

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

TEXAS STRATEGIC PLAN TO PREVENT AND  
END HOMELESSNESS

PUBLIC HEARING

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Dallas City Hall  
1500 Marilla St.  
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BEFORE:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. FAENZA: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much for being here today. My name's Mike Faenza. I'm the president of the Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance, and besides welcoming you, I want to say thank you to the folks here up at this table and introduce them.

They represent the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless and they're the driving force here in Texas for the US Interagency Council plan and their efforts over many years to put the needs of our homeless neighbors and solutions to homelessness on the map in the United States. And, as a whole, that agency has really created a lot of policy and funding for services that ten or twelve years ago was not there. So we're grateful to the Council.

And to start off, I'm going to introduce Colin McGrath, who will really be our leader today with this event as you give input into the Texas Interagency Council's plan. And Colin is an AmeriCorps VISTA and planner with the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless and he's served full time as a staff member for the Council since November of 2010.

On my immediate right is David Long and David is the president of the Texas Affordable Housing

Corporation and he's been an advisory member of the Texas Interagency Council on Homelessness since 2010 and his role on the Council is that of a liaison between the Interagency Council here in Texas and the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness in Washington, DC.

And I want to introduce Mindy, who's here in the front row. Mindy is a colleague of David's at the Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation. She's senior asset oversight compliance specialist with the Corporation and she's been a support and an assistant to David in his position as the liaison between the Texas Council and the US Interagency Council.

And that's my colleague at MDHA, Paula Maroney. Hello, Paula, and thanks for your help.

Okay. So I think without any further ado, I'll turn the microphone over to Colin.

MR. McGRATH: All right. Thank you, Mike, so much, and thank you to Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance for hosting this event and inviting us to Dallas.

So I'm Colin McGrath with the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless. As of October 2011 we have released a state plan to prevent and end homelessness.

We are going to finalize the plan early mid-January. Until then we are receiving public comment. We

are receiving public comment. We want to make the plan as responsive as possible to the needs of our communities throughout Texas. So we've been traveling around to Corpus, to San Antonio. We were in Fort Worth this morning -- Dallas, Houston, Austin -- other areas of the state, Laredo, Lubbock.

And the goal here today is just to hear from you all in Dallas to learn what you think of the plan and to find out is it addressing the needs of the city and how can we make state agencies more responsive to local government needs, or local coalition needs -- to CFC [phonetic] needs, to service providers' need.

Just a brief word about the council. We have eleven state agencies that are members of the council. Each agency has a representative that the executive director or commissioner of the agency appoints to sit on the council. Among the agencies are Department of Family and Protective Services, Department of State Health Services, Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, Aging and Disability Services, Texas Department of Criminal Justice, the Department of Housing and Community Affairs, and others -- the list is long.

The overall goal of the plan is to find ways for the agencies that sit on this council to coordinate

their resources most effectively and efficiently. There, I think, is a critical need for mainstream services right now.

Mainstreams services are those that are not specifically engaged in homelessness assistance, programs like TANF that are administered through the Health and Human Services Commission -- or food stamps, workforce programs through the Texas Workforce Commission, because since about 2000, HUD had emphasized increasingly that the funding that goes to the Continuum of Care should go towards the housing component of services or of there HUD-funded programs which leaves supportive services sort of out of the picture and somewhat underfunded.

At this point I think the emphasis is around 80 percent of COC grant funds should go to housing and that leaves the question where are the supportive services going to come from -- case management, job training -- you name it.

So we in -- through the plan we really want to find ways to make state agency services available to support the housing work that's already happening but also to increase housing opportunities on the ground to get people re-housed, people who are experiencing homelessness.

So I'll give a brief overview of each section of the plan as we go along. So the hearing is broken up into four sections. Each focuses on a different priority area within the plan and I will just describe the goal and the objectives that we have identified in the plan and then invite people to speak to that topic.

So we'll get right started. Our first section is affordable housing and supportive services. The goal is to increase housing options for homeless individuals and families who face multiple barriers to secure housing. We have three objectives within that section.

The first is to identify individuals and families experiencing homelessness and prioritize their housing stability; second, explore options for increasing the supply and availability of affordable and permanent supportive housing units in Texas; and, third, to promote the strategic pairing of state agency, nonprofit and private sector resources to increase supportive services linked with affordable housing units.

So that's -- you know, we'd like to invite people to speak to this topic. Has the plan -- do we have the right priorities in mind and what needs to happen in Texas? So -- and we have individuals listed who wanted to speak to this issue?

MR. FAENZA: Yes, Colin. Our first speaker would be Dwight Johnson from the Salvation Army -- or from Salvation --

MR. JOHNSON: Salvation Army. You got it right.

MR. FAENZA: Okay, sir.

MR. JOHNSON: I am Dwight Johnson.

MR. FAENZA: Sir, could you come up here to the podium, and thanks for your comments today.

MR. McGRATH: Yeah, thank you, everyone.

MR. JOHNSON: And I'll try to make this brief. Yes, I'm Dwight Johnson. I am homeless. I'm living right now at the Salvation Army. Concerning the question that's on the format there, I was -- being homeless you have to be able to identify the different levels of homeless people that you have in order to know how to help them.

Some of them down there are mentally ill; some of them are illiterate; some are just people that's been caught bad breaks and just can't get their feet on the ground. I don't understand how you could help these different people without knowing what their individual problems are and you got all kind of people down there.

And basically that's what I want to know --

your bridge, what type of bridge of communication do you have set up to help homeless people rather than -- I mean, I understand your bureaucratic political scope about how to go about doing that and the grants and the loans and the government and all that but I just don't understand how you can reach those people and deal with those people if you're not in communication with those people.

MR. McGRATH: Can I ask you a question?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

MR. McGRATH: And so part of the plan, and this is kind of a symptom of the way we've broken up the hearing into different chunks, but one of our goals is to improve the amount of data collection that happens in the state.

So, yeah, and this is a very impersonal way of finding out who we're serving but through, you know, the Point in Time count that happens annually to assess how many people are homeless in a community and who is experiencing homelessness in a community is one area that we can look to to find out more.

And that's sort of like our biggest basis in the plan. And then the Homeless Management Information System that everyone who, say, enters an emergency shelter or receives some sort of service, they enter information

into that system, and we're trying to find ways to aggregate that information so we can report it to decision makers on a statewide level.

But my question is is that adequate or are there other areas that we should be looking to?

MR. JOHNSON: There are definitely some other areas. And like I say, you need to just be in contact with -- it's mainly the shelter, The Bridge, Stewpot, Salvation Army -- that's where your homeless people are.

MR. McGRATH: Yeah.

MR. JOHNSON: They're not in your communities.

MR. McGRATH: Uh-huh.

MR. JOHNSON: They're not in your communities. They're in the shelters and you're going to have to go to the shelters to deal with that, yes. I just wanted to share that with you.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you.

MR. FAENZA: Thank you, Dwight.

Next person to comment is Monique Allen from UPCDC Texas, Inc.

MS. ALLEN: I am a not-for-profit housing developer and we are focusing on looking at housing for homeless wounded warriors and vets, which is another category that seems to be falling between the cracks. And

one of the things that I find is that there is not enough for that particular data base, or group, there's not enough communication, it seems to me, between the VA and the not-for-profit agencies to really reach out.

I mean, this issue of identifying your population is a huge, huge issue. And I think the other thing is that we need to slim the bureaucracy or the bureaucratic -- not the bureaucracy -- bureaucratic processes to create housing.

