

Clackamas County Provider Community Listening Session

Date: July 28th, 2021

Time: 5:30-6:30 PM

Panelists

Jill Smith – Director of Housing and Housing Services and the Executive Director of the Housing Authority of Clackamas County (HACC)

Vahid Brown – Supportive Housing Services Program Manager for HACC

Rodney Cook – Interim Director of Health, Housing and Human Services (H3S) of Clackamas County

Mary Rumbaugh – Interim Assistant Director of H3S and Director of Behavioral Health Division of H3S

Mark Sirois – Manager, Community Development (CD), a division of H3S

Brenda Durbin – Director of Social Services (SSD), a division of H3S

Cody Thomas – Support for Vahid Brown and the Supportive Housing Services Team at HACC

Erin Fernald – Support for Jill Smith and HACC Leadership Team

Attendees

Please note that part way through the Webinar all attendees were moved to panelists. Phone callers remained as attendees but settings were set to allow them to unmute and participate. Some attendees reported that they were dropped from the call in the transition and were unable to rejoin due to a technical issue with Zoom.

Representatives from the following organizations were in attendance:

A Village for One, Bridges to Change , CASA of Oregon, Catholic Charities of Oregon, Central City Concern, Clackamas County, Clackamas Women's Services, Clackamas Workforce Partnership, Community Warehouse, Consultant for Catholic Charities of Oregon, Cultivate Initiatives, CWS, DevNW, Do Good Multnomah, Easterseals Oregon, El Programa Hispano Catolico, Family Promise of Tualatin Valley, Freelance, HereTogether, Home forward, Homeless Solutions Coalition of Clackamas County, Housing Authority of Clackamas County, Impact NW, IRCO, LoveOne, Mental Health & Addiction Association of Oregon (MHAAO), NAMI Clackamas, New Avenues for Youth, Northwest Family Services, Northwest Housing Alternatives, Parrott Creek, Second Home - EMO, The Father's Heart, The Living Room, The Salvation Army, Unite Oregon

Introduction

The session began with a brief introduction by Rodney Cook and Jill Smith. Mr. Cook thanked everyone in attendance for their patience and hard work on their various programs. He also reiterated the multiple changes that the Supportive Housing Services (SHS) Program rollout has seen and the importance of transparent communication in working with providers through this process.

Ms. Smith also expressed her appreciation for the attendees and began her remarks by emphasizing that the Local Implementation Plan (LIP), which contains the framework established to lead this work with a focus on racial equity and community identified priorities, has not shifted and will continue to guide this work. While the budget may have changed, it is still the Housing Authority of Clackamas County's (HACC) intention to roll out the full LIP with its associated goals, as funding is available. The first programs to be implemented will provide permanent supportive housing to highly vulnerable people who are being temporarily sheltered or housed through term-limited programs that are ending. The participants in these programs are all highly vulnerable people with disabilities and/or chronic health conditions.

While HACC is going to provide rental assistance to these folks, we cannot place them without the help of the providers. Due to the changes in available funding, the initial RFP for the SHS program was canceled out of fairness to the provider community. A narrower RFP which focuses on the housing navigation/placement and ongoing supportive services these highly vulnerable folks need will be issued in its place. Ms. Smith concluded her opening remarks by asking the providers who responded to the first RFP to keep their ideas for larger scale programs in mind as the SHS program continues to ramp up over the next year and additional funding becomes available those ideas will still be needed.

Erin Fernald and Cody Thomas then opened the discussion up to the question and answer portion of the session. Both verbal and written questions were taken and are outlined below:

Questions & Answers

Q: Did the programs selected for the new RFP apply for the first RFP - how were they selected over other programs?

A: The selected programs did not apply for the first RFP. The Metro 300 program was always assumed by all three counties to be absorbed into the Supportive Housing Services programs as it is a one year term-limited rent assistance program for senior disabled homeless people. The Hotel/Motel program may have been included in services provided under the last RFP, but not in such a defined scope as it will be under the new RFP. Finally, while Community Corrections did apply to the last RFP, it was for a different program than what will be funded under the current budget.

Q: How is the \$8.2 million Clackamas County currently commits to housing assistance and related services being spent, and of the budgeted \$10 million is any of that funding currently unallocated and available for organizations not serving the populations identified to receive funding under the RFP?

A: The \$8.2 million is the baseline commitment for Clackamas County for current housing assistance and related services. Additional information which will detail the types of services

being funded by that \$8.2 million figure is currently being gathered by the Health, Housing and Human Services Department (H3S) of Clackamas County. Once available, that information will be publicly available and H3S is committed to updating and posting that information annually.

