with related departments prior to it coming before the Selectboard.

Ally asked what the practice for writing that the Policy should be. Tracy said that she would want to talk about the policy with VLCT, Hartford's insurance carrier. Did Montpelier do any Listening Session? They did this without gathering support from related committees and this built animosity.

Scott volunteered to reach out to someone from the Conservation Committee.

Ally said that the HADCES Committee should revisit the process before taking next steps. It was agreed that HADCES would clarify its understanding of the proposal at our next meeting.

Updates on the RV Policy

Simon reported that the meeting advanced without reaching a final conclusion regarding the proposed removal of the time limitation regarding people's ability to reside in RVs.

Bryan mentioned that we may need to have emergency shelters on unimproved lots, or more than one structure on a lot.

It seemed that there were a lot of voices at the meeting that said that if I want to have an RV on my property and stay in it, then who has the right to tell me no? Bryan offered to reach out to the Planning Department.

Jon Chaffee mentioned a couple of things that are worth noting that the positive experience: He also mentioned that there has to be 5 or 6 or 10 people living in RV's currently. It would be interesting that we are just legitimizing something that has already been a common practice.

Other Business

Bryan mentioned having written the Committee Report for the Town's Annual Report and welcomed comment or amendment from Committee Members to be submitted via Committee Members. Ally suggested leaving out the conversation about Emergency Sleeping on Public Lands.

Michael Redmond reported that the looser eligibility of the cold weather program is in effect, which is good news, but said that there may be hotel availability issues that persist. There are a bit over 100 individuals. There is some concern regarding how COVID could impact the process, if there were an outbreak, and the question about whether there is a quarantine hotel in place in the event that there is an outbreak.

Michael also reported that the Haven and Twin Pines are collaborating to create a low-barrier shelter and 18 units of supported housing, which the Haven would provide housing for. This was reviewed by the Planning Commission and this discussion will continue.

Michael moved adjournment. Ally seconded and all were in favor and the meeting adjourned 6:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Simon Dennis