TDHCA is a nightmare and I repeat -- I've said that to the legislature and I've said that to them. We need to -- if the government, the federal government, won't slim it down or make it easier, we need to do it ourselves. So I think that's it. And there are many of us who would like to do more building and we find there are a lot of barriers. And it's not just economic barriers or, you know, financing barriers.

So those are two issues I have but, in particular, we have this group of the veterans who are -- it's getting bigger and bigger and there's tremendous -- these are guys who come out of Iraq, Afghanistan, often suffering from PTSD and then physical problems.

So that's a group -- and they're young. They're between 18 and probably 26. So it's a different

group and they just give up. And the groups that are active are --

(Sound of cell phone ringing.)

MS. ALLEN: I just got this two weeks ago, guys, and I don't know how to use it. It's an iPhone. That's part of the problem. I keep turning it off. I don't a teen-age engineer at home --

So I think those are the issues and we need to really look at that so carefully because they really are a suffering population.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you so much.

MS. ALLEN: Thank you.

MR. FAENZA: Thank you, Monique. And the comments are three minutes or less, and our next speaker will be Moses Vine who's with the Street Scene so out of the Stewpot, First Presbyterian Church.

Moses.

MS. CUNNINGHAM: This is Moses right here. He doesn't want to speak but I have something to say when I -- I'll get up.

MR. FAENZA: Okay.

MS. CUNNINGHAM: I'm Sheryl Cunningham.

MR. McGRATH: When you do come up to speak, just for the record, since we are recording the whole

session, I know we're calling your name out but if you don't mind, coming up, introducing yourself --

MS. CUNNINGHAM: Yes. I don't mind at all. My name is Sheryl Cunningham. I'm right now currently at the Austin Street Shelter. I didn't know what meeting I was coming to until I got here but, now that I know, I have something to say.

Based on my experience, the main problem of homelessness is drug addiction and alcohol addiction. I can't speak on mental problems, people with mental problems, but I can speak on those who have drug addictions. I have a drug addiction myself.

Being homeless since 2007, the resources are there, plenty of resources -- Salvation Army, The Bridge, Austin Street Shelter, food stamps, Texas Department -- I have used them myself and to my advantage have received a job, homes -- by myself, you know, saving money, getting clean, going to the NA meetings, whatever I had to do -- be clean was what I had to do in order for this stuff to work for me. And it can work for anybody else, without the drugs and the alcohol.

We need to address drug addiction because, like I said, the resources are already there. Plenty of resources are out there, and I have done it over twice.

I've been homeless since 2007, got on my feet for about two years and I'm back in the shelter because of drug addiction. That's what needs to be addressed. Thank you.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you.

MR. FAENZA: Thank you, Sheryl.

Next comment is from Tim Thetford who's a policy guy as Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance.

MR. THETFORD: Hi. My name is Tim Thetford. I'm director of public policy for Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance and I have read the report, the plan, excuse me, and I found it very well written. Specifically, I really feel like the background material that you had in there concerning the causes of homelessness and the focus on the solution of permanent supportive housing is adequate in the plan.

And there are a couple of things on page 23. The three objectives that you have there. I found that they are ones we're in particular agreement with but especially on 1 and 3, identify individuals and families experiencing homelessness and prioritize their housing stability.

This is a critical element -- identifying, and where can we do that? We should do that in the very first possible place. And given -- we know that a large

percentage of folks who find themselves experiencing homelessness have mental illness, severe mental illness; have drug addiction; and have a number of other circumstances.

But depression is a disability that also causes a great deal of the homeless situations. The place where we could find them first would be where they're being treated, when they're being treated, by our mental health providers and behavioral health providers, and we have been working for some time to try to encourage identification and direction from the intake of folks who are receiving behavioral healthcare.

The third objective, promote the strategic pairing of state agency nonprofit and private sector resources to increase supportive services linked with affordable housing units -- this clearly endorses collaboration between state agencies in increasing access to supportive services. Our experience at this time right now is that we're actually at a -- we're already at a shortage in terms of supportive services.

With the cooperation of our providers in the Continuum of Care, MDHA has led in the development of almost 2,000 permanent supportive housing units. And as you know from the report, permanent supportive housing is

completed with supportive services.

To provide affordable housing and then supportive services creates an environment of housing stability where those things can be addressed which caused one to experience homelessness in the first place.

And it is our concern that, because of funding cuts which originated with the state legislature in this last session, the people who are going to be hurt the most are probably the people who are most vulnerable. The end result of how we're going to divvy up what's left of behavioral health funding in this region, in the NorthSTAR region, is that about 70 percent of our permanent supportive housing residents are going to lose some level of their supportive service.

That was just the most reasonable way for our North Texas Behavioral Health Authority to allocate the cuts. They couldn't do it with Medicaid so they did it for indigent populations which were -- who are not enrolled in Medicaid. That's about 70 percent of our residents.

So we're going the wrong way in that, and I just -- we just wanted to make sure and register that where we can, and I think this is one important place to do it.

There is one last thing, if I have any time left, and -- in that portion of the report where you discuss expanding affordable housing stock and utilizing the housing subsidies in the state to encourage permanent support housing. We wanted to suggest that you incorporate one of the recommendations from the Sunset Commission from 2011 when they were reviewing TDHCA.

Their recommendation was that we eliminate one of the tax credit scoring criteria, the second most valuable in that process, which is called quantifiable community support. And the way that the legislature has dictated the means of gathering that evidence of support is by letters from neighborhood organizations which are probably the least likely to have the full picture on what we're trying to do and instead recommend using the city councils and county commissioners courts. That's all I have. Thank you so much.

MR. FAENZA: Thank you, Tim. If I could you just -- a 30-second bill -- we work together. If, in your relationship with the Department of state services -- if they could require that their contract with behavioral health systems would have them identify homeless people and track homeless people. In NorthSTAR ValueOptions uses a scale to rate housing stability.

We have this crisis in the system and they can't identify who is homeless which they say prevents them from creating a prioritized population and so the cuts are effective, so homeless people have no case management in effect anymore. So that's a huge structural issue in the contracts between the state and the local providers.

And we're going to move on to homeless prevention and Robert Ceccarelli, who's a homeless -- oh, it's a -- did we miss somebody?

MS. WALKER: Well, no. This gentleman wants to speak on homeless prevention but his name is not on the list.

(Pause.)

MR. FAENZA: Okay. Well, we're now at homeless prevention and we'll be sure to hear from you, sir, but first, Robert's a strong homeless advocate here in Dallas.

Thank you, Robert.

MR. CECCARELLI: Thank you, Mr. Faenza. I just want to say --

MR. McGRATH: Can I just take one minute just to kind of give the context of this section that we're talking about?

(Pause.)

MR. FAENZA: All right. Thank you, sir.

MS. WALKER: I think we should have signed up for homeless prevention -- I mean for support services and not homeless prevention.

MR. FAENZA: Okay. Well, if you would like to comment right now then about the housing and supportive services, please do.

MS. WALKER: Thank you. Thank you for letting us make that switch. I'm Angela Walker, executive program director at The Family Place for Residential Services.

MS. HARDY: And I'm Lori Hardy. I'm director of transitional housing at The Family Place.

MS. WALKER: And we want to speak today on behalf of victims of domestic violence. We are truly a special-needs-population service provider. And we lately have been hearing a lot about the HEARTH Act and rapid re-housing and have even participated in rapid re-housing to the extent of using HPRP funds.

