

Human Services Campus, Inc. hosted a Quarterly Community Outreach Meeting on Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 6:00 pm via ZOOM.

More than 90 individuals participated.

The questions/ concerns that arose and how they were addressed:

Question from Laurel Langemede:

Rachel from the county mentioned how she was they were closing down all the tent parking lots. But I noticed that there's still an awful lot of tents that are in the easements or you know, you know, the sides of the streets. We're not going to get rid of those? I mean, they're the firemen don't want to go in there without police protection. And the police I you know, there was one policeman that went in there for some kind of arrest, and he stumbled around because they're three deep. So please advise what you're going to do about all those tents.

Responses:

Amy Schwabenlender: Yes, there are still unsheltered people. And there is no other direction, we can provide them at the moment because there are no shelter spaces for them to relocate or move into. That is the goal, though, is to help each person find a safe indoor space, we're starting with the people that the county has been working with us on in those parking lots. I don't think I mentioned Human Services Campus recently received a grant to allow us to hire two staff to start a multi-disciplinary street outreach team. And our attention intention is to staff that up by June 1. And that'll give us the bandwidth to have staff just dedicated to outreach and engagement. The multi-disciplinary part means that we're work with our partners Circle the City Community Bridges, really anyone who wants to be part of it. The way this works in other communities is that you don't rely on one set of skills or expertise to do outreach and engagement. You have a team so that as people are being approached, the team is having a conversation about who would be best to outreach with this person. Or if I've already talked to someone five times that I can't get them to talk to me or build a rapport, then maybe it's someone else's turn to try to have that conversation.

Rachel Milne: I think we're sort of setting a precedent and we have more federal funds to help in this type of situation right now than we ever have previously. And so, yes, our shelter capacity is down due to COVID. But hopefully, this we can take advantage of this opportunity where we do have federal funds to assist in this area specifically.

Alan Stephenson: So the one thing I would add is that the city does have its home taskforce that continues to meet to work on implementing the plan, including using some federal monies to try and address this issue as well. And so those are our ongoing efforts where there's a substantial amount of staff work that is going into trying to move the needle as it relates to providing places for people experiencing homelessness to receive some services.

Question from Michael Rogers:

I have a question regarding the stipulation for the police department having beds reserved on the campus. In my conversations with law enforcement over the years regarding this issue of transient camps and contact with homelessness, or people experiencing homelessness, oftentimes, those encampments don't even begin to develop until midnight or later, and that police officers have expressed to me that it would be quite valuable to have beds available, basically 24/7. My question is, how late are those beds available that are set aside for police and other uses? And I think Amy mentioned that the you're trying to hire for 24-hour service at the at the Welcome Center, I believe. Could this if those beds aren't available 24/7, could they be made available 24/7, as part of that planning?

Responses:

Amy Schwabenlender: I'll let Alan chime in or back me up on this when we met with the city to go through all of the stipulations. Some of the sub-bullets related to the additional permit shelter beds, permanent shelter beds, can't really go into effect until there's more shelter capacity. So especially in COVID mode, there haven't been a lot of open beds available. And we've been prioritizing people out of that Safe Outdoor Space, the parking lot. So Alan, correct me if I'm wrong, but my understanding was a lot of those sub bullets about police bed reservation, or some of the other really specific things to the CASS shelter. We need some time and we need the additional bed capacity before we can implement them.

Alan Stephenson: Amy, you're correct. You know, the City enforces stipulations once you know things are built and constructed to do things. And right now you're in the process of adding the capacity for the additional beds. And once that is up and going after COVID times where we have the social distancing requirements, we'd be looking at how that stipulation would get applied under normal operation. So right now, there's really kind of two things. There's one the COVID protocols that are you know we're approved by Council in separate action. And then the second one is, you know, this the stipulation that really wouldn't get implemented until the campus expands pursuant to the special permit allowance for the additional beds.

Lisa Glow: And can I added to this as well, it CASS, you know, taking people up into 11, as we open up more beds above the 400, you know, should be able to happen sooner rather than later. It just all depends on how many from the tents are coming in. So as we scale back up with safety, and even pre construction, you know, up until 11, is what the stipulations are saying we are a 24/7 provider and do take calls 24 seven as well. But I think it's really important to have that kind of responsiveness that we grow into even more.

