



Home, Opportunity, Planning, and Equity (HOPE)

Advisory Board Meeting

*Approved Minutes

June 24, 2020 from 4 pm to 6 pm

GoToMeeting Webinar



Members Present: Florence Anderson; Xan Augerot* (Commissioner, Benton County), Catherine Biscoe; Karyle Butcher; Bruce Butler; Bryan Cotter; Anita Earl; Joel Goodwin; George Grosch; Aleita Hass-Holcombe; Nicole Hobbs; Christina Jancila* (Business Associate); Charles Maughan* (Corvallis City Council); Pegge McGuire* (CSC); Jim Moorefield* (Co-Chair); Andrea Myhre; Jan Napack* (Corvallis City Council), Reece Stotsenberg* (Co-Chair); Linda Tucker

Members Excused: Barbara Hanley, Debora Stevens

Staff Present: Julie Arena (Benton County Health, HOPE Program Coordinator); Paula Felipe (Benton County Public Health, recorder), Vance Croney (County Counsel); Paul Bilotta (Community Development for City of Corvallis.)

*Executive Board Members.

- I. **Welcome and Introductions:** Coordinator Julie Area thanked all attending this first HOPE webinar for their patience and kindness as we try out this new way to conduct public meetings. Co-Chairs Reece Stotsenberg and Jim Moorefield gave welcoming remarks. Typically, the co-chairs run the meetings but since the webinar needs a host presenter, Julie will be running this meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to catch us up to speed so that we're all on the same page and re-iterate where we left off. Vance Croney, the County's Counsel, will give a presentation on Oregon's Public Meeting Laws. Julie and Paul Bilotta will cover the "educational topic" which will address the Emergency Operations Center and their work on housing and homelessness issues. Julie would like to have a speaker on equity issues at the July meeting.

- II. **Public Comments (limited to 10 minutes).**
 - Maggie Cooper discussed the vandalism in the downtown area where many glass windows were broken. She said it was caused by an individual staying at the tents near the men's cold weather shelter and that these tents are being financially supported by the city and the county. She wonders if the HOPE Advisory Board has a response to this act of vandalism? The Corvallis Mayor reassured us that the HOPE Advisory board is the group to help us figure out what to do about this. Julie Arena acknowledged the pandemic put the board behind in their work. There is not enough time now to address this issue, but the entire board has heard her concern and issue and thanked her for the comment.
 - Laurie Chaplen said she is new to this, but trying to get educated on issues with the city and county and HOPE board because she is considering running for Ward 6 after talking with Nancy Weiss. She has questions about homelessness: Has there been a full Census of Homeless and Benton County? How many are you expecting to get into homes per quarter? Since homelessness is a very complex issue, has the VA in Lebanon been tapped as a resource to help any homeless veterans? Julie Arena said there is a census done every year and some analysis was done in January, which can be shared and Julie can share that info at another time. Pegge McGuire shared that CSC has a homeless veteran

program that houses homeless veterans who want to be helped. Pegge added there are many organizations that help house veterans, and she can email those lists to Laurie.

- Karyle Butcher: Don't forget that the League of Women Voters has the latest report on homelessness as well. Karyle would like to post to our HOPE website.

III. Approval of the Minutes. MOTION was made to approve the February 26, 2020 Minutes. **MOTION** seconded and passed with only one abstention, which was by Jim Moorefield who explained he did not attend the February meeting. *These approved Minutes will be posted on the HOPE website within 7 days of this meeting date.*

IV. Overview of Public Meeting Laws - Vance Croney, County Counsel: The County has many public meetings and HOPE meetings are governed by the Public Meeting laws and this requirement is established in the Bylaws.

