

HRC/Council/Staff December 28 Meeting Notes

XXXX – original agenda draft

XXXX – meeting notes

XXXX – suggested agenda revisions

XXXX – next steps

Why we are meeting?

On November 11, 2020, the HRC sent Council a copy of their motion title “Unhoused Programs Overview and Potential City of Boulder Human Rights Violation”. The motion contained six recitals.

Councilmembers Brockett and Young spoke with some members of the HRC and staff. Based on these conversations, three potential actions were identified as acceptable consensus responses.

Purpose of the meeting:

We are meeting to discuss feasibility, acceptability and scope of these potential actions.

In attendance: HRC: Lindsey Loberg, Art Figel; Council: Mary Young, Aaron Brockett; Staff: Kurt Firnhaber

HRC representatives proposed changes to the agenda. Our discussion kicked off with a conversation to address these.

Through a phone call between Judge Cooke and Mary, it was suggested that, since many of the suggestions for item 2 fall within the rubric of “trauma informed services” which Judge Cooke advocates for on her court, HRC could benefit from a presentation from the Court on what court navigators are currently doing and how and what data could be gathered through their process.

With respect to proposed changes to item 3, we discussed that a values statement for the collaborative could incorporate our community values as well as include the first two bullets as part of the mission statement. It was suggested that Matt Meyer and Carl Castillo be looped in.

List of potential actions:

1. Consider reviewing program language and terminology within information and descriptions of city services produced and provided by the city in response to the recital: “Whereas it appears that the City of Boulder consistently uses dehumanizing language in reference to underserved populations,”

Proposed by HRC: 1. Consider implementing (or revising) standards for language and terminology used by the city officials regarding people who are unhoused; inclusive of formal, informal, verbal, and written communications and across various formats such as program descriptions, news releases, meeting agendas, and policy documents

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Consensus was reached that a path forward could include a review of city code language, development of a “communications vocabulary” (for use in e.g. press releases, meeting agendas, policy documents) and review of our current Homelessness Strategy document. Process would be similar to the Gender Inclusive Language project recently completed and worked on by some current members of the HRC.

2. Consider data collection on the number of individuals who are turned away from city services, specifically severe weather shelter, due to the following:
 - a. Individual does not wish to be separated from service animal
 - b. Individual does not wish to be separated from partner
 - c. Individual presents potential to cause harm to others

In response to the recital: “Whereas it appears that the City of Boulder has enacted policies and practices to exclude some unhoused individuals from receiving appropriate services,”

Proposed by HRC: Consider closing data collection gaps with respect to individuals in the City who are unhoused and unsheltered, due to the following: ● Individual does not wish to be separated from a companion (e.g., companion animal, family, friend, service animal), ● Individual does not feel safe in the shelter, ● Individual has difficulty with group shelter due to medical reasons, ● Individual believes they are ineligible or that they will be denied sheltering, ● Individual presents potential to cause harm to others, ● Individual is ineligible for or denied shelter services through CE (accompanied by reason they are ineligible), ● Individual is currently suspended or is permanently barred from shelter service (accompanied by reason they are suspended or barred), ● Was housed or diverted and is still homeless or became homeless again.

Discussion on this item touched on collecting data on why people are turned away, leveraging Coordinated Entry and the Court as touchpoints for gathering data, qualitative vs. quantitative information regarding the BThere and HOT programs, funding and scope of new mental health program, understanding why people who are eligible are not accessing programs and “time based ineligibility”.

V2 addition: While it may be difficult to collect much of the requested data, staff may be able to leverage and work with outreach efforts currently in place (HOT, B THERE) to provide qualitative information as to why some individuals may not engage in services.

3. Consider what it would take to initiate the formation of a regional coalition to lobby for statewide legislation to address homelessness (similar to [CC4CA](#)) in response to the recital: “Whereas the City of Boulder does not allow unhoused individuals to self-shelter and at the same time, based on the triangulation of independent assessments of the City of Boulder unhoused populations, the City of Boulder does not provide nearly enough sheltering options to provide shelters for unhoused individuals,”

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Proposed by HRC: Consider what it would take to prevent the loss of life due to the unintended consequences of local and regional policies regarding homelessness, including in the investigation: ● Understanding what data is needed to calculate mortality, illness, and diminished life expectancy of people who are unhoused in order to gain a clearer picture of regional needs, trends, and outcomes, ● Understanding the interplay between policies and services, the gaps created when either is changed, and existing deficiencies (e.g., not arresting someone who is unhoused may remove a sheltering option, the effect of sweeps on mental health, the subsequent impact of regular camping ban enforcement on people who are not sheltered when the weather is inclement), ● Forming a regional coalition to lobby for statewide legislation to address homelessness (similar to CC4CA) and incorporating the information above to guide those efforts

Discussion on this item focused on how we would go about initializing this effort. It was proposed that Matt Meyer (Executive Director, Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI)) and Carl Castillo (City of Boulder Chief Policy Advisor) be consulted on feasibility. It was stated that this could be good timing as the pandemic may bring other entities to the table such as Broomfield and Jefferson Counties.

What we hope for outcomes:

A path forward on each of the above that Aaron and Mary will propose to the full Council.

How we will meet:

- We will bring our best selves to the meeting
- We will be kind yet courageous, honest and forthright
- Aaron and Mary will take turns facilitating

Next steps:

- V2 addition: HRC to review documents that have occurred over the last year, e.g. CC memos, the Annual Report on the Homeless Strategy or other official documents to identify words/phrases of concern and propose alternate language.
- HRC to schedule a presentation from the Court
- Staff will obtain feedback on feasibility of Regional Initiative
- Aaron and Mary will take proposals (humanizing language, data collection, regional initiative) based on this meeting and follow-up conversations for consideration to the whole Council as part of its January retreat.