

Housing Opportunities Action Council

Governing Board

Minutes 05-22-2019

Board Members in Attendance: Biff Traber (co-chair), Aleita Hass-Holcombe, Andrea Myhre, Kenny Lowe, Julie Manning, Bettina Schempf, Jill McAllister, Sara Ingle, Chris Hawkins (with Sarah Devine), Jennifer Moore, April Hein (alt for Martha Lyon), Blake Pang

Community Members in attendance included: Maggie Cooper, Bob Baird, former Commissioner and HOAC Co-Chair Anne Schuster, City Council member Bill Glassmire, Roberta Smith, Lynn Jarvis, Ryan Wolfe (apologies for missing several names of those in attendance)

Due to a scheduling conflict, the meeting was re-located to the Benton County Commissioners meeting room. Times listed below are from the original agenda. Thanks to HOAC members and community members who helped in the rapid last-minute change of venue!

| Time | Topic | Presenter | Topic / Notes |
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| 1:30 pm | Intro | Co-chairs | <p>Approve April minutes Co-Chair report Program Manager report</p> |
| <p>A motion to approve April minutes was not offered.</p> <p>Biff Traber (Co-chair): Commissioner Augerot is unable to attend today. This is likely the last HOAC meeting, due to the changes planned for the organization. We've changed the order of the meeting to end with a little celebration of what we've accomplished, and closing out HOAC.</p> <p>Shawn Collins (Program Manager): Brief monthly summary, and a longer summary prepared for County Administrator Joe Kerby and Health Department Director Dawn Emerick available at: http://bentonhoac.com/monthly-meetings/ Following comments were delivered in the meeting:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">My comments will be brief, and barring some surprise event, final in this role. My time in this particular barrel is over, though I suspect I'll continue to be engaged in housing and homeless issues for a long time to come.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I view this with a mix of pride and sadness. While I've been somewhat skeptical about the odds of HOAC's future success without structural changes, I have always believed in the mission: safe, affordable housing for all. In creating HOAC, you all created something noble and ambitious – a collaborative group, formed around a shared vision, and a desire to drive positive change.</p> | | | |

Sustaining collaboration is hard. It takes a willingness to fail at it, examine the failure, and try again, over and over. It takes resilience, and bravery to tackle tough issues, and keep coming back for more. You all have taken risks and sacrificed time to keep HOAC going, and I believe the community is better off for your efforts. Thank you.

Looking back, what is the collective impact of our efforts?

A. We know a bit more about who we're working with, both partners and clients.

B. We know a bit more about the failures of the recent past, to plan and build adequately to support housing needs, to collectively agree and support courses of action, and to communicate and collaborate effectively with some in the community who may have been left out of the conversation.

C. We know that when aroused to collective action, change can be effected by groups in the community.

D. We know that we may still need to learn a bit about how to work together. Our collective ability to hold a conversation about housing and homelessness constructively has often been challenged.

And E. We know that the actions we are collectively taking, the sum of all the nodes in our social, medical, legal, philanthropic and administrative networks, have not uniformly succeeded. We haven't ended homelessness.

But there are successes. For all of the public and visible failures of our systems to shelter, support and restore our houseless community members, as well as those struggling to remain in housing (the at risk), successes happen. I marvel regularly at the work of organizations and individual staff to craft solutions, and the capacity of individuals to pursue paths of recovery when their environment supports positive choice.

When people are supported enough to make the risk of change worth the fear of failure and punishing outcomes — when they are supported in believing that they can succeed and then their accomplishments are celebrated, even as new goals are set and new challenges set before them, wonderful things can happen. "Self-sustainability" is possible, but the need for a network of engaged supporters never truly goes away. In fact, self-sustainability may only be possible if people have a supportive community, fellow-travelers who can encourage persistence when things are rough, and will join in the celebration when obstacles are overcome.

I look forward to seeing the progress we will make as a community going forward, and the ways the collaborative spirit that brought this group together, will be built on. Great things lie ahead, I'm certain.

My confidence comes from a stubborn optimism, and a belief that the more we see ourselves in the other, the more we can understand and relate, the greater our capacity to help becomes.

Here’s to the “hope of home”, and a future filled with ensuring we can all confidently thrive in a safe and affordable home.

1:40 pm

Public Comment

Maggie Cooper (Physical Therapist with office downtown): Attended workshop last Monday the 13th. Disappointed in the workshop. It did not meet expectations, or match the lead up. The conversation at her table quickly moved away from problems downtown, to things that could be done for the homeless – and remained focused on the idea that if there was enough affordable housing, problems would go away. Conversation ground to a halt. Was sitting with some public employees, and a business person who left, frustrated. The public employees never asked why a workshop like this was needed? They never engaged to solicit a downtown business person's concerns. Felt ignored and heart broken. There were so many upset downtown people at the meeting, that after the meeting, many of them came to Maggie to discuss their concerns, and have continued to reach out in the time since the workshop. This meant Maggie was unable to prepare the draft materials she intended to have before this meeting. Want to give thanks that the workshop, though frustrating, brought out many folks who have concerns and feel their voices have not been heard. It galvanized folks. There were many good ideas expressed, but it did not address concerns of livability downtown.

Bob Baird (Downtown business owner): At the meeting, which felt like 2 hours, 50 minutes of useful conversation, the last 10 minutes looked like a classic Corvallis meeting, with a presentation of the "solution" - the model for the new organization. This new model will fail, because it treats business as one voice. But there's retail, restaurant/hospitality, and other business (service/professional) downtown. Want the business community to pick the representatives to the new organization, rather than being appointed by some executive committee, which will likely pick someone that doesn't truly represent downtown and isn't likely to cause any trouble. If there's not more business voices on the new council, perspectives will be lost. That workshop was the first time I've ever heard of the HOAC and these meetings, even though I'm an informed downtown business owner. It's up to you guys as to whether you create the new organization as planned, but if you do, I don't think it will succeed. My family owns the Book Bin, which doesn't mean you shouldn't shop there if you don't agree with me. We've had a public bathroom for years. We put up with problems, but when there was a rape in the bathroom, we had to lock it. The feelings are strong enough in the downtown, that if you don't get real about the health and safety issues fast, vigilantism is a real possibility and is already happening. We don't want it, but we don't see alternatives. Assaults and deaths have happened, shoppers are avoiding downtown, and employees don't feel safe after dark. The best thing recently was the end of bottle redemption at the downtown Safeway. Propose that we need to criminalize stealing a shopping cart, and enforce that. There have to be limits and consequences that have real meaning to those perpetrating crimes. This point was made clear by the officer that sat at my table at the

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| <p>workshop. It's a small number of people that are a problem, but they have to be addressed. This can't go on. It's not something to take another year to figure out answers to, or there will be things that happen.</p> | | | |
| 1:55 pm | Downtown Safety & Livability Workshop Update | Co-chair Biff Traber | (information) |
| <p>Biff Traber: Ari Basil-Wagner and the team at GOBHI are compiling the notes from all of the tables at the workshop to provide a report, but this is not yet complete. Notes from the workshop will be shared through email list of attendees, HOAC website and email lists, when available. Propose that additional feedback from the workshop be shared here during this time. At my table, there were several comments about downtown being at risk, and there is an urgency to address safety and livability issues.</p> <p>Andrea Myhre: Disappointed by the workshop as well. There are several areas of concern around the community (9th as well as downtown, and others). Wish the workshop had done more to understand what people mean by safety, and looking at the data to support the conversation about crime. It's not just a homeless issue -- it could be issues around trash, police response times, lack of response when there's a mental health crisis, etc. The conversation was general, and never got to deeper issues. Appreciate that safety downtown is a huge stressor for folks downtown. But to get to a better conversation, we need to understand more about what people mean when they talk about safety</p> <p>Aleita Hass-Holcombe: Appreciated the way Ari began the meeting, and showed quotes from a variety of perspectives. Don't feel that this workshop solved any problem, but it's a start to get the conversation going.</p> <p>Jill McAllister: The meeting was focused on downtown, and needed to be. Feel we know a great deal about what best practices are needed to address community concerns, but we have a culture that is very bureaucratic, and doesn't support bold leadership. Recreating this organization makes sense, as an advisory board, but that's not going to quickly drive solutions. In the earlier workshop in September, priorities were identified – safety and livability downtown being one of them -- but we've only just begun to work on them.</p> <p>Question from community member: Are the homeless folks downtown the same folks creating issues on 9th or other areas in town?</p> <p>Kenny Lowe: Difficult to say with any certainty. It's a small population that's creating problems.</p> | | | |
| 2:05 pm | Proposed Benton County Advisory Council: Process updates and status | Co-chair Biff Traber | (information/direction) |
| <p>Biff Traber: As the HOAC Leadership Committee has been talking about the change of the organization, the group agreed that it would be helpful to have more community discussion about the new organization. One more focused meeting on the new organization with opportunities for community input is needed – and is being planned for June. Today we wanted to get feedback from the HOAC membership on how that meeting may need to be structured. We think it should be an evening meeting at the library - but other</p> | | | |

details are still TBD, and Leadership would like input from the Governing Board, and community members here today.

Blake Pang: Clear we need to have more business input into the process - United Way can help get the word out about the meeting and encourage attendance. We need to bring some of the larger employers in the community to the table.

Maggie Cooper: Mr. Pang, I like your suggestion, but when business people do show up, meetings end up focused on the homeless, and this new meeting needs to stay on track. Can't shame people for having an opinion. Most people are afraid to come because they feel that their business will be harmed based on their views. At the end of last summer, when the shelter moved back to Hanson Tire Factory, someone came into Gibb's Furniture and yelled at Ken Gibbs, asserting that he was one of those who were opposed to the plan for 2nd Street. This had a chilling effect on the business community.

Blake Pang: Want to point out that United Way also took threats, of lawsuits and withdrawn donations, due to the struggles over shelter. It wasn't just directed at downtown business.

Biff Traber: Need to be sure to create safe space for conversation.

Kenny Lowe: Suggestion to social service providers, it makes sense to start getting business representation on your Boards -- if you don't have that, it's worth pursuing to build stronger alliances. End goals for different sectors may be the same - creating effective solutions -- but the common ground hasn't been secured.

Bettina Schempf: It's not an "either/or" but an "and" -- we need to address housing, mental health, crime, addictions in concert. We're all in this together.

Question from community member: Can we bring law enforcement into the discussion?

Biff Traber: Yes - they have been involved in this group, and should be part of future discussion.

Jennifer Moore: Logistics of the meeting and the group going forward need to be considered. I've been involved since 2007 and the initial work to create the Ten Year Plan. There's always been a tension between representing the whole county, and Corvallis specifics. Some attention to keep those tensions in balance is needed.

Bob Baird: Mr. Pang suggests bringing larger businesses into the conversation, but many larger businesses have their own security, and see the problems differently. We don't have that downtown (no in-house private security). This week, my wife called the police on someone, and they told her that other communities are sending homeless individuals here. I'm of the opinion that if the community was stable, and only local, we'd see more progress in the work of local agencies. But with the new additions from elsewhere, we're not gaining ground. We have to say "We're full" -- not building a wall around the problem, but must address this issue. It makes our problems worse when others send their most challenging people here.

Andrea Myhre: The meeting might make a good opportunity to introduce the idea of the advisory committee to the community. We have had a tradition of an annual meeting to share info with the community - this may be an opportunity to share data and the details of the new advisory group. See a lack of alignment between systems in the community as a substantial cause of problems. If someone has mental health issues, and is homeless, they have to meet high standard to get treatment. In our state, across every community, a lack of mental health resources is creating challenges.

Julie Manning: Agree with Andrea’s idea to share an introduction of the new advisory group at a meeting in June. Would also be helpful to discuss what we envision this group will do, as outlined in the draft IGA (inter-governmental agreement) and Bylaws. One of the key goals of the new group is to focus on implementing goals of the updated Ten Year Plan. Many of the concerns raised here are referenced in the Ten Year Plan. That means we've already gone a good distance toward identifying actions we need to take, and initiating action. Street outreach is a good example. What we haven't done is identify specifics across the full plan on what we need to do, who will do it, and metrics for success. Don't want to give the impression we have no plan -- nothing could be further from the truth. We have to communicate and share the work that's been done, and the plans going forward.