Question from Ian Francis:

This question ties back into the first one that was asked. So there's sort of the white elephant that we're all anybody that's down here all day, or every day or even a couple times a week and talks to some of these people and I've actually reached out and I've spoken to some of these people that

sometimes they'll congregate in front of the buildings out here, and I just have a civil discussion with them and ask them, you know, "What would it take for them to get off the streets?". And a lot of the responses I get are, they have really no intent to do that, because it's sort of a lifestyle that they want to live, they choose to live that way. And I'm not saying everybody, but I'm saying there are a vast number that are out there that really don't want services. There was talk a couple of months ago about this is on a state level about coming up with an area that's not in a residential neighborhood or a business neighborhood, that could be allocated for people that want to remain out, not be sheltered, that want to continue to sleep in tents, or however they will want to live. That wouldn't be in a residential or neighborhood that would affect businesses. My question is, what is the HSC's opinion on that? Would they be in support of having that area? a safe area with showers, restrooms, facilities and security, and is the county in support of that? And is the city in support of that concept?

Responses:

Amy Schwabenlender: There was a bill proposed at the legislature. I think there's a comment or question in the chat box. Related to that as well. An outside group that came in with this proposed legislation. And so the way that bill is written the HSC does not support that bill. It handcuffs cities and towns on how they spend their public safety grants. It's, it could actually jeopardize HUD funding that comes into our community, because it's really against housing first. And all of us who participate in the continuum of care have said that we support and we operate in a housing first and the harm reduction model. So I as the as the way the bill was proposed, we would not be supportive of it. We've voiced that. The Arizona Housing Coalition has convened lots of direct service providers and other people in the housing space to potentially work with the state legislature on other options to that bill, to come up with solutions.

Alan Stephenson: The only thing I would add is the city had significant concerns about that bill, as well. It was something that an out of state group had had proposed, but they didn't really have any discussions with providers and folks that are working in this area. And I think that was the biggest concern. You know about that proposal.

Lisa Glow: We know there are a lot of people who need oftentimes it takes a lot of cajoling and street outreach to get people off the streets because we hear the same thing. But there are some models, definitely not the model that this group from outside came in and proposed without thinking through, but there's got to be a better solution because there are going to be people who take a long time to get off the streets.

The next question is from the chat box. What is being done to ensure that people, the unsheltered population that are staying in the shelters or otherwise receiving services are getting their COVID vaccinations?

Response:

Amy Schwabenlender: Circle the City has made available COVID testing and the vaccine in the clinic here on the campus. Clients can receive their COVID vaccine at the clinic; Circle the City has also gone

into CASS at different hours different days of the week into our Lodestar Day Resource Center all day on Thursdays to offer the vaccine. A couple of weeks ago, the week of April 12. Circle the City did a five-day outdoor event hoping that of creating a different atmosphere with tents and business would bring more people in for their vaccine. It's been 1000s of people that have received the vaccine, they have been out with their mobile medical unit to the safe outdoor space. They've been around to lots of other partner sites across Maricopa County, St. Vincent DePaul, dining rooms, other shelters to offer the vaccine. And so we continue to do that encourage that there's no slowing down on offering people the vaccine.

Question from Angela Ojile:

I'm speaking for a large group of the community here. We've got text going. And I think we're trying to understand if the neighborhood is also a priority, why are we still in there. And CASS is CASS not CASS, HSC everyone is concerned about getting the neighborhood cleaned up getting things moving on why they're not allowing the change in front of their area, and Andre House. It really puts people that are homeless at risk they've gotten to be so crime addled and drug ridden that it's, you know, we had three shooting three people shot and one murdered about seven days before that on 11th Avenue. And, you know, 12th Avenue now after a lot of to do with the HSC, and is now becoming just a mess again, I mean, it's just, it's starting to just overflow into the whole neighborhood. And, and I think what the neighborhood wants to see and hope to see, after all this back and forth is to see some major improvements, not just on your time, but on our time and in our lifetime too. You know, we feel like, I've been there eight years, and I'm a newbie, so many people have been there's so much longer, they feel like give some of this money, let them try the overflow, you know, this new model? Because what's been done for so many years isn't working, it's getting worse. And we think that is an answer. So, you know, we would like to like to see a more open minded approach and share some of those funds. I think, you know, if that works, then we can all raise more money, and we'll be, you know, be able to secure more money. But I think we spread the wealth, we could help more people because, you know, there is the elephant in the room that nobody wants to say there's a lot of people that are never ever going to go in anybody shelter. So, you know, you can't just let them live in the easement on you know, for an undetermined amount of time. Thank you.

