

Notes from Homelessness Conference, May 8, 2015
L. Ames, with personal observations [in brackets].

Public comments:

- * Some homeless have skills, such as carpentry, and could help assemble dwellings in exchange for use of one.
- * They need stability; a safe place to camp. hard to be constantly kept moving; theft of belongings. There is no place to legally sleep other than in the shelter: every other place trespassing.
- * Shelters do not allow pets and don't accommodate couples.
- * There should be a homeless person on the Task Force. [But which one? Who is most representative? Also, would take time to go thru formal vetting and seating process...]
- * Task Force members each get a vote; say they're listening to the homeless, but the homeless don't get a vote. [There are few votes taken, and none have been evenly split, but still it is symbolic...]
- * I spoke: introduced myself as Chair of Nghbrhds Com'sn, said we're there to listen & learn, share info w/ community, & to offer our help.

Staff Report:

- * There are 7,500 homeless in County, including 5,500 without shelter.
- * Permanent housing, immediate, and transitional.
- * Transitional generally not thought of as a viable solution: high return rate. However, for youth, it does help: they go on to get jobs or off to school.

Board Discussion on Work Plan:

- * Need for immediate housing is critical: it shouldn't be agendized for last Task Force meeting (in December).
- * "Safe Parking" -- a legal place to sleep in car?
- * Give the homeless old cars? [But what about maintenance and insurance? Or are they just steel sleeping boxes?]
- * Very long (decade!) waiting list for Sec. 8 vouchers & housing assistance. Some current homeless didn't need assistance when the list was made, but recently lost job or had medical issues. A: a portion of the allotment is for immediate distribution rather than for those on the list.
- * Discussion on rearranging the work schedule: do Vet housing first (there's a window of opportunity for funding), then shift Immediate Housing forward.
- * Q: what would gov't do if there was an earthquake that displaced 7,500? Much faster response! [But those displaced might not have the underlying mental or physical problems of the current homeless...]
- * Q: good to discuss Vets, but what about Foster Children? What about newly released prisoners? Hard to prioritize care. A: Work to reduce all homelessness.

Next meeting: June 12, 9 AM, at 70 W. Hedding.