But our population really needs transitional housing and I was reading the report and what it said about the costliness of supportive housing versus transitional housing. But we want to speak to support transitional housing today because our clients need a little more time. We don't need permanency; we just need

a little more time to learn life skills and build our ego strength and emotional strength so that we can move back into the community and become productive citizens.

And so we're advocating that transitional housing is not wiped out because of the costliness but that it's kept because of the costliness to lives that don't have the opportunity to rebuild.

Back in the mid-'90s The Family Place actually did rapid re-housing, not knowing what we were doing. From the shelter right into apartments, into the community, and our clients were not doing well. They didn't have the strength, the life skills -- their lives had been controlled by others for so many years they didn't know how to manage on their own.

And we stopped that and went to a different -- went a different route within our transitional housing program. We have a facility, a campus, where they live for a number of months learning how to manage their own households. It's temporary but it gives them the opportunity to learn those skills they've often never learned.

They frequently move from the abuser's home -- from their parents' home to the abuser's home or from whoever their guardian was, maybe grandmother, aunt, or

whoever, so they don't have those skills. They don't know how to parent; they don't know how to get a job. And our transitional housing program gives them that opportunity.

And we found through HPRP, our clients at The Family Place who access homeless prevention were much more successful than our clients who got rapid re-housing. They were calling the shelter back: now what do I do? That rent is gone; what do I do? Because they didn't have the case management or the transition to guide them in developing those skills.

So we couldn't bring a client here today because they're working, so Lori's going to tell you about our clients.

MS. HARDY: So we're representing an office manager at a home health agency, a woman who works full time at a food warehouse, a customer service representative who works downtown, a substitute teacher at DISD, a certified nursing aide who works at a home health agency, a woman completing her LVN clinicals at El Centro, a reporter for a local television station, and a psych tech at a local hospital, and an optical technician, and that's just a few of the women that we represent.

MS. WALKER: So transitional housing does make a difference. Please keep it in your plan.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you. Actually, can I ask just one of you a question?

MS. WALKER: Sure.

MR. McGRATH: You mentioned that the prevention component was the most successful or useful portion of the HPRP program. Could you kind of just briefly discuss how the worked or what was the success with that?

MS. WALKER: Well, most of the -- the prevention we really used in our outreach programs. Most of those clients were already in housing and needed help to stay there. Of course, they were in outreach seeing a counselor but they were already in housing. The clients that we see at our Safe Campus were already homeless due to domestic violence.

They had a number of evictions due to domestic violence, they had a lot of credit issues that we had to help them move through to get back into housing, and they just didn't have the skills to maintain a household, which are the things that we're able to provide in our transitional housing program.

So we were getting called back and called back, and one of the case managers even came to me and said, Ms. Angela, is there a way that I can case-manage these rapid re-housing clients because they need so much. And I said

we just don't have it to provide at this time.

MR. FAENZA: All right. Well, thank you so much. And I would add that we are completely in support of you. The -- there are folks from the Texas Balance of State who are advisory members to the council and they've helped us see in the Balance of State region especially, domestic violence or family violence is a huge factor for that region which is about 202 counties of Texas and they've made it very clear to us, you know, transitional housing is crucial for family violence victims and we're --

MS. WALKER: We're open to anything that helps homeless people; just don't cut out anything.

MR. FAENZA: Thank you. All right.

Angela, another strong advocate for transitional housing -- has the same concerns is Harry O'Borman [phonetic] at The Promise House and would make the same case for the youth population that -- where transitional housing is really important but a disability and permanency is not necessary, and there's a lot of concern from youth advocates about the diminished role of transitional housing and your plan and in the HEARTH Act.

MR. McGRATH: All right. On that, let's jump into homelessness prevention. This is something that is

becoming increasingly important for HUD especially. We saw one of the first national prevention programs funded through HPRP which was just mentioned, the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid and Re-Housing Program. The Emergency Solutions Grant Program, which is another large homelessness-targeted program administered through HUD is now going to also increasingly focus on prevention.

So, in that vein, our goal here is to develop a statewide crisis response mechanism that identifies at-risk individuals and families and prevents them from becoming homeless.

First objective is to refine and promote a definition of at-risk of homelessness that fits Texas. We have broad guidance of what is at risk of homelessness. The new -- the ESGP guidelines give some broad sense of what qualifies as at risk of homelessness but we think that for Texas we need to come up with a more precise definition.

Objective two, increase awareness of opportunities for preventing homelessness among state agencies; three, increase the coordination of state agency services to enhance the state's preventive capacity; and, four, increase the capacity of state institutions to prevent instances of homelessness and shelter upon

discharge from facilities.

With that, let's jump into comment.

MR. FAENZA: Robert, thanks for your patience. It's time for your comment.

MR. CECCARELLI: Nice to meet you again, Mr. Faenza.

First thing about homeless prevention, you need the people here to show up. Okay? You have three major players who are not here, Jerry Killingsworth, Suzanne Durham [phonetic], and Jay Dunn. I don't see any city council members here. They could get a lot out of this information instead of somebody assistant to them. These people need to show up instead of being on vacation or wherever they're in in San Antonio. That's the first thing I have to say.

MR. FAENZA: We'll ask them to make sure they give input into the plan.

MR. CECCARELLI: Okay. All right. Now, what I'm trying to say is I picked this up today at city council. It says homelessness and permanent supportive housing. I put a big line through it. You got the homelessness; then you got the permanent supportive housing. My concern is before you get to permanent supportive housing. Mr. Faenza, we talked about that at

length.

There's 7,000 people that are homeless, not just chronically homeless, and people are forgetting about that. All right? Now, what we need to do for the state or for the city -- there's got to be three buildings at the Austin Street Shelter, one for mhmr, one for drug addiction and dual-diagnosed, another building for education, and another building for jobs. There places need to be built immediately so that way the permanent supportive housing could be met.

Now, Mr. Faenza, we've talked about this and I really hope that everybody understands you have to wait months and months and months for supportive housing. Before that, they're on the street. Fortunately, I'm in Salvation Army in the accounting program and I could stay there and I could do this work that needs to be done.

The only refuge that people have besides staying on the streets are these ministries like Reconciliation Outreach, Victory Outreach, all Bible-based programs that turn people away. But right now all this talk, all this fancy talk could be one thing -- housing, housing, housing like jobs, jobs, jobs.

And right now these buildings need to be put away from the city, nothing fancy, just like Austin Street

Shelter -- not like The Bridge, glitz and glamour and no substance. All right? Now, The Bridge is something else -- whoever that planned it, no housing there either.

All right? That service at The Bridge is just like the day resource center, just it's more fancy.

\$25 million for nothing; \$5 million for cottages for 50 people for the chronically homeless, and I was totally against that because you've got to think about the 7,000 people, a large amount of chronically homeless is okay but it's just not getting the picture because there's a lot more people that need to be helped.

Now, like I said before, these buildings don't have to be long to be put up but they need to be put up immediately so that supportive housing can be done without these people quitting, committing suicide, going to jail before this happens. All right?

Now, Kim Horn [phonetic] is here and she wrote an article about me and also a guy named Richard Antwine.

He committed suicide because of the housing. All right?

He was chronically homeless. Now, I'm just understanding that -- I don't remember the county program with the bum rush at six o'clock in the morning. About four months ago, a few thousand people. That's desperate need. It was on TV, national news. That's desperately needed that

needs to be get across.

