

**GEAUGA COUNTY BOARD OF MENTAL HEALTH
AND RECOVERY SERVICES
CAPITAL PLANNING/HOUSING COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2023
5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

Present: Christine Lakomiak, Jim Mausser, Michelle Maneage, Teresa Slater, Reba Dykes, Gregory O'Brien, Kathy Johnson, Douglas Lundblad, Steven Oluic

I. Call to Order/Pledge

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was then recited.

II. Charge of Committee

Ms. Dykes distributed a draft charge of committee as a starting point to determine what the focus of the committee will be. The committee discussed the following:

- The phrase "substance abuse" should be changed to "substance use".
- Add the word "housing" to bullet point 1 ...long-range housing and capital planning goals...
- Determine financial sustainability beyond five years.

Action Item:

- Incorporate suggested changes to Charge of Committee and distribute to committee members.

III. Housing

Discussion included:

- Updating what type of housing is currently available in Geauga and identify service gaps for adults with serious and persistent mental illness. The Board's Service and Population Priorities Resolution can be used as a guideline.
- Clarification between housing and treatment facilities that have a housing component.
- Need to identify what the Board is allowed to do per Ohio Revised Code as it pertains to housing - permanent supportive housing, recovery housing, residential care housing, transitional time limited housing, residential treatment that includes a housing component.
- The Board can provide financial support to an agency to own and/or operate housing facilities/programs.
- The Board's apartments on Aquilla are for adults with severe and persistent mental illness. It is considered permanent supportive housing with private apartments. Section 8 vouchers or Shelter Plus Care vouchers can be used to subsidize rents. A client's rent portion is based on income. There is a case manager available and clients are connected to services through providers.
- Committee to review housing definitions and the criteria for each.

- It was also suggested that the Board engage professionals to help increase the types of housing we need.
- The state has been working on a needs assessment to determine what types of housing each county has and what is needed. Some boards own housing and some don't. Boards are asking for guidance from OhioMHAS as to their role since it is not delineated in the Ohio Revised Code. Trumbull is building another apartment building they will own, but other boards are divesting themselves of facilities.
- There are housing vouchers available in Geauga through Metropolitan Housing. The Board's service populations would receive priority but they can't find landlords. Other counties are having the same issue. Geauga rents are typically higher than fair market value. The question was asked if it would be cheaper for the Board to partner with Metro Housing to provide funding and support for the vouchers that are available.
- There is no waiting period for residential treatment facilities. The issue is where individuals go next. Should the Board invest in more recovery housing, permanent supportive housing, or help subsidize the vouchers that are available. There is a need for more permanent supportive housing. The Board has already been approved for funding from the state for this type of housing. An agency can own and manage this facility and the Board can apply for the funding.
- There are not many rentals in Geauga. This population has other barriers that may need to be addressed. Metro Housing has focused on an advertising campaign to landlords the last two years. Access to funding doesn't seem to be the primary issue for housing in Geauga County for low income residents. Metro has housing vouchers and the Board has vouchers through Shelter Plus Care available and the reoccurring issue is finding landlords that accept the vouchers and units that pass the required HUD inspections.
- Discussed whether to build or retrofit existing facilities. It takes two/three years to build, the facility is filled right away, and there is still a need. There are specialized housing agencies in other counties that we could approach for this purpose. The Board first needs to determine what type of housing is needed most.
- Samantha Jackson, Housing Coordinator at Ravenwood, reported that their housing is always full and there is a waiting list. She receives at least five applications a week for housing.
- Mr. O'Brien envisions locating existing structures to renovate/retrofit. The Board could then provide funding to a design/build firm, and enter into a long-term lease agreement with an agency to operate. The Board does own the Geauga Independent Apartments and the Transitional Living Center, which are managed by Ravenwood. He said the Board may be able to seek a zoning variance to change the size of the setback for the TLC.

Discussion:

- Distribute housing definitions, spreadsheet of what is available in Geauga, and the Board's service/population priorities resolution.
- Determine what is needed and what the Board can realistically do.
- Conduct a feasibility study on specific vacant homes - contact Commissioners?
- Reach out to housing agencies/professionals/architectural firms that do the types of projects needed by either building a new facility or retrofitting an existing facility.
- Director Lakomiak will reach out to Metro Housing to see if any of their property would be available for the Board to build on.

IV. Transitional Living Center Update

Director Lakomiak provided the following updates:

- The TLC is a type 1 residential facility that serves as a mental health and addiction crisis stabilization center or as a stepdown unit when someone is discharged from an inpatient hospital facility.
- There was a regional funding opportunity to increase crisis residential facilities and the Board was awarded \$1.2 Million for this purpose.
- The initial discussion focused on determining whether or not the Metzenbaum houses could be used. It was determined that there is not enough funding to operate a new 24/7 facility.
- The application was changed to potentially add additional beds to the Transitional Living Center.
- Architect Chris Sanders will do a pro bono assessment to see if the TLC can be expanded. He has looked at the property, reviewed the architectural plans, and given staff his initial thoughts on the expansion project.
- Since that time, OhioMHAS Director Lori Criss has asked boards to pause on their projects until further guidance is received from the state.

V. Out of County Placements

Director Lakomiak updated the committee on an out of county placement and potential out of county placement.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM.