

## Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

### Remote Meeting

**Thursday, March 25, 2021**

**8:30 am – 10:00 am**

## Minutes

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Adam Harr	City of Portland	Norm Maze	Shalom House
Cullen Ryan	CHOM	Ben Martineau	HVJ
Aaron Geyer	City of Portland	Oriana Farnham	MEJP
Jim Devine	HVJ	Brian Townsend	Amistad
Bill Higgins	Ha4aLL	Rob Liscord	MEJP
Jenny Stasio	Through These Doors	Peter McLaughlin	People's Housing Coalition
Donna Yellen	Preble Street	Sydney Avitia-Jacques	People's Housing Coalition
Anna Brewer	Preble Street/HVJ	Ben Strick	Spurwink
Joe McNally	Milestone Recovery	Jesse Falero	People's Housing Coalition
Beth Campbell	United Way	Dan Coyne	United Way
Amanda Corneau	People's Housing Coalition	Amy Geren	Portland Downtown

Summary: The group discussed the merits of varying levels of restricted to open membership and which organizations are eligible to join as a voting member. Parallel to the membership eligibility discussion was a conversation on the merits of public versus closed meetings. The meeting ended with the passage of the following motion:

Membership be restricted to organizations whose mission or practice includes focusing on ending homeless, providing services to the unhoused community, funding services for the unhoused community, or advocating alongside the unhoused community. ESAC members are the only entities that can vote.

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- **Membership**
  - Stick to agencies and not individuals.
    - How large can an effective body be? Is there a right size?
  - Closed membership
    - Include entities with the mission to end homelessness for individuals.
    - Don't include organizations whose mission is not to end homelessness, such as community groups that want to protect neighborhoods from homelessness.
    - Neighborhood associations do not offer services and have histories aligned with keeping people out of neighborhoods.
      - Membership focused on homelessness *works* and including neighborhood associations would put us back to square one.
      - The organizations present are doing work in the community, *not* opposing it.
      - Closing the group to have open conversations would be undermined if neighborhood associations were included.
      - Some, including unhoused members, would have a hard time participating if neighborhood associations are there, saying potential hurtful things and perpetuating trauma.
      - They do not represent entire neighborhoods.
    - Unhoused people are the experts in the experience of being unhoused.
      - Adding neighborhood associations would put the burden on unhoused folks to educate them on homelessness.
      - How do we make it so unhoused people do not have to do the educating?
    - Entities without stakes in homelessness already have venues for their voices to be heard, such as City Council meetings.
    - Feedback is different from membership.
      - Public comment periods.
      - Last meeting had great conversations that might not have happened with neighborhood associations there.
      - Organizations in this group can solicit and share neighborhood feedback.
    - The purpose of the ESAC membership is to move forward with people who provide services or fund services.
    - The current meetings of 14 entities work and are not too insular.
  - Open membership
    - ESAC won't just be an information sharing place.
    - ESAC could be a more effective voice at promoting community engagement with a goal of systems change to solve homelessness, to be more solutions oriented.

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- Requiring homelessness in a mission would exclude some organizations in this meeting.
  - How to determine if an organization has a stake in homelessness?
  - A super majority voting structure can facilitate systemic work.
  - Excluding groups for not having a sufficient stake is hard to adjudicate.
  - Err on the side of inclusion.
- Whether or not an organization lists homelessness explicitly in a mission statement, organizations here are doing work to end homelessness or offering services.
- Consider how guests from a neighborhood association with one vote would listen and participate at our meetings.
  - Opportunity to change minds in more open forums.
  - With the deliberative nature/outcomes-based nature of ESAC, there is a potential benefit.
- The path forward is working with people we disagree with:
  - Connection fights stigma.
  - This could be addressed by distinguishing between who votes and who attends.
  - If a neighborhood association wants to participate to end homelessness they should.
  - How to build connection and relationships while continuing our work?
- The education department is not at the table and the education aspect needs to be addressed.
- People's Housing Coalition **MOVED** that organizations be limited to organizations providing services to the unhoused community.
  - That eliminates the United Way as a member ESAC and the Tri-Chair, which is not a direct provider of homeless services
  - The executive committee said that groups that have part of their core mission or practice that provides, advocates or funds homeless services.
- People's Housing Coalition **AMENDED MOTION**: membership be restricted to organizations whose mission is focused on ending homeless, providing services to the unhoused community, funding services in the unhoused community, or advocating alongside the unhoused community.
  - Preble Street **SECONDED** as amended: membership be restricted to organizations whose mission or practice includes focusing on ending homeless, providing services to the unhoused community, funding services for the unhoused community, or advocating alongside the unhoused community.
  - This is for assessing shelter in the Portland area; some funders are statewide such as DHHS. Are we extending membership to those organizations?

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- Yes, as the group discussed including Westbrook GA.
    - This is about voting membership, not attendance.
      - Is this a baseline of who could be a member, not automatically including members?
      - It's for who could be a voting member; a process for adding members will be separate.
    - Add an amendment to clarify if is for voting membership.
      - ESAC members are the only entities that can vote.
    - Membership be restricted to organizations whose mission or practice includes focusing on ending homeless, providing services to the unhoused community, funding services for the unhoused community, or advocating alongside the unhoused community. ESAC members are the only entities that can vote.
      - Start with Voting membership to take out an adversarial tone?
  - MOTION PASSED as amended: Membership be restricted to organizations whose mission or practice includes focusing on ending homeless, providing services to the unhoused community, funding services for the unhoused community, or advocating alongside the unhoused community. ESAC members are the only entities that can vote.
    - All organizations in attendance voted in in support, except for United Way, which voted against
- **Meetings**
  - Meetings used to be closed and neighborhood associations were invited; why did we originally open up the meetings?
    - It was open before but less people came to the physical in-person meetings. usually came to listen.
    - COVID & moving things online increased accessibility and controversy at the City level around homelessness have greatly increased engagement from when it was in One City Center.
  - Closed meetings
    - Needs to be something other than a public meeting for a safe forum to facilitate unguarded discussions.
    - Going to neighborhood associations and then reporting back could be the approach.
      - Our members bring back those perspectives and converse.
      - A quarterly public meeting.
      - Neighbors who don't agree with each other from the same neighborhood went after the each other at a fall public meeting that got derailed.
    - Proactive outreach in the community and pulling information in would prevent unhoused people from having to do the education.
    - Inaccurate quotes and reporting can hinder our work.
  - Open meetings

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- Moved to closed meetings because meetings had become unwieldy; it is possible to have a healthy dialogue during well chaired meetings.
- To create housing, it is important for neighbors to understand the continuum of care that gets and keeps people housed.
- Going small and insular doesn't help our ability to solve homelessness.
- Engaging neighborhood associations early and often would prevent the adversarial relationship seen recently with the shelter relocation process.
- Inclusion, transparency and communication, lowers the temperature.
- Fear of the unknown and feelings of disempowerment leads to rage.
- Quarterly meetings might still make folks feel like outsiders.
- **Additional member organizations that were brainstormed at the Feb mtg**
  - Open for groups that should be invited as participants.
  - We have membership now; what do our meetings look like in general?
    - Quarterly/number of open meetings and closed meetings, etc.
    - Work out bringing people in after the above.
- **Next Steps**
  - Should there be another meeting before the next meeting?
    - Yes, perhaps the first Thursday in April.
    - Meet the first and third Thursdays until governance is sorted.
  - Agenda
    - Open and public meetings.
    - Meeting frequency and length.
    - Process for adding new members.
    - System for Meeting Minutes