Responses:

David Schwartz: I think it kind of goes without saying, but I'll say it, I don't think anybody really wants anybody sleeping in the easements. But what we are trying to do, and especially with Lisa mentioned from CASS, we've got some beds coming on by the summer. And then so we're going to work on that.

Amy Schwabenlender: We are all for people not living, camping, sleeping in easements. We know there is no place for people to go, which is why we've not asked the city to put up more posts and chains. As part of our effort with ASU Action Nexus to address homelessness regionally, we've had an ASU landscaping class, I think, Angela, and many of you met with them. We would rather improve the aesthetic of the neighborhood to create shade, to have environmental justice in our neighborhood to

have it look like other neighborhoods. And so we want to pursue that path of having landscaping that improves the look in the atmosphere and the environment of the neighborhood while we work on finding shelter and housing for every person.

Question from Angela Ojile:

I guess we just don't seem to the group doesn't feel like we're getting to the point on this. I mean, the landscaping is great. I think that's a whole other movie. But yeah, we think that's wonderful. We all want that. But I don't think that's got to do much with what we're talking about here.

Response:

David Schwartz: Alright. Well, so like we said, like I mentioned to you yesterday, we're going to be working on some of this stuff, you won't see it all happen overnight. Like we said, it's going to take some time for the beds to get put in. We're going to work to try to get as many of the folks off the streets as we can. And we will continue to have the dialogue as we go.

From one of the comments from the meeting registration. This comment reads, "they would love to see a gated alley program implemented in downtown Phoenix, like other cities, and Arizona are starting to do" Do you have anything that you would like to address on that?

Response:

Alan Stephenson: The Mayor and Council did authorize an additional gated alley pilot program area around the campus for 10 additional gates to look at being able to close off some alleys within that area. That is over and above each council district got 10 that they could designate within, you know, their council district and working with their neighborhood groups. And so that larger city wide one is in its second phase, and that one will be going forward here to have the gates constructed. You know, later this summer and done in the fall. We will start the discussions with Council District seven and eight, regarding the additional pilot allowance for the gates around the campus here. But we needed to get through the zoning case first, which happened in February to see what happened there. And then also, we obviously had an election that we had to get through as well. So now that we have those things all solidified, we'll be working with council district seven and eight to identify exactly, you know what alleys might be good for this pilot program. To really, the idea behind the pilot program is to study whether or not it does have an impact, and what happens in those areas, there is concern that I've heard from some neighbors that are very supportive of it and want to see it happen. Other ones have concerns that it will become an area that if there's no trash collection, that's going back there, and there's not some kind of regular eyes on it that other, you know, nefarious things may happen back in there. So the idea behind the pilot program is to do some gates, study those over, you know, a one to two-year time period, report back to the council about the success that that may or may not have had in terms of reducing crime, reducing, you know, blight for either dumping calls is alleys need to be cleaned up graffiti, you know, those types of things. We'll be collecting that data, not only around the campus, but the city as a whole so that we can report to the Council on the success of that pilot program. But it is something that the City is very much interested in at the direction of, of, you know,

Vice Mayor Garcia. Yeah, he was very instrumental in trying to get some additional, you know, gating monies for this area around the campus.

The areas have not been picked for the additional allotment of gates around the Human Services Campus area.

Question from Bill Morlan:

You know, the fact that there are not enough beds available for, for people, that is true, the city is actually doing quite a bit to try to increase the number of beds, we appreciate that I'm on the task force working on that, as a matter of fact, and trying to think of, you know, better ways to do it. Question is with people who are outside right now, is there any kind of tracking? Or is there any way that there's any record kept of people who are given the opportunity to move to housing, but refuse it? Or is there any way that there is any kind of tracking of people who have the opportunity to take advantage of services, but choose not to, because it almost seems like that gets in the way of the people who are actually trying to take advantage of services? You know, if, if people, excuse me, if people are down there who don't wish to take advantage of the services to you know, help them get off the streets, and find an opportunity to move into more permanent housing, is there some kind of different approach that needs to be taken with those people? You know, with the people who refuse to take the services when they are offered into people try to think of what are the different models that anyone tries to think of to approach that, because, you know, there are a lot of people that are down there looking for services, and that are very interested in taking advantage of what HSC and CASS and everyone else does. But there are people who are not interested in taking advantage of those services. And is there anything different. You know, this is maybe a little outside the scope of, you know, the community meeting, but I mean, is there something different or some way that we're keeping track of, you know, people who don't who are don't want services?