- The HOPE Advisory board does not have decision-making authority and the meetings are to be open to the public. Due to the pandemic, the Oregon Governor issued an Executive Order in April that allowed meetings to take place via video conference.
- HOPE consists of 21 members and a smaller executive board, which is not subject to the public meetings laws. (These rules are spelled out in the Bylaws).
- There needs to be a public notification in advance of the HOPE Advisory Meetings, and meetings must be accessible and have a published agenda.
- Oregon law requires the board members need to be able to hear each other and the public and the person speaking from the public needs to be heard by board members.
- The Board's committee needs to have a quorum to make decisions, and that means a majority of attending members. So, if you have 15 members in attendance, the quorum would be the majority vote out of 15. To prevent a very small number from making decisions on behalf of the larger group, there is a requirement to have 11 or more in attendance to have a quorum. So, the quorum requirement is a majority of sitting members, and the decisions must be made with a vote of 11 or more members. So, if only 9 people attended, you can still have a meeting but cannot make any decisions.
- Concerning Public Records, HOPE Advisory Board members emails written in their capacity as board members are public record—even though they are not elected public officials—HOPE board members are considered public officials under Oregon law. One suggestion is members could create a separate email address to be used for HOPE business.
- Board members cannot send a proxy in their place. Their decisions have to be made at a public meeting where a quorum is present.
- Board members should avoid engaging in small groups to form pre-decisions without having the quorum membership in attendance required for making decisions. Decisions should not be made outside of the public process.
- HOPE Advisory Board members are public officials when they are in these meetings. So, what you say and do can be scrutinized as a Government entity, which is Benton County, when you participate in these meetings. (Once you walk out of the meeting, you become a 'private citizen' again and are not held to the same standard as a government official).
- Sub-committee work, like the data workgroup, involves public records and Julie can be the primary repository of those public records. On rules for retention of public records, Oregon Secretary of State's Office is in charge of the retention schedule and it's in the

V. **Emergency Operations Center (EOC) – Julie Arena and Paul Bilotta, Operations Deputy Director and Director of Community Development for City of Corvallis:** During the pandemic response, Julie and Paul were assigned to work in the EOC. Julie served as a liaison to homeless service providers to provide them with a forum to collaborate and communicate with EOC. The City and County has been preparing to execute a joint emergency operations center to respond to fires and flood and other emergencies, so some infrastructure and communication were already in place for the EOC (comprised of both City and County staff, who are redeployed temporarily from their regular jobs). Some issues/plans handled by the EOC included:

- **Hospital Overflow plans**
- **Mass Care**
- **Alternative Care Sites**
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) planning**

EOC Operations –Julie presented an organizational chart of the EOC. Public Health branch addressed homeless support (hotel/motel, transportation, support/food, hygiene, Fairgrounds vehicle camping, isolation) in addition to other issues, such as Behavioral health Response Plan; Mobile Testing Plan; Morgue Overflow plan; Long-term support plan; Mass sheltering plan, and COVID-19 isolation options. HOPE members assisted with overlap issues, such as collaborating with City and County and community partners; sanitation and hygiene, options for sheltering in place; street outreach; and COVID19 impact on homeless. One of the first things that was executed was motel sheltering. That was a huge lift by our community partner C.H.A.N.C.E. with help from Samaritan’s Homeless Resource Team, HOPE board member Anita Earl, Corvallis Housing First & their case managers, board member Andrea Myhre, and Community Services Consortium with Board member Pegge McGuire. They came together very quickly to address how to put the medically fragile and individuals who are over age 65 into motels and hotels with screening, referring, and support. The County Commissioners voted to allow access to the County fairgrounds for vehicle and RV camping so that people had a safe place to isolate and shelter in place. Some hotels did not want people who tested positive for COVID19, and Pegge McGuire commented it's unconscionable and a true fair housing issue to have motels or hotels say someone can't stay there because of their COVID-19 status. This is an on-going struggle for many places in this state. Other issues the EOC is working on: funding for both the men’s and women’s shelters. Referrals from community partners came from Corvallis Daytime Drop-in Center (Aleita Hass-Holcombe), Hygiene Center, and Benton County Health Navigators. The City and County expanded housing options available, including microshelters: 5 of them are being hosted at 2 different churches inside the City limits of Corvallis with no complaints. HOPE can incorporate the lessons learned from the actions taken in response to the pandemic.