I hope you understand that, Mr. Faenza. I wish Jay Dunn was here and the rest of them because they would get the drift. But this has to be done and it can be done. It needs to be -- see, homelessness does not have a vacation. It's there 24/7. I try my best to get the homeless people out but another thing that is concerning -- you don't have any homeless people. All right? These people need to be spoken -- there are a few but I really had to put out the airwaves about this. All right?

But housing, housing, housing -- they need to get off the street and, by the way, Life Net -- I don't know if anybody's here from Life Net, but their permanent supportive housing is stalled right now, no permanent supportive housing. My case worker had to put me on the DHA list, Dallas Housing Authority list because the permanent supportive at Life Net is slow.

So I just want to let you know permanent supportive housing is great, Mr. Faenza, but I think that's only what you think about. It's got to be a real bigger picture and that these buildings -- they need to be like bunk beds, maybe 500 per building -- I don't know -- to get these people off the street. They would have

caseworkers there and these buildings could be put up very quickly and that's what needs to be concentrated on right now, not ten years down the road -- right now.

And I will pound that out in every city council meeting until and I wish, hopefully, that the rest of you would come to city council meetings and speak about that because that's the only way it's going to get done, if you pound it out, pound it out, pound it out. But the homelessness -- the housing's got to be put up to stop it.

That way they can have the patience to get the permanent supportive housing so they don't do anything stupid.

I will concentrate on that and please, Mr. Faenza, get that done and get Jay Dunn, Jerry Killingsworth and Suzanne Durham -- get them to work. They happen to be hands-on. Okay? Nobody knows about them. They're taking a vacation in San Antonio right now, wherever they are, and I'm very ticked off about that. Thank you very much.

MR. FAENZA: Thank you, Robert.

Our next speaker is Judy, and Judy, I'm going to mispronounce your last name here -- Judy from the Stewpot.

MS. PFENNEGER: Good afternoon, gentlemen -- ladies and gentlemen. First of all, I'd like to know how

to get on this committee. How do you get on this committee?

(No response.)

MS. PFENNEGER: Yes?

MR. McGRATH: I can answer that. First of all, we have members who are voting members of the council. That means that you are an employee of a state agency who has decision-making capabilities within your department, but we also have advisory members. Those are people who have been to meetings and the council has voted on to invite them to become permanent advisory members.

MS. PFENNEGER: Okay. Thank you. Now, Stewpot has been here 35 years. I've been at Stewpot quite a while and I've seen the population probably triple. And I've also seen the population probably triple when the homeless -- new Homeless Assistance Center came open at The Bridge because they came -- they put a thing in there that said no police protection, no police at The Bridge; come to Dallas.

All of a sudden we tripled on our business because they thought they could go to The Bridge because there'd be no police there and you would stay there. Now the police are called over to The Bridge ten times a day. They don't want to hire a police officer over there but

they're called over there ten times a day to get help because The Bridge is not run right.

Second of all, we have new people -- it's not just the homeless that I've known for 20 years myself who did not have the education or the -- they're scared people come do this. They're scared to come out here and talk; they're scared to get together because they -- political, politics -- if there wasn't so much politics and everything, things would work better.

I learned about politics four or five years ago because I'm pretty ignorant about politics, how each one does only a certain thing because it's for the money, the money, money, money. Now, if you get rid of the politics, you'll help the people more. Thank you.

MR. FAENZA: Thank you, Judy. Judy, are you staff or volunteer at the Stewpot?

MS. PFENNEGER: I'm staff. I've been there 20 --

MR. FAENZA: Yeah, I'm so sorry that I don't know that. Thank you.

And, Colin, I believe that's all of the speakers that are documented.

MR. McGRATH: Now, if we have anyone else --  
Did you want to speak, yes?

Just please state your name before you begin.

MR. BAILEY: My name is Augusta Bailey. I have two concerns. One concern is what Ms. Judy talked about. Most people only want to go to The Bridge because y'all use that as y'all main resource center, but look at the violence that goes on at The Bridge? Who'd want to be there? Nobody.

And the second issue is the CPS situation. I was a CPS over twelve years. Ninety percent of us kids that get out of CPS, why do they come out homeless? They take them out of a home to put him -- when they age out of care to no home. What needs to be done is -- before y'all take them out of home is come up with a plan where they're going to go.

The circle support system don't work at all. The track system don't work at all. You got to come up with a plan because (a) like 90 percent of the kids hang out downtown and one of the issues -- a couple of them have committed suicide. CPS kids is constantly struggling. We have PTSD also just like the Veterans due to abuse.

Something got to be done. We got [indiscernible] illness, got health problems but we constantly just get put on the street. Why is that?

MR. McGRATH: Could I ask you -- do you have suggestions so Texas -- the Department of Family and Protective Services isn't a member of this council so -- and they handle CPS. What would be your message to them?

MR. BAILEY: That they need to come up with a plan before they take us out of a home to come to the street -- I mean to come to their facilities because when we age out of care, where are we going to go? They need to come up with a plan because if not those attorneys have cases and cases on their hands because this is abuse goes on in CPS just like abuse goes on outside of CPS.

So what's the use of them coming and taking us out of a home to -- when we age out of care to make us homeless? And I don't get that resourcing -- maybe come up with a plan before they even take us out of the home instead of waiting until we turn 16 and 17 to do a circle support which don't help.

MR. FAENZA: What do you think should be in that kind of a plan? Do you have any thoughts about that?

MR. BAILEY: Housing.

MR. FAENZA: Okay.

MR. BAILEY: Why? Places in housing because (a) homeless -- what are you going to do homeless? They give us tuition fee waive letters; they give us our

college but we -- how are we going to do college going through all the stress of being on the street?

I tried it myself. I tried to be in college from the streets. That don't help at all. I'd had tried to do something; I'd had been to different resources, different resources. Channel 4 News also have interviewed me due to that situation and they CPS is -- they got one organization that help the CPS kids -- they can't help everybody, which is TRAC, Transition Resource Action Center. They can't help everybody. They only can do so much.

MR. FAENZA: Yeah, I'm hearing you say real clearly that if Child Protective Services has a young person in custody before they're aging out of foster care, they have the responsibility to provide housing and support services for any other challenges the kids might have, but just not end the program and you're out on your own.

MR. BAILEY: Yes.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you so much.

MR. MOBIL: Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Tim Mobil [phonetic]. I'm with Life Net. And what I'm hearing today, which I agree with, is that we need more resources; we need more money. That's a fact. With the

economy the way it is right now, it's just -- the money is not there so we need to be more effective at how we use the money that we have.

Life Net -- our housing is still open. Are we housing people at the same rate that we were a year ago? No, we're not. It's because of resources but we are still -- those opportunities are still available at Life Net. So what we -- I think it's established that we need more resources. What we need to start talking about is how can we work together to use the resources we have to help the most people. And as far as the -- so The Bridge was -- is a work in progress. It has done some successful, amazing things for a lot of people. Unfortunately, I don't think many of those people are here today, but I do know a lot of -- I could bring a busload of people who have gone through the bridge and have gotten --

MR. FAENZA: Yeah, I've worked with The Bridge directly for several years up until recently and they've placed over a thousand people in permanent supportive housing, I know that.

MR. MOBIL: So what we want to talk about is what can we do to help The Bridge and what can The Bridge do to help more people. Instead of saying because I haven't

been helped or because of all the people that we want to have been helped haven't been helped, that The Bridge isn't -- not a worthwhile endeavor. I think with -- it's not the correct or the best thing to do.

