

# MINUTES OF THE GUILFORD COUNTY HOMELESSNESS TASKFORCE

Greensboro, North Carolina  
April 17, 2024

The Guilford County Homelessness Taskforce met in a duly noticed meeting on April 17, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. in the John H. McAdoo Conference Room located in the Truist Building, 201 West Market Street, Greensboro, NC.

## Guilford County Board of Commissioners

**Present:** Taskforce Tri-Chair Melvin “Skip” Alston (Commissioner Chairman), presiding; Commissioners J. Carlvena Foster (via virtual communication), Kay Cashion, Brandon Gray-Hill

**Absent:** None.

## Greensboro City Council

**Present:** Taskforce Tri-Chair Nancy Vaughan (Mayor) (via virtual communication)

**Absent:** Councilwoman Sharon Hightower, Councilman Zack Matheny

## High Point City Council

**Present:** Michael Holmes (Mayor Pro-Tem), Councilwoman Amanda Cook

**Absent:** Taskforce Tri-Chair Cyril Jefferson (Mayor)

## Guilford County Continuum of Care (CoC)

**Present:** Bernita Sims, Guilford County CoC Chair; Dr. Pamela Palmer, Guilford County CoC Vice Chair (via virtual communication) and Cheri Neal, Guilford County CoC Program Manager

**Absent:** None.

**Also Present:** County Manager Michael Halford; Robin Keller, Clerk to Board; Victor Isler, Assistant County Manager; Debra Mack, Behavioral Health Center Director; Abby Gostling, Guilford County Program & Fiscal Recovery Manager; David Payne, Senior Budget and Management Analyst; Nena Wilson, City of High Point Director of Community Development & Housing. Participating via virtual communication: Greg Ferguson, City of High Point Deputy Manager; Michelle Kennedy, City of Greensboro Housing and Neighborhood Development

Department Director; Elizabeth Alverson, City of Greensboro Supportive Housing Analyst; Erin Stratford Owens, Partners Ending Homelessness Executive Director; additional staff for county and cities, community partners, the public and media. Virtual and in person participation was made available to the public, staff, and media partners.

## **I. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER**

Taskforce Tri-Chair Alston called the meeting to order at 4:17 p.m. and welcomed those present.

## **II. MISSION MOMENT**

Deb Harris Richardson, President and Chief Executive Director of the Shirley T. Frye YWCA, highlighted the organization as a center for voting, and spoke to its infant and maternal health programming, and to its contributions to the civil rights movement. She spoke to the emergency family shelter, and described how funding makes a difference. She shared that funding provided an avenue to have the roof fixed to allow for full access to shelter rooms. She spoke to challenges from those using the shelter facilities. She closed her comments by saying Guilford County is making a difference for the entire community.

## **III. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

The taskforce reviewed the minutes of the March 6, 2024 regular meeting.

Michael Holmes, City of High Point Mayor Pro-Tem, made a point of clarification by stating Councilwoman Amanda Cook replaced Councilwoman Monica Peters on the taskforce, and Councilman Chris Williams has retired, is no longer on the High Point Council, and no replacement has been announced.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Brandon Gray-Hill, and seconded by Commissioner Kay Cashion, to adopt the March 6, 2024 meeting minutes of the taskforce as amended. The meeting minutes were approved by unanimous consent.**

## **V. STRATEGIC PLANNING**

### **A. Project Plan Update**

The following consultants were introduced from the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH): Senior Program Manager Maya Saxena, Senior Program Manager Charlesy Nance, Senior Program Manager Stephanie Crumpton, Senior Program Manager Eva Lerner, Senior Program Manager Liam Hudson, and Associate Program Manager Nhaomie Douyon.

Saxena highlighted community conversations and shared that an upcoming Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis report will be presented at the end of May.

Victor Isler, Assistant County Manager, recapped the last taskforce meeting regarding what leadership looked like and the strategic priorities. He spoke to collaborative approaches and alignment with the Continuum of Care (CoC). He urged the taskforce to look at who can carry the load. He noted to lean into level setting and to engage for operational support.

## **B. CoC 101: Understanding the Operating Structure to Best Support Homeless Services Delivery**

Saxena spoke to United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) specific guidance. She introduced the presentation with a definition of a CoC along with examples of relevant organizations. She provided an overview of the CoC's purpose, which is to end homelessness, provide funding to providers to rehouse individuals, promote access to programs for those experiencing homelessness, and optimize self-sufficiency among those experiencing homelessness. She reviewed CoC responsibilities regarding designing a local system to assist the unhoused, provide services necessary to access housing, community long-term planning to promote stability, enhance coordination and integration with mainstream resources, and improve data collection and performance measures. She provided an overview of CoC requirements to include operations, system planning, data management, and a CoC funding application.