VI. **MOTION** read by Jim Moorefield: **“To direct the HOPE Coordinator to write a letter to the City of Corvallis and Benton County that expresses the HOPE Advisory Board’s support for the continuing collaboration between the City and County, the actions they’ve taken in response to the pandemic to address the health needs of people experiencing homelessness, and our support for continuing efforts to:**

- **To collaborate with service providers throughout the County *(this text was added after discussion)*.**
- **address access to sanitation and hygiene services**
- **allow microshelters in order to expand shelter options with appropriate distancing, and**

- **strengthen street outreach.”**

Alieta Hass-Holcomb seconded the MOTION.

DISCUSSION: Some board members felt it appropriate for the advisory board to have opinions about the emergency operations in response to the pandemic and to express support, such as for the micro shelters and street outreach. The original intent for allowing micro shelters in the city and in the county was for appropriate distancing and need for isolation and to help medically fragile people. Julie explained one clarification is the proposed letter is not taking a position on the permanent feasibility or appropriateness of micro shelters, although we have some champions on the advisory board, and I know we're going to have that conversation at some point in time. It felt premature to take a position on the permanent nature of a micro shelter program just yet. Question: What does street outreach mean? It means being able to go out and ask questions about the status of people's health and have a good grasp on where people are sheltering in place, whether they're camping or otherwise. It also means cooperating with parks and recreation and with the county health department and providing supplies to the homeless. One board member commented it would be great to see added to this motion outreach into some of the rural areas and that increased access to sanitation and hygiene would be valuable. Julie Arena said we could add the words *“to collaborate with service providers throughout the County.”* The motion is really about a letter of support for what the city and county have done with EOC efforts and continuing to support those efforts. It's not a motion to support expanding different things. Collaboration with service providers throughout the county has already happened so this is consistent with the intent of the letter. Question: Is this letter of support a symbolic thing or does it have a legal aspect to it? The board does not make decisions. It makes recommendations to the city and county, so the letter is basically endorsing what the EOC has done in response to the pandemic and saying ‘good job.’ One board member was concerned about the vagueness of the letter: “It’s sort of saying that we support everything that has happened and I don’t feel that is appropriate. You know, this is effectively saying that we recommend that the city continue paying for hotel rooms and continue to allow camping in city parks and things like that? That would really require a lot more discussion and thought and research to make sure that we're making the right recommendations.” Another board member commented, “What we're really saying is keep up the good work and these are just some examples of the good things that happened. We're in the midst of a worldwide global pandemic, and people are dying. We have to do something in this community now and continue to do what we're doing to protect the most vulnerable people that we have.” Another member expressed concern with the uptick of homeless coming in from other areas and states. Question: Are there specifics in this motion regarding expanding the cold weather shelter operations? Again, the intent of this letter is not about expansion or specific practices. It's about supporting the city and county’s efforts to continue collaborating with service providers on basic things like sanitation, hygiene, shelter options, and strengthening street outreach. It is also expressing gratitude to community partners, who have been working exceptionally hard. A board member asked for a more detailed list of accomplishments or actions taken by EOC over the last few months to review, which could be a starting point for policies. This can be provided at a future date.

The amended **MOTION** includes the words “to collaborate with service providers throughout the County,” and is ready for a vote: It was moved by Jim Moorefield and seconded by Aleita Hass-Holcombe. **The MOTION passed.**

VII. Recap and moving: This board was only able to meet three times before the pandemic hit. In July

the workgroups are going to meet twice to pull together data and create a presentation for the full board. Hopefully, in August and September, we can start doing community feedback sessions on specific topics. There will be on-going opportunities for the public to give input. The bylaws dictate that this group be data driven and look at the whole comprehensive system, not just one part of our system, and to engage and involve the community. This includes prioritizing based on vulnerable populations; promoting safety for everyone in the community; and promoting racial and ethnic justice using a racial equity lens. We will look at the full spectrum of housing options and services and see what is happening in the community right now so we can address gaps in services and not duplicate efforts. Julie will be scheduling workgroups and will send out doodle polls.

VIII. Meeting Adjourned at 6:10 pm.

**Approved at the 7/22/20 HOPE Zoom meeting.*