David Schwartz clarification:

Alright, Bill, thank you for the question. I want to clarify one thing you asked when you said if they're refusing housing, or do you mean shelter, or services, or all three of those?

Question from Bill Morlan:

I guess I don't know enough to, okay, services are a place to go, someone who has the opportunity, as beds become available, which they are going to become available, if there are open beds and people choosing not to move to them. You know, are there any repercussions for people, other than the obvious repercussion of it would suck to live in a tent, but I mean, are there any other repercussions for people for choosing to not accept services? Or is it, are we are we struggling to find a different model to approach those people or a different way to deal with that, other than the stuff that hasn't gotten a certain segment of the population off the streets for years?

Responses:

Amy Schwabenlender: That's really complicated Bill, and maybe it's something we can keep talking about over time. We all operate in this harm reduction and housing first model, which is about meeting people where they are at. At the same time, yes, we have case managers, navigators, people having service interactions can capture in the Homeless Management Information System, or HMIS are some of the things you asked about Bill. So again, we got we've had this intense housing focus, we work through By-Name List of people to refer them to housing. And so if someone's up next on the housing list, and a housing navigator is engaging them to offer them the chance to move into an apartment, then, essentially, in a way every answer they have is tracks because I think the, the thing our teams here all do is to continue to meet people where they're at. So, some people it takes lots of, Lisa mentioned this, it takes lots of engagement. It can take lots of different people having that conversation with an individual to offer them shelter or housing. And so in some ways, it's as if we as service providers don't give up on people. We kind of take their, "No" as "No, not right now". And we will continue to outreach, engage and work with them until we can move them to a, "Yes". So it's like you know one of the hardest sales jobs because some people don't believe That's true, they don't believe it's going to happen. They're dealing with significant mental health issues. But it takes a lot of time it could take treatment first, to have someone feel more comfortable having a conversation about shelter housing. So I know that's like a really long answer. And maybe it is something that it would help as we go through these series of meetings or have other conversations about different models of service delivery, and how we use that harm reduction approach to help people over whatever amount of time it takes them to end their homelessness.

Lisa Glow: It often takes 25 outreach attempts, before someone who's chronically homeless will choose to accept services. But once we get them into shelter, we really work on the engagement. And we have case managers with lower caseloads to work specifically with the chronic, the chronically homeless, about 30% of our population at CASS out of the 4800 we serve every year are chronically homeless, as measured by the intake tools. So the intensive engagement is critical. But so are the outreach attempts. And kind of going back to what Ian was saying, no, what is what are we going to do about those until they are willing to engage? So I think that is definitely a worthy conversation that, that it's bubbling with all the planning going on at Phoenix, through MAG, they're coming out with their regional plan this month. Because it's, it's not just downtown, it's throughout every community where there are encampments and people who are not coming off the streets.

Question from Bill Morlan:

And I appreciate that. And they were, as you said, Amy, you know, a relatively long answer, but it was a very long question. So I understand that. And, you know, I, I guess the thing I would just follow up, my follow up question to that would be, you know, after the 20, if it takes 25 engagements, I mean, is there anything, we could be doing differently to shorten the number of engagements, and I am not

talking about, you know, like, arresting people for being homeless, I'm not talking about, you know, criminalizing homelessness or anything like that. But, you know, if our history shows us that certain individuals just will not accept the opportunity when it is given, is there some other approach we should be taking some other thing we could be doing? even going back to what Ian was talking about, like having a place where people who just do not want to engage in services, you know, but if they have a place that they can go, where they do have more very consistent interaction with people who are offering to help, but that they also, you know, have someplace it's safer for them, and safer for the community, then, you know, in a tent? And yes, it is a much longer term conversation, and I think we're going to get to, we're going to finish tonight. But I mean, I do think it is an important thing, we have to keep in mind the huge percentage of people who are looking for help. But we also have to keep in mind the very small percentage of people who are going to keep resisting.

Response:

Amy Schwabenlender: Sure. And, yeah, there's a lot of food for thought, and I have a couple ideas. For the next meeting, I do think it would be helpful to hear maybe directly from Community Bridges, a couple of other partners to talk about those different service delivery approaches. And we could also show you a picture of data, like the last 12 months of everyone who's come to the campus and what we know about them, and how many people like you just sort of ended with it's not everyone who's not engaging in services, by and large, most people are engaging in services, and we work to help them end their homelessness. So I think there's lots of future conversation topics in that question.