Nance highlighted operations and member roles, governance charter, system operations, coordinated entry, written standards, performance measures, and record keeping. She spoke to system planning regarding housing instability as it informs HUD of housing communities. She provided an example of a point-in-time count, system gaps, coordination of systems, emergency solutions grants (ESG), and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

Nance spoke to data management and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) designation, participation, and compliance. She spoke to the CoC funding application regarding the notice of funding opportunity (NOFO), to collaborative applicant protocol alignment with HUD awards, to already existing programs needing to be preserved, and to justifying new programs.

Nance shared CoC roles with checks and balances through committee structure and noted that systems are for improvement. She spoke to HMIS lead management responsibilities, shared participation, compliance monitoring, and reporting requirements. She highlighted the collaborative applicant as the agency that submits the application and can serve as the lead agency. She shared that the collaborative applicant can serve as the lead agency and described its responsibilities as a support function, partnership collaborator, communicating the work of the CoC, and providing technical, operational, and meeting support.

Saxena spoke to lived experience and shared that at least one (1) person must be included on the Board to provide a voice of their experience. She shared four (4) questions to consider: (1) What

will people with lived experience gain from their involvement?, (2) What will the organization and community gain?, (3) How is their time being compensated and what training and professional development is being offered?, and (4) How will their participation lead to changes in policies and priorities? She shared best practices with authentic engagement surrounding lived experience. She noted the criminalization of homelessness by sharing a recent Supreme Court case (i.e., The City of Grant Pass, Oregon wants to enforce a ban on camping and sleeping at all times in all public spaces, affecting several hundred unhoused individuals. The court's decision could impact the Ninth Circuit, which could authorize ticketing and arresting people for sleeping outside.)

Nance shared system performance monitoring through community accountability in addition to the frequency of reporting and providing benchmarks, timelines, and analysis.

Saxena spoke to diversity of the CoC Board and displayed a chart indicating disparity in North Carolina by ethnicity.

Nance spoke to stakeholder partnerships and coordination while maintaining consistency with HUD priorities.

Michael Holmes, City of High Point Mayor Pro-Tem, questioned capacity and the build out of the organization's vision.

Bernita Sims, CoC Chair, confirmed working towards the mark and closing the gap. She noted the disproportionality of African Americans experiencing homelessness. She shared that the CSH consultants will assist in determining gaps to identify and address. She noted that we have operated in silos over the past fifteen (15) years regarding homelessness. She urged that we need to become a complete and total system, reviewing a strategic plan, reviewing the CoC lead, functionality, and partnership buy-in.

Holmes questioned infrastructure to build upon the vision before we think of building out.

Sims shared that some components need to be strengthened, as we do have a CoC which provides the framework of building. She shared that we must determine if public-private partners are at the table along with supportive services and then establish priorities.

Cheri Neal, CoC Program Manager, shared some historical perspectives regarding when the CoC came to the County as a collaborative applicant. She noted the separation of a nonprofit organization (NPO) entity and working together within this system. She shared that lots of gaps exist, but we have moved the needle, because it takes time to build consensus and relationships.

Holmes clarified deconstructing the entity in order to optimize the work.

Taskforce Tri-Chair Alston noted that we must build the plane while we are flying it, address immediate problems, and build infrastructure.

Neal spoke to medical respite care and to building capacity for crisis management work.

Commissioner Kay Cashion commended the CoC on its program last week and information sharing. She questioned the different areas regarding lived experience representation. She further questioned the other areas under consideration as the largest gap right now. She noted that the infrastructure supplied is by those who are not volunteers. She emphasized thinking of the next level of support to make this program effective. She shared a call to action at the end of the CoC program was “to endure to make a difference”.

### **C. Leadership Supports**

Isler began his presentation by speaking to leveraging resources, to placing everything on the table, to exploring a leadership staffing model for stability and sustainability. He highlighted job descriptions and organizational structure. He urged moving in uniformity with collaboratives and continuing debrief meetings. He spoke to addressing pain points, to showcasing a new platform, and to funding from several sources such as a braided funding model. He shared back filling and leadership gaps, CoC key roles and gaps, and further defined leadership duties.

