

COORDINATED HOUSELESS RESPONSE OFFICE (CHRO)

Board Meeting Minutes

11 – 12:30 pm on Thursday, March 21, 2024
Deschutes Services Building, 1300 NW Wall St., Bend, OR

Attendance: Commissioner Adair, Chair, Deschutes County; Councilor Zwicker, City of Redmond; Councilor Blum, City of Sisters; Councilor Perkins, City of Bend; Commissioner DeBone, Deschutes County; Chris Ogren, CHRO; Eric King, City Manager - City of Bend; Mayor Richer, City of La Pine; Eliza Wilson, Homeless Leadership Coalition; Captain William Bailey, Deschutes County Sheriff's Office; Mickie Derting, City of Bend; Erik Kropp, Deschutes County; Nick Lelack, Deschutes County Administrator; Tammy Baney, Executive Director – COIC; Jean Hrabik, COIC; Amy Fraley, City of Bend; Jessica Gamble, Home More Network; Keith Witcosky, City Manager – City of Redmond; Kerry Prosser, City of Sisters; Linda Cline, City of Redmond; Brook O'Keefe, City of Bend; Steven Emerson, Deschutes County; Gwenn Wysling, Bethlehem Inn; Jordan Wheeler, City Manager – City of Sisters; Mike Savara, Oregon Housing and Community Services; Leann Knapp, Oregon Housing & Community Services; Jim Cook, Oasis Village; Carly Congdon, NeighborImpact; Chuck Hemingway, Community Member; Linda Murrer, Community Member

1. **Call to Order**

Chair Adair called the meeting to order at 11:00.

2. **Approval of Minutes & Review of Financials**

Chair Adair reviewed the minutes from the meeting on February 15, 2024, and the financials.

VOTE: Councilor Perkins motioned approval of the February 15th Minutes. Councilor Zwicker seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. **Lessons Learned at National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH)**

Chris Ogren & Eliza Wilson shared that five individuals from Central Oregon had recently attended the National Alliance to End Homelessness's Conference on Unsheltered Homelessness. Chris and Eliza reviewed some of the highlights of the conference, including lessons learned from other communities and recent trends across national Best Practices. Board members and staff asked questions about lessons learned at the conference, and Councilor Blum asked if there was any indication at the conference that trends around homelessness were improving.

4. **Letter of Request to HLC – Data Dashboard**

Mickie Derting presented a memo regarding the data dashboard, requesting approval to draft a letter to formally request access to information from the Homeless Leadership Coalition, to support the creation of a dashboard on

homelessness data. Eliza Wilson shared that the community, providers, and the HLC all want to see increased transparency on data around homelessness. Chris agreed that a collaborative approach would have the greatest impact.

VOTE: Councilor Perkins moved to approve the memo and directed staff to draft the letter of request to the HLC. Councilor Zwicker seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Legislative Update

Mike Savara and Leann Knapp presented on 2024 Legislative Session and provided updates on bills related to housing and homelessness.

6. CHRO Business Updates

a. RFQ Update - Chris Ogren reported that the Request For Qualifications went live on March 12. Chris noted the ways staff had announced the solicitation, including a press release, outreach to community partners, and an interview in the media. Staff also provided a virtual Open House, to interested applicants. A recording of the open house is available on the COIC website. Chris shared that up to this point, there have not been any applications submitted for the RFQ and suggested delaying the timeline in order to solicit feedback from more statewide providers.

VOTE: Councilor Perkins motioned approval of extending the RFQ deadline to April 12. Mayor Richer seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. CHRO Roadshow/Communications Lead Update - Chris provided an update on discussions about the CHRO Road Show. Chris reviewed the request made by the Board during the December CHRO meeting, which outlined initial requests for a way to engage the public. Chris shared that staff had met with each community's communication leads and had shared the CHRO's vision for a roadshow concept, and that staff were eager to engage. Chris noted staff's unanimous preference for a coordinated approach rather than a community-specific approach. Chris the Board if the elements requested in December still resonated with the Board and noted he'd follow up with an email asking for more feedback. Councilor Blum expressed support for a series of meetings, rather than one meeting that tries to accomplish all of the goals.

8. Community Updates

- La Pine - Mayor Richer discussed Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) as a potential opportunity to preserve affordable housing in La Pine.
- Sisters - Councilor Blum provided an update for Sisters, including some proposals that are coming in for low income and affordable housing.