So I don't have any answers today but I wanted to speak to that there is some positive things that have come out of The Bridge and MDHA.

MR. FAENZA: Okay. Maria? Let me get -- you're going to tell us you're from the Corporation for Supportive Housing.

MS. BROWN: I am. I am Maria Brown with Corporation for Supportive Housing. And I've had the pleasure and wonderful opportunity of working here in Dallas for the last year and prior to that I did direct homeless services in permanent supportive housing for ten years out in Los Angeles.

So I'm here as an advocate for permanent supportive housing and I think a possible solution would be to lower some barriers to getting folks into housing. A lot of times we have to keep folks homeless and work them through a system when the access to housing is available for them to move in.

So one thing that I found to be very successful is move folks into housing and then really layer those

support services that go along with permanent supportive housing -- layer those support services and really do a robust case management take and work with the clients to make sure that they're successful.

Folks are going to mess up sometimes and so we're going to have to -- going from the preventative measure, we're going to have to look at how do we keep them in their housing; how do we take a proactive role? One thing that I heard both Tim and Mike speak on, and a couple of other people, is the lack of resources here in Texas.

And I know we're all trying to work on Medicaid reform; I think that's very important. Texas is number 50 in the United States, I believe, for serving mental health needs, and also getting folks access to those services. It's kind of a Catch-22. They need the mental health services but they can't access the mental health services because they don't have Medicaid, but in order to get the Medicaid, they have to have a diagnosed illness in order to get the services.

So really getting folks linked to benefits and wrapping them around the intense services and access to housing would be what I have to say.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you. And I think we can

also spend a little more time on this subject since data tends to draw a little less interest sometimes.

MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, good afternoon. My name is Kevin Williams and I've been homeless since June and most of the -- really all the support I've gotten has been from Stewpot, know the staff here. And I have two issues and probably two solutions.

First of all, I'm not on probation; I'm not on parole. I don't drink and I don't use drugs. I've been to college, two different colleges and have completions, but yet every time I put on an application that I'm homeless or staying at a shelter, I can't get hired. They don't hire me, right off the break like that. And my solution is if they was to offer some type of tax break or bond or something like that for hiring a homeless person, then maybe they'd hire more of us.

And my other solution -- my other problem is with the housing situation. If you go in South Dallas right now you're going to see about 20 to 30 abandoned homes, boarded up -- nobody profiting off of them, nobody living in them.

If you all was to like just give one of those houses to a homeless person and get homeless who had -- who are qualified with different skills to fix it up, then

that person can own a home. And those homeless people who don't have a job would get paid for cleaning that up, fixing it up. Thank you.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you.

Sir?

MR. BURMASTER: I'm Brett Burmaster. I'm executive director for Soul's Harbor Homeless Shelter. We've been around since 1956, so for 55 years we've been serving the homeless in Dallas County. I took over the job about three years ago. My background's corporate so, you know, one of the things that you always try to do is find out what the problem is before you solve it.

And one of the things we started doing three years ago is tracking everybody that comes into our shelter. Now, it's only a men's shelter. All right? So we take them in as young as 18 and then our oldest was 74 years old. But I want to share some statistics with y'all.

Sixty-nine percent of the people coming in -- now before I talk about my statistics if you go out there on the web, there's a thing called How Homeless Works and they indicate about 60 percent of homelessness is due to substance abuse, about 25-30 percent is mental illness and then the rest is circumstances with is lost jobs or things

like that.

But we've been tracking for three years close to 300 residents and 69 percent is substance abuse. That's alcohol, pills and drugs. Twenty-six percent is mental illness and only 2 or 3 percent is circumstances and those circumstances come from Child Protective Services where they've completed the foster care and they're done with them after, you know, they're 17 or 18 years old and, unfortunately, they end up in my shelter. But I think it's -- you know, you got to look at the problem first and then solve the problem.

So I believe in housing and everything but housing a drug addict or an alcoholic is not the solution. All right? Getting them treatment is the solution.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you.

How many people do we have signed up to talk up on the other sections?

MR. FAENZA: We've completed them.

MR. McGRATH: Okay. Would you like to speak, sir?

MR. BAGLEY: Good evening. I'm Gregory Bagley [phonetic]. I've been homeless ever since 2009 and it's just like the guy said, there's no homeless people here. I know most all of the homeless people here in Dallas. I

was once homeless in 2000 when I came back in from Little Rock, Arkansas. I had an alcohol problem. I lost my license. I used to drive a truck. I worked for the city sanitation --

The people at The Bridge are just like this Judy was saying. I don't have much education. I can't -- I don't know what to go by as is how to get the check start or run a computer, all of that. I got a tenth-grade education. I'm from Ellis County, Ellis, Texas. I moved to Dallas in '94.

But I do know one thing: Austin Street Shelter is the one that hold me from day one. I was a staff member at Austin Street and I stayed there several different times. I mean, you know, whatever you want to say about Austin Street. Now, The Bridge, I don't hate The Bridge but The Bridge won't do nothing for me lately and it still won't do nothing for me.

I go there and they say they're going to give me a caseworker; they say they're going to put me in housing. They put my girl in housing. I'm 57 years old, I've been shot in the leg, I'm mentally ill, and I can't see out good out of one eye; I wear glasses.

I can't get nothing out of The Bridge and I'm just going to say that I see that we'll live on by the

help of the Lord even though my sister and my brother don't speak to me. I have quite a few people here in Dallas, resident.

I can't get a disability check. I can't get a job because of the education and my back-time criminal record is 7 to 1. But I'm willing to work if I can get a job or get housing or get somebody to help me find a job, I would be able to get myself off the street. And thank y'all for listening.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you very much.

MR. STEVENSON: Good afternoon. My name is Mark Stevenson and I'm the founder and CEO of Montreal Living. Montreal Living provides transistional housing for the mentally ill, the homeless and veterans in the Oak Cliff area of Dallas.

I wasn't going to speak but I heard some of the other people in the audience speaking about the homeless and housing. And one of the things that I wanted to talk about, or make a point is, as a transitional housing -- and I know there's a big push for permanent supportive housing, I really think that there is a key with transistional housing because like some of the other people prior to me were speaking of is that getting one person from one location and getting them into permanent

supportive housing is very difficult.

You need that transition; you need that time period where people can get acclimated to the community. So I know HUD is really pushing the funds as far as permanent supportive housing but I'm just saying don't like the transitional housing go by the wayside because I think that's very, very important for people to get acclimated back into the community, and will all the other supportive services that are out there trying to help some of the homeless people, some of the mentally ill, and most of all, some of the veterans that are out there. Thank you.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you. All right.

With that, we'll jump into the third section here. We don't have any signed-up speakers but if you are so inclined to address any of these next two sections, please do.

VOICE: And then how are -- we have about 28 more minutes to go?

VOICE: Yes, whatever you need.

MR. McGRATH: The third section that we deal with is data research and analysis. The goal here is strengthen Texas's capacity to gather, analyze and report precise data on homelessness systemically. Objective

first here is evaluate the quality of homelessness-related data; second, facilitate coordinated data collection policies and procedures for all sources of data; and third, coordinate timely data collection, reporting and analysis.

And I would just say that in regards to this it's a sort of wonky subject but it's so -- from our perspective as a council that is, you know, trying to inform state agencies on how they operate their agencies in respect to homelessness issues, it's what speaks.