Isler shared a draft of the Homeless Services Director duties and responsibilities. He spoke to an essential leadership conversation starter regarding the agency designation and key milestones, which are similar to Guilford Metro 911. He provided an example of a joint office with an interlocal agreement (ILA) managing the funding while designating this joint office as the collaborative applicant.

Taskforce Tri-Chair Alston questioned which process comes first, and noted and under the direction of the CoC, Guilford County is the current collaborative applicant.

Sims confirmed that we are in the discussion phase of which direction to take. She shared that we need a liaison with administrative functions, as we are volunteers working in that space and need to build out our organization. She shared that we are having those conversations but not with the full Board or membership on how to proceed as we must determine what the final product will look like. She emphasized that we cannot have a lead and a collaborative applicant; we can only have one.

Taskforce Tri-Chair Alston questioned the CoC needs from Isler and his team so that the proposal can be presented to members of CoC. He further questioned the timeline of presentation to the CoC Board.

Sims confirmed that May 6<sup>th</sup> is a full Board meeting, and from that point, they will vote to move forward to present to the membership on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of May. She suggested that the worst-case scenario pushes this decision to June.

Neal clarified that the full Board makes the decision and not solely the Executive Board.

Nena Wilson, City of High Point Director of Community Development and Housing, questioned the advantages of which method to follow, what is real capacity, and which option provides the greatest impact.

Sims confirmed that we speak of a lead as a separate entity, however, it is not because it is not recognized by HUD. She noted a joint office is a separate entity from the CoC and may not service the CoC. She noted looking at the governance charter recognizing the joint office.

Neal stated that HUD only recognizes those entities in its plan and further explained the collaborative applicant's role. She shared that it cannot act independently but always must connect with the Board to maintain federal funding.

Nance sought clarification regarding the Homeless Services Director, who must be surrounded by infrastructure under a body or lead agency doing to work.

Michelle Kennedy, City of Greensboro Housing and Neighborhood Development Department Director, questioned the intergovernmental position when Partners Ending Homelessness (PEH) was the collaborative applicant.

Isler confirmed that PEH lacked collective and shared investments. He spoke to an alignment in this lead staffing position and to explore supporting the administrative model.

Kennedy recalled at the beginning of the taskforce we spoke to this CoC being the only one functioning in this capacity and moving to a community-county approach. She opined that it feels like we are moving backwards with a joint office.

Isler confirmed that an agency needs to hold this space.

Sims emphasized the CoC's intention is to move towards a different space. She shared that Guilford County is willing to become the collaborative applicant. She noted that we are new in this conversation and need to talk to our Board and membership as some do not want the government involved. She urged the taskforce to not assume but give us time to come back with a clear understanding.

Taskforce Tri-Chair Alston suggested mini meetings.

Holmes sought clarification regarding the framework already existing while constructing a new entity. He spoke to creating a mission and vision of the new entity before moving forward.

Isler confirmed CSH consultant updates in June in addition to strategic shared priorities.

## **VI. CoC UPDATES**

### **A. CoC Administrative Update**

Sims spoke to last week's CoC gathering, to having great interactions, and extended appreciation to attendees. She noted looking forward to future planning. She expressed thanks to Greensboro, High Point, and Guilford County. She shared statistics from the end of March with a concentration on disproportionality.

Sims shared ten (10) families were provided hotel assistance, along with prevention and diversion with High Point grants and utility assistance. She noted twenty-two (22) rollovers in

Greensboro from the Interactive Resource Center (IRC). She urged the necessity to provide case management. She shared funds spent of \$53,000 from Greensboro, \$19,000 from High Point, and 100% of Guilford County allotments.

Neal spoke to a Building Connections outreach program to bridge disconnects, with sixty (60) in attendance. She emphasized expediting those suffering crises.

**VII. OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business for this agenda.

**VIII. ADJOURN**

There being no further business, Taskforce Tri-Chair Alston opened the floor to entertain a motion.

**Moved by Councilman Michael Holmes, seconded by Councilwoman Amanda Cook, to adjourn the Homelessness Taskforce meeting.**

The meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 5:49 p.m.

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Commissioner Melvin “Skip” Alston  
Taskforce Tri-Chair

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Mayor Nancy Vaughan  
Taskforce Tri-Chair

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Mayor Cyril Jefferson  
Taskforce Tri-Chair

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Robin Keller  
Guilford County Clerk to Board