Sara Ingle: Concern that there are so few members here today. Some of our members are quasi-governmental, and others are independent. Stone Soup is an example - we feed people, but can't control what they do beyond their time at the meal. Concern that HOAC members aren't attending the meetings, and that there's some expectation that organizations like Stone Soup can solve the problems of downtown. Concern we're losing involvement of many agencies that provide key services to the homeless. Providing these services doesn't "promote" homelessness. It's important we have a positive, forward moving agenda to support people in their lives. As co-chair of Housing Supply and Messaging workgroup, we were focused on housing and policy, rather than just homeless.

Maggie Cooper: While a good idea to present what this group has been working on, it is premature to present the new organization model as complete because not all of the stakeholders outlined in the GOBHI contract have been consulted. This organizational structure is still a work in progress, and can't move forward until those stakeholders are brought into the process.

2:20 pm

HOAC: Accomplishments, acknowledgements, appreciation and close out

Biff Traber: Comments on challenges we have been having shouldn't distract us from our accomplishments. The organization (HOAC) has been in place about 3 years now. One of the accomplishments is that by moving ahead with an organization, and staffing it, it helped us structure and define the work. Another accomplishment was hiring the Benton County Health Department to update the Ten Year Plan. Beyond this, work of the formal workgroups, and informal groups beyond HOAC has helped advance our understanding of needs. Creating the street outreach team (SORT) has built bridges to those on the street, and CPD. In addition, this group came together to work on the last year of the Shelter on 4th, and address some of the problems at that location. If HOAC hadn't done that, we may not have been able to have the successful Shelter at the Hanson Tire Factory.

Jennifer Moore: The Adult Services Team has been stabilized, and has had success in helping specific individuals move forward, and that work is worth acknowledging.

Andrea Myhre: AST (Adult Services Team), SORT (Street Outreach and Response Team), the Vulnerable Patients team -- there are many good efforts underway now, that were not happening before HOAC. This work is difficult and takes time and effort.

Julie Manning: Appreciated that the current group, its predecessor, and the new group to come is willing to work hard, be inclusive to service providers, philanthropy and other sectors, and continues to collaborate. There's been a desire to expand to include more business representation for a long time, but this hasn't happened yet. Going forward, we need multi-stakeholder involvement, and this group has endeavored to be a place where that can happen.

Bettina Schempf: In the workgroups, and in places like Homeless Vulnerable Patients group, multiple agencies have come together to work on issues, which is valuable. Want to advocate for more focus on struggling families with children, and youth. Hope that we will listen to those front-line agencies and staff who work with those in need, to understand how to develop more effective solutions.

Chris Quaka: Benton Community Foundation (BCF) has been involved in a variety of ways over the years. Happy to say that even after BCF stepped down from HOAC last year, members of the group continued to work with BCF. And happy to announce the first awards of the BCF Homeless to Housing Initiative will be granted this summer. BCF has raised over \$400,000 so far. Thanks to all for your work.

Sara Ingle: Much of the work that's been done has been due to Shawn Collins. Prompt, effective, communicates with everyone, works behind the scenes to create solutions, and worked hard to get the Men's Shelter created at Hanson Tire Factory. A caring administrator, and the group is stronger for his work.

Blake Pang: Echo Sara's comments. Pleasure working with Shawn - no one works harder to support solutions. Hasn't seen a meeting he didn't like - will join any conversation and work hard to make things happen.

Biff Traber: Key part of forming HOAC was having a skilled administrator to help. It was a very simply written job description. Shawn came in, took on that work, and began to develop real expertise in this area. Glad to be working with him.

Biff Traber: As we are going into a new organization - there needs to be some level of a wrap up, and a motion to close out the organization. We don't have full attendance of all members, but we do have a quorum, and need to have a vote to disband the organization (Housing Opportunities Action Council) with the end of the fiscal year (June 30).

Blake Pang: so moved.

Andrea Myhre: 2nd the motion.

Motion approved unanimously

Biff Traber: Pursuant to the motion, the HOAC directs the Lead Administrator to reconcile and report on the HOAC budget, work with County to effect a smooth transition and transfer of the website and relevant files, and communicate actions of the group to disband through appropriate channels.

Meeting adjourned: 3:00 pm