It's what HUD wants to hear about; it's what is a powerful communicator to agencies and we think that, you know, a credible place to start in any dialogue with decision makers is having really solid facts to back up what you have to say.

So we're looking to get stronger statewide data on homelessness that we can use for communication purposes.

MR. FAENZA: Yeah. And I think this is the experience throughout Texas but I can say for sure here, in our experience, that getting data, even minimal data, about homelessness out of public health agencies is almost impossible.

So I'd mentioned that ValueOptions that runs

NorthSTAR mental health and substance abuse treatment and support being so central to recovery for many people that are homeless and to feel no obligation to track homelessness is really getting in our way in a time of crisis where the system needs to be flexible, and in healthcare, Parkland Hospital does a great job with hundreds of thousands of indigent people but beyond their Homes program and their outpatient clinics and the rest of their medical services, you cannot get data about homelessness.

And maybe it's a little wonky an issue but for an organization that's attempting to do planning and advocacy it really gets in the way of developing a rational way. So if there's anything that the Interagency Council can do with your colleagues to start out with the most basic responsibilities of capturing data about homelessness and tracking people, that'd be a huge step forward.

MR. McGRATH: Yes.

MR. CECCARELLI: About this data, like I said earlier, I've been reading articles and 6,000 are homeless in Dallas County. Right? Now, we take 10 percent it's 600; 20 percent is 1200, or something like that. Okay?

Now, I don't -- and you go to Homeward Bound.

I just came out of there. I talked to the caseworkers there. Seventy percent of the psych patients that come to three-day stay in Homeward Bound are homeless, 70 percent.

Now, I don't know how this can be figured out but, like I said, whatever happened at The Bridge, those figures -- it was messed up. I mean, however you calculated it, it didn't work out.

Okay? There's too many people there. It's -- whatever it is -- but like I said, I'm just concerned -- like, again, what the people were thinking about when they made The Bridge when there's no air-conditioning at the Pavilion. And I know I'm tired of bringing it up but, you know, it's -- I can't emphasize what people were thinking about. All right?

And this past summer, you know, there's no housing there and I just -- it -- you must have lost your mind, really. I mean, one day at the Municipal Building and they closed it down because there's no air-conditioning; three years and no air-conditioning is unheard of. I don't know why it doesn't get the publicity, but it should. And I will say that every time, every meeting. What were y'all thinking about? No air-conditioning. Unheard of. It's like cattle and it's inhumane. All right?

And when I speak of City Council, Carolyn Davis was supposed to be here. She emphasized to me she was going to be here. She is head of the House Committee for City Council; she's not here. All right? I'm just -- where the people higher-ups are thinking about.

I bet they care about the homeless because like I was at the two meetings, MDHA at the library; nobody showed up. I mean, none of the big-wigs showed up, and Mr. Faenza, you know about that. Jay Dunn didn't show up.

And I can't emphasize again that you got to have common sense and I'm trying my best.

If some of you can stay at the Pavilion, and I'm trying my best -- if some you can stay at the Pavilion and stay there during the summer where it's hot, we might get better reaction and more urgency from all of you. All right? But I haven't got one taker to stay at the Pavilion, not one.

But if The Bridge is so good, why don't you stay there, you know? Please tell me that. Please stay there during the summer, all of you, one night. And I bet you, all of you would stink and all of you take urgency needs of housing immediately. I can't emphasize that -- for the past 12 months every city council meeting -- I've invited all city council members to stay down there. Not

one time they want to do it, you know?

But it just -- what the mind-set is no one gives a damn about the higher-ups about the homelessness.

I can say that firsthand; I know. I'm vowed Mr. Faenza can substantiate that because we've had meetings and I'll be darned if -- how you can be here and talk about homelessness but you don't want to experience it. All right?

And I just hope that for PR sakes in your agency one of you go to the Pavilion and go there during the summer and let me know what it feels like. Come back to your boss; come back out here and let them know that the housing is needed immediately before you get the permanent supportive housing.

Like I said, I've got to reemphasize again, doesn't have to be fancy but it needs to be built immediately because if more people commit suicide, more people will leave; more people go to jail like was in yesterday's newspaper. But please, do that. One night at the Pavilion during the summer, and please, it will make you -- you may change your mind immediately what I've been doing for the past 12 months. Thank you very much.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you.

MR. FAENZA: Thank you, Robert.

All right. Yes?

GREGORY: Good afternoon. First of all, before we can get any true assistance, we've got to be considered human. Right? And a lot of times we're not considered human. A lot of time when people see us with a backpack, they immediately don't look at us as a human being. They give their dogs more respect.

And part of this problem is our fault as well. Me, personally, I'm not a panhandler. I've got a spray bottle and I clean windows. And to me that's the old-fashioned hustle. Because I'm 46; that's something I used to do when I was young. But yet I have bike patrols and police who would give me more problems for cleaning somebody's window than they would somebody for panhandling.

In fact, day before Thanksgiving, I was told to leave downtown Dallas for a whole day because I was cleaning somebody's window; yet panhandlers wasn't -- no saying anything to them. And I'm like, well, if I'm positively trying to help myself, why you punish me for it? And the thing is, they have a view of us and they want to keep their view. They don't want to see anything positive come from us.

So I think really better interaction between

homeless and, you know, non-homeless people should be, you know, set up. You know, maybe we could do some car washes or, you know, charity work, or whatever. But until they view us as human beings, we're not going to get any respect or get any type of assistance. Thank you.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you.

MR. BANOSKY: Hi. Good afternoon. I'm Britton Banosky [phonetic] and I am actually just a homeowner here in Dallas and I'm fortunate to have a home because I know there are a lot of people that don't have homes.

And I want to just applaud your efforts to try and develop a plan and to try and move the City of Dallas and the State of Texas to a leadership position on this issue. I think everyone in this room have valid perspectives and we all come from different places. Some of us work for agencies; some of us are actually homeless folks.

But just as a citizen, I'm so encouraged that you've taken the time to develop a plan and that you're furthering the plan and that, hopefully, you're acquiring the necessary resources to implement the plan. And you're getting the cooperation from all of the various agencies that are involved in touching this.

And to the issue of data, in particular,

because I know that's a topic we're talking about right now, I think it's absolutely essential for you to require, to the extent you can, agencies that are touching the homeless population to document what's going on because I think without quality information, it's very difficult to make informed decisions and be persuasive.

And so, once again, I want to thank you for having this forum. I want to thank everyone here for participating because, obviously, everyone here cares about it a lot. And I want to wish us all well as we go forward into the next five years and decade to fix not only the problems that we see day to day in our homeless shelters, or whatever, but think of a way to address the issue from a macro and bigger perspective so that we can hold ourselves out as Texans and Dallasites that really are making a difference in the lives of people. Thank you.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you, Britton.

(Pause.)

MR. McGRATH: Well, you wanted to speak.

ASHLEY: Okay. I know some of y'all. My name's Ashley. I'm the assistant director of volunteer services for the Stewpot and our meal services at The Bridge. Today alone for lunch we served 717 meals and so

that means I came in contact with a plethora of the population in Dallas, almost, I guess, a quarter -- a little less than 20 percent.

I just wanted to say that information sharing is the biggest problem. A couple of different agencies over the past year have talked about using HMIS, even for service providers that don't offer shelter and using the same systems management to try to understand the data.

In the dining hall alone, you see people pop in and pop out, go away for a couple of months, and then you're always curious, well, what brought this person back? Why all of a sudden are they engaged in services here?