Question from Bill Morlan:

And I think by and large, the majority of people are engaging in services. You know, the, the unfortunate thing is that people who are not are the ones who then are dangerous to the community and dangerous to the people who are down there looking for help.

Question from the chat box. Is there a targeted date in which the tents are expected to go away? And is it possible to extend the use of the county parking lots and move all the tents into those lots?

Responses:

Amy Schwabenlender: If it's tents outside in the parking lot safe outdoor space, there's no, there's no firm date where we can say we will have found shelter and housing for everyone. And then, and part of that does tie to the rest of the question that Rachel can address.

Rachel Milne: Sure, and the date for the, we hope to have that Safe Outdoor Space phased out prior to June 30. But June 30th, is our target for closing that. And really, I there would not be an option for additional tents to come on the lot. Because really, the Safe Outdoor Space is not safe in the summer. And so really, that's the, you know, the County has not is not in a position to allow people to have a tent on an asphalt parking lot during the hot summer months.

Question from Laurel Langemede:

Hope you address crime. I think somebody earlier mentioned that, you know, there was somebody was killed by gunshot. And there were some other shots fired. If you look on the map, that area around the Andre House is always red the highest crime rate in the in the, you know, probably that Nation. So what are you doing about the crime? You know, I heard one time where somebody got accosted for somebody because they thought he was old. And he had it, he got his Social Security check so they want the money. And then somebody had their car window bashed in. So what are you doing about the crime? And it goes along to Bill Morlan? I mean, you've got people there that want services and need services, but you have that criminal element that is there selling drugs and doing prostitution and killing each other. So what are you doing about the crime?

Responses:

Alan Stephenson: There is a stipulation number 13 that requires them to develop a Security Master Plan, and to work with the Police Department on an annual basis for review of that, to ensure the safe environment and that they're coordinating with Police Department on issues. Within the larger area, there is, you know, a dedicated police, Sergeant and team that works on issues around the campus. Lt. Moeller has been an integral part of the City process in reviewing the stipulations and the proposals that the Campus has come forward as it relates to trying to address some of the crime and other issues that are happening within that area. And so that is something that the Campus has worked on and continues to work on in conjunction with the Police Department. Any do you want to add anything more specific on that?

Amy Schwabenlender: First we can do what we can on our property. The safety and security plan includes registering for virtual block watch, which we've started that process, it has to be done by security camera, so that's underway with Lieutenant Moeller. There's authority to arrest by each property owner. Those are all current. And yes, Lieutenant Miller's been great to sit with us over the last three years to talk about security, what we can do, what our boundaries are for our paid security staff. And I really think this is a topic of conversation that all of us need to work on addressing together, including the city staff and, and PD to figure out how we prevent more crime.

Question from Laurel Langemede:

I bet if you were to move the people that are in the tents that are in the easement, and maybe to someplace like 24th Street in Van Buren at the State Hospital, which is a grassy area, that the crime would go way down. So why not add that to part of your plan?

Responses:

Amy Schwabenlender: I think property owners that owned that land would have to be willing and want to be part of a conversation about what can be done on those other properties.

Amy Schwabenlender:

The question was also in the Q&A box that I answered. So stipulation 29. I talked about briefly that there are eight strategies of the city and where we can support and advocate. And that response document was sent. We will post it on the HSC Website in the community section.

This next question is in the Q&A. "So the City, so in the City budget, there is money allocated for street cleanup? Is it possible to hold individuals accountable? For the trash that they leave on the streets?"

Response:

Alan Stephenson: You know, in the chat question, I think there's a little bit more on that question, which is really more about making someone clean up that whatever they're leaving behind, so that you're not having to spend public monies to clean that up. And I think the reality of that is that it's very difficult to enforce something like that. I mean, certainly, if the police catch someone littering in the process I think they can tell them, "Hey, you know, clean that stuff up", they could, under the threat of some type of arrest or something if they're not complying with those requirements. But if, if there isn't anyone around, you can't just walk down the street and say, everyone's got to clean this stuff up, because there's trash here. Police have to actually see something happening in order to do anything. The idea with the stipulations is to have additional trash containers that are out there that are available for the public that are more convenient, so that trash can be easier to throw away as opposed to a few of them that get overflowing and then people just say, well just leave it here or pile it up on the side. And so that's why we have the stipulations that we're working with the Campus on for the additional trash receptacles. So it'll be easier for people to throw away their trash.