- Redmond - Councilor Zwicker stated that Redmond is on task, with Rooted Homes and Housing Works properties coming along. Councilor Zwicker also noted the Squire Hotel being renovated by Hayden Homes.
- Bend - Councilor Perkins attended the National Leagues of Cities Conference, stating that our funding streams are extremely limited compared to other communities and that we need sustainable funding.
- Deschutes – Commissioner Adair thanked Hayden Homes for the work they are doing on the Squire Motel to develop it into workforce housing. Commissioner Adair also noted that she had received a report on Juniper Ridge that said there are 20 people living on County property and that it seems like things are cleaning up and looking better.

9. Public Comment

- Commissioner DeBone presented information regarding Central Oregon prescribed burns.
- Linda Murrer provided input about her concerns with projects operating in the community. Full Statement attached.
- Gwenn Wysling provided an update on Bethlehem Inn, specifically the Redmond location transitioning from shelter to housing.

10. Other Items and Adjourn

- Chair Adair adjourned the meeting @ 12:29.

Full Statement from Linda Murrer:

"Statement for CHRO meeting on 3/21/24

I would like to express my concern over the recent closure and repurposing of the Bethlehem Inn – Redmond. In 2021 Bethlehem Inn was awarded \$2,700,000 of state money through Project Turnkey to purchase and remodel a motel in Redmond to be used for a shelter hosting 88 beds. Another \$900,000 was also awarded by Deschutes County for further remodeling. Once open, BI encountered a lack of need for this type of shelter in Redmond along with reported staffing shortages. In October of 2023 BI announced they were closing their shelter and would eventually reopen as a Rapid Rehousing facility with only 30 beds.

During the November 29, 2023 MAC meeting, the committee voted to award \$84,257.89 to BI Redmond for further renovations to convert the facility to a rapid rehousing model, with the knowledge that there would be another request at a later date for funds for operating costs.

By late 2023, the MAC committee was fully aware that they had met the state's goal for shelter operations in Deschutes County but were coming up very short meeting the state's goal for Rapid Rehousing operations which would create a potential loss of Executive Order funding. It was at this time, BI quickly switched gears and was now to be used for rapid rehousing. COIC Executive Director Baney, who also sits on the Board of Bethlehem Inn, was also advocating for additional funds for BI so they could have operational funding to open before the early January state deadline. At some point in December, in a closed vote via email, the MAC committee voted to grant another \$510,075 to BI for operation costs. This allocation was not made public in the meeting videos.

Bethlehem Inn has received almost \$4,200,000 million dollars of public money for Redmond. They currently only have 13 participants and will only have capacity for up to 30. Their Bend shelter is full with 150 participants.

I have the following questions:

1. Why wasn't this asset used for overflow for their Bend shelter instead of reducing capacity by two thirds? They are helping many fewer people.
2. Their per bed cost is \$140,000. This extravagant expenditure has not been fully transparent to the public.
3. Why was the recent \$510,000 allocated in a private MAC Committee email vote and not made public?
4. Why was Executive Director Baney advocating for this model switch and funding when she has what appears to be a conflict of interest, especially with COIC in jeopardy of missing their RRH goal?
5. Why was BI granted almost \$85,000 for remodeling when they did not have their larger plan flushed out?

In addition to all of these questions, I am very uncomfortable with the amount of public funds that have been allocated or spent with The Old Mill Suites rapid rehousing project in Bend. The total as of January was \$4,700,000 (MAC funding) plus another \$200,000 (MAC funding) which was requested for furnishings.

There has been a grand total of over \$9,000,000 spent or allocated for 2 rapid rehousing projects in Deschutes County and currently less than 20 people are being housed. In my opinion this is an egregious example of unbridled spending of public funds with very limited results.

Where is the oversight? Where is the transparency into the spending of public funds?

I implore the CHRO board to bring COIC Executive Director Baney , Bethlehem Inn Executive Director Gwenn Wysling and the Old Mill Suites Executive Director into a public meeting to answer these and other questions and for a full status update. We the taxpayers of Oregon and Deschutes County deserve to know how and why our public funds are being spent.

Thank you,

Linda Murrer
Concerned Citizen”