And then I work 14-hour days, for my breakfast, lunch and dinner, and so I wonder why this person's only choosing to come to lunch or is this person actually staying at The Bridge? Are they going to be here for dinner or are they coming out of the encampment and that's why they're here for just breakfast and lunch and then have everything with them, kinds of things?

And so I think that if there was an opportunity for service agencies who people that aren't necessarily sheltered to also be a part of -- and I know it was an idea for HMIS as well as Parkland was trying to develop an

idea to have a way that the data is shared collectively as well as maybe through the state because sometimes people who are very active in the VA in Waco will make their way to The Bridge for a meal and it's just because they're trying to access a court or there's something going on in Dallas and they know it's a place to get a meal.

And so even if they were -- if you had their information or something like that to where there was an opportunity to know who a person was, what exact services they were looking for, and then I think you could understand their situation like was said, because each and every circumstance is different and then understand what exactly they need to move forward and motivate themselves to be on that.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you.

(Pause.)

MR. McGRATH: Oh, you can go ahead.

MS. CUNNINGHAM: I'm Sheryl Cunningham again and I stated before I stay at Austin Street Shelter. I spent the summer of 2007 at The Bridge. I slept in the Pavilion. I woke up at five o'clock. There was breakfast to eat, a shower -- I could take a shower; I could change clothes. At eight o'clock I can go to the Workforce and use the computer and submit resumes to find work. I can

go to the doctor if I need to go to the doctor.

I could do -- go to my caseworker and get bus passes to catch a bus to go to the interview. I can go to the Stewpot; I can go to Salvation Army. The resources are there.

There's no need to spend money and build things on people that are going to take advantage of it such as drug users, you know, when they're just going to go in there when they're drugged out or boozed out or whatever to take advantage of everything. A person has to help themselves before anybody else can help them. You just -- can't just give people stuff. You have to do -- help yourself.

And like I said, drug addiction is a problem. It needs to be addressed. People cannot just keep coming to these shelters expecting to be given everything when they're not clean, when they're not, you know, themselves; they're on drugs. And they're going to be back and back. Two years later they're back again.

So like I said, the resources are there. You have to help yourself. And if you don't get clean, it's just a revolving problem.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you.

MS. STORY: Hello. My name is Teddie Story and

I'm CEO at Irving Cares. We are a social services provider in the prevention business, homelessness prevention. My point about data is we have to make it a way that sharing the data is doable. We are a small agency. We only have eleven staff members. The data entry that we do just into our system is about as much as we can handle.

When it comes to a time that we would love to be able to share data to see if we've assisted this client before at another agency in Irving or just to find out what the bigger picture of that client is, we don't have a way to share it easily. But also the core issue is if we had a place or some system that could export the data out of our system that we currently do -- you know, when we looked at ESG funding we decided to not do it because we can't handle HMIS. It's too cumbersome; it's too hard for us. It's not a thing that we as a business can handle.

So when you're thinking about data, if it could be a way that it could be exported out of existing systems into your big system somehow, that would help us a lot. And we would love to share in a participation like that.

MR. FAENZA: That's helpful.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you.

Yes, sir.

MR. KIRBY: I'm Jamey Kirby. I'm the grants coordinator for the City of Lewisville and assist with the Denton County Homeless Coalition. I saw on your plan that you have with the data collection advocating for a uniform point-in-time survey tool and I think, along with the previous comments, that that would be very helpful.

I know from doing several counts, sometimes there's -- some people want to do less data on a survey so that you get more participation and -- but I think in the times that we've done additional questions that really tried to delve -- to get at richer information that it was a little more helpful.

And one thing that would help, I think, particularly in suburban areas is having a question on the point-in-time survey that asked where a person was located, what jurisdiction they were in, what city they lived in the last time they had permanent housing. Because I know one thing we struggle with is homelessness in the suburbs is not as visible and some people just think that's is not there. And that data would help smaller communities a great deal.

MR. FAENZA: Good suggestion.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you. The most recent HUD report on homelessness actually showed slight decreases of

homelessness from the point-in-time count in urban areas but actually increases in the country's suburbs.

Anyone else on this matter?

All right. Jumping into our final section, and we are running low on time. State infrastructure. The goal is increasing communication and collaboration between all service providers and units of government in order to sustain TICH, the Council's planning efforts and aid in the implementation of the plan.

That communication involves communication between state agencies -- you know, horizontal communication, finding ways for us to all interact and administer services more effectively as a unit of state government as a whole and also to increase communication, like we're working on right now state government and local communities throughout Texas so that agencies that we're working with are more responsive to community needs.

Objectives: (1) increase coordination and communication between state agencies through promoting a common language for communicating information on homelessness. We have two major definitions of homelessness, one that comes from the Department of Education and another one that comes from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and then numerous state

agencies use their own kind of fuzzy definitions that don't really have any grounding in a federal definition.

And we think we can improve just the level of coordination among agencies just by coming to some sort of coherent way of talking about homelessness in general.

Second, increased coordination and communication between state, local and federal government and non-government entities; and finally, objective three, raise awareness of homelessness among state agency boards of directors, executives and other decision makers.

Just about every agency -- I mean, every agency that sits on the Council addresses homelessness in some way or another. They serve people who are at risk or experience homelessness. Many of them are not entirely aware of the fact that that is the case. So we are working towards making everyone aware of who they're serving.

Any comments? Excuse me. Any comments on that last goal area?

MR. FAENZA: I just want to throw this out that one of the things that we're working on here is to bring government jurisdictions together in some way to look at the issue of homelessness.

And so we've started with -- there's a city

council member, a county commissioner and a criminal district judge that are reviewing a plan for permanent supportive housing that are looking at some of the policy issues that the Homeless Alliance is putting in front of them and that -- it seems like at the local level there are major obstacles to making advances in policy and rational plans for homeless services because the cost savings that can be accomplished are across systems.

And you have municipal governments that traditionally don't care about mental health, county government that doesn't care a lot about housing, and so any way the Interagency Council at the state level can encourage, support this kind of formalized review of major policy and appropriations issues across counties and municipalities that would cross behavioral health systems, hospitals districts -- that would be great.

I don't know how that's done but it's like the Interagency Council's model at the level of in DC. It has cabinet members on it, you're -- what you're doing in the state is actually getting policy makers to look across their own jurisdictions at issues. I'm not sure how that stuff -- we have our own little homemade way to try to start accomplishing it.

MR. McGRATH: And what you're saying is you're

seeing, for instance, like counties are out of sync with one another. Is that -- am I understanding you correctly?

So one county -- might have a certain way of handling issues and that the other county is handling it in their own way and so it's hard to put them in --

MR. FAENZA: Well, say, like the City of Dallas has a huge investment with The Bridge, with its investments in tax credit projects for permanent supportive housing and homelessness. Mental health and substance abuse is a major issue in that field but they traditionally really pay no attention to policy and appropriations for community mental health.

Here a major issue too is the issue of regionalizing a look at policy. So this group is looking at doing outreach to Collin County. Right? We had a speaker from Collin County.

There's been 106 percent increase in homelessness last year but there's no integrated view of looking at Dallas as this island amongst suburbs and what needs to be done for jurisdictions across the region to address homelessness. So any encouragement that the Interagency Council could give local communities to start thinking that way would be helpful to us.

MR. McGRATH: Okay. Thank you.

Thank you for waiting.

MR. WOODY: Okay. My name is David Woody and I'm director of programs here for the Salvation Army. First of all, I want to applaud the group in terms of the Strategic Plan. I think it's a tremendous start, in terms of at the state level, there beginning to be a process for looking at the various ways that the state needs to take a more sensitive look at and approach to the needs of homelessness in local communities.

At this point we're talking about the state infrastructure and one of the things that jumped out at me in terms of the plan and in particular the executive summary, there is a statement, a sentence, the third paragraph into this summary that reads in this way, "A statewide initiative to prevent and end homelessness reflects a commitment to fiscal responsibility."

Now, I'd expect that there are many folks in the room who are particular keen on the issue of fiscal responsibility in our economic environment, and for many of us who are part of nonprofits, certainly the notion of fiscal responsibility is very important.

My concern at this moment is that the definition of fiscal responsibility may be a challenge for us -- many of us to understand, especially at the state

level. There are many of us in this room, or many organizations, who certainly are challenged in terms of fiscal responsibility as a result of the number of cuts that we are experiencing in terms of trying to meet the needs of folks who are homeless currently.

And some of what that has left us with is a good deal of competition among each other in terms of how is it that we use the existing pool of resources to meet the tremendous need in our community. So when I read that, there are -- that this plan is about attempting to get folks to understand one another, to understand what their priorities are in their little silos and to further understand how it is that folks could work together.

That's an encouragement to me and certainly that's an encouragement to many of us in a position, like the Salvation Army, to try to address the needs of folks at the front line.

The second concern that I have about the plan has to do with what's going to happen with the information in respect to data research and analysis. Okay. We have, I'd expect, too many folks with political leverage who don't understand, who don't have an appreciation for what the experience of homelessness is like.

We've had the benefit today to hear of a number

of individuals who are describing to us what that feels like, what some of the challenges are and, unfortunately, it's been at the individual -- individual person-to-person-within-agency experience. It has not, unfortunately, been lifted up to a level that really speaks to some of the conflicts that folks at the front line encounter as a result of understanding the State of Texas's response to individuals in need.

How the plan will lift up what it learns needs, I think, to be a part of the plan. What will the information that's gathered here -- how will that get to the next level to folks who need to understand what the resource needs are currently?

My worry is that what will come out of this will be folks speaking to the choir, not moving the information on to the next level where policymakers can begin to make better decisions about what needs exist.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you so much. And I want to say that one of our goals is to start producing something like -- this is one thing that we can do, a state plan where we can articulate a statewide vision for how to address homelessness and make sure that this alliance in the office and at the desk are people who make decisions in Texas but also to use the information, the data that

we'll be gathering in the future -- use the personal experiences of people who share their own accounts of what it means or the -- what it is like to end up in a homeless situation with us -- to use that information and compile it in reports that we deliver directly to people who have decision-making capabilities in Texas. I think that's absolutely critical.

MS. ALLEN: I'm now going to put my other hat on. I have been a long-time board member of the Dallas Housing Finance Corporation, and one of the things that I would like you to think of because we are a method of financing supportive housing and doing innovative ways of providing that housing, and we should be given the -- it's mostly the amount for -- Salvation Army, Life Net, when we've got lots of people here who really work at it.

And we should be given preference by, one, TDHCA for funding and allocations. They need to do exactly what we discussed instead of doing that community -- yeah, the community hearing is a joke very often. I've done a bunch of them. We need to be talking to the folks who really know what is going on and I think that we need to have maybe even -- and I'm quite sure HUD would be very flexible in working with us.

To me, we have -- every city in the state of

any size has a housing finance corporation. I know many of them would be extremely pleased to be able to finance projects. We have been working on it in ours and it's a mass of frustrations to do so because the State has made it, in some cases, very complicated for us to do.

And I just can't urge you enough that -- and in the bond review board those are the folks, some of the folks, who you would normally not talk to that need to be addressed. It's that level. They -- you know, everybody just kind of goes their merry way. And again, I think it's -- they don't realize that this is a mechanism.

And it does address -- another thing is it creates jobs and they -- maybe they put a rider that we need to put -- some people who are currently homeless and unemployed need to be part of the project and I know that our builders there would not -- I mean, I think that's one of the things that we need to look at.

It's an engine for -- three kinds of people benefit from. I just can't urge you enough to help us. Thank you, and thank you for holding the meeting.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you so much for your sharing.

(Pause.)

MR. McGRATH: And, Paula, how much time do we

have? Can we go over or are we going to get kicked out of the room or --

MS. MARONEY: We'll get kicked out eventually but not --

MR. McGRATH: Okay. If we get kicked out, we get kicked out.

MR. CECCARELLI: I just want to emphasize -- I put more work in this really than anybody else. I mean -- now, I just want to say one thing before we stop. It's getting complicated. I'm just saying to you again if you don't have housing for the people, the drug addiction will continue because they're on the streets. They could commit suicide.

I -- whatever you get out of this meeting, get these buildings up. It won't take long. I'm going to say it again: one for jobs, people working; one for education; maybe another building for mhmr and drug addiction to get outpatient care but you got to get these buildings up out of the city so that way treatment could be done; people can feel good about themselves to want to live, to want to move on.

It doesn't take a lot of money about this. All right? Whatever you're talking about, all this fancy stuff, statistical -- without housing you're not having

nothing because they're not going to get the help they need if there on the streets. At Austin Street Shelter you can lose your bags any time you want to; they can steal 20 bags at one time. It's out in the open and no one will know who stole all your bags. All right?

Salvation Army? You got to leave 4:30 in the morning. I stay there but I have to say this -- you take your bags 4:30 in the morning and you can't come back till 4:00 in the afternoon with your bags. You can't keep your bags there. All right? I just have to emphasize that again.

But what I'm trying to say is Austin Street Shelter -- if it's built like that with lockers, they can stay there; they have caseworkers to work what they need to be done. A requirement is to get -- be on some kind of supportive housing list, maybe two or three of them because Life Net, like I said, is slow. But whatever you decide to do, get the homeless off the streets immediately, ASAP.

I can't emphasize it enough. All right? Without that, you're wasting -- you're spending your time and I know it -- been homeless. I'm doing well -- Salvation Army where I can stay there, where I can do what I have to do to fight this terrible addiction of

homelessness. All right?

But, please, whatever the state does, it doesn't cost much money to build a very simple -- but get them off the street ASAP. If not, you're wasting -- you're spending all your time, wasting all your time. Thank you.

MR. McGRATH: Thank you. In closing, I just would encourage you if you are so inclined and you are interested, find the plan on the TICH website. It's through the TDHCA website, [tdhca.state.tx.us/tich](http://tdhca.state.tx.us/tich). If you have not an opportunity to speak and you are interested in submitting comment, you can write directly to me. You can write -- we actually have a form somewhere in the back where you can actually write comments if you are interested and we hope to hear more from anyone who is interested.

Thank you all so much for your time.

MR. FAENZA: Thank you so much, Colin. Let's give Colin and his colleagues a hand.

(Whereupon, at 3:45 p.m., the public hearing was concluded.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

IN RE: Texas Strategic Plan to Prevent & End  
Homelessness Public Hearing

LOCATION: Dallas, Texas

DATE: November 29, 2011

I do hereby certify that the foregoing pages, numbers 1 through 69, inclusive, are the true, accurate, and complete transcript prepared from the verbal recording made by electronic recording by Penny Bynum before the Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs.

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(Transcriber) 12/05/2011  
(Date)

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