While \$10 million is currently authorized for the SHS program, staff will be monitoring the status of the tax revenue and the goal is to amend the budget to the original \$24.5 million if the revenues allow so. Of the currently budgeted \$10 million, much of it is budgeted for the folks housed in term-limited housing, but there is additional budget available beyond that for other purposes.

Q: Many members of the BIPOC community are at risk of eviction. There have been talks of additional funding becoming available in January, 2022 but this will be too late to assist many members of this community who are currently facing eviction. In the last two weeks the court dockets are filled with more evictions, most of them for members of the BIPOC community. I hoped that assistance to this community would be approved as part of this pool. What can you do to prevent homelessness to non-English speakers and the BIPOC community?

A: Social Services is currently distributing approximately \$20 million in state and federal rent assistance which is available for residents of Clackamas County. Residents can apply either over the phone through the Coordinated Housing Access line or through the State's Oregon Emergency Rental Assistance portal. Staff plans on reaching out to local community based organizations, particularly those who work with the BIPOC community, to assist with the process for accessing these funds for residents as the State's portal can be difficult to navigate.

Additionally, the approved LIP places a strong emphasis on leading with race to identify and address disparities in housing outcomes for the BIPOC community in Clackamas County. This emphasis remains a strong part of the framework and a core principle which will guide the work as we move forward. We share the frustration that the funding is not available as early as initially anticipated as HACC and the County have no control over how quickly revenue from the Measure becomes available. Staff also recognizes that the BIPOC community does not prefer hotel/motel shelter. We continue to prioritize supportive housing and a housing first model which means people are placed in their own units and provided the services they need to stay in their homes. The other top priority is contracting with culturally specific providers to work with the BIPOC community. Those continue to be some of our top priorities and will be emphasized once funding becomes available.

Q: Can Spanish speaking volunteers assist with the applications for rental assistance funds?

A: Absolutely. Any non-profit organization that can help community members access assistance through the Portal are welcome to do so. The State also has helpful tips on their website for how to use the Portal. Additionally, our hope is that in the near future funding will be available to pay community based organizations to provide this type of assistance to the community.

Q: Regarding the prioritized support for Metro 300, is that for the future or what was used for services already provided? Will Do Good see additional funding for Metro 300 support services?

A: This funding is for future services. The prioritization is for clients who were served by Do Good and other agencies through the Metro 300 program. As this was a term-limited program, part of the \$10 million budget is allocated for moving those clients off of Metro 300 and onto long-term

rent assistance administered by HACC and connected with supportive services through the upcoming RFP.

Q: There has been a lot of talk about rent assistance and hotel vouchers, but we know that housing is often not successful, especially for individuals living with mental health issues, without the other wrap around supports. How much of the funding is planned on going directly to pay for housing and what will be going to the services that help assure folks will stay housed?

A: There is approximately \$2.4 million allocated for support services such as housing navigation and placement as well as supportive housing services and case management. These services will be included in the upcoming RFP. An equivalent amount will be allocated for regional long-term rental assistance vouchers for those households as well.

Q: Instead of scrapping the RFP, why not use it to qualify providers and then fund them when money becomes available?

A: As it was a RFP and not a RFQ the format could not be used to qualify providers and then fund them later as it was specific to their proposals. We do intend to issue a RFQ later this fiscal year so that we can qualify a large pool of providers which can then be engaged for contracts and funds in the future. Additionally, as these efforts are regional, we have made a commitment with our sister counties that any RFPs or RFQs for these services include language to ensure they are of a regional nature.

Q: Will the RFP include serving the chronically homeless folks that are on the PSH waitlists through CHA or only the chronically homeless folks in hotels with Covid money through community based agencies?

A: The RFP is meant to provide housing and services for chronically homeless folks who are currently in motels, were served in the Metro 300 program, or were in ESG funded rapid rehousing programs as these are all term-limited and funding is coming to an end. While this is the focus of the upcoming RFP, the focus of the SHS program as a whole is not limited to these populations.

Q: As a culturally specific organization, we have been in desperate need of support from Clackamas County over the last 17 months and we're concerned the funding will be too little too late for communities in need. We would like to understand a little bit more about whether the County is getting any ARPA funding or additional funding outside of this Measure that you've been waiting on to move forward? Washington and Multnomah Counties are distributing and expanding access to ARPA funds, how is Clackamas County handling their funds?

A: While revenue collection from the Measure and the program's rollout has been slower than initially anticipated, we have been told by Metro that revenue distribution from the measure will significantly increase around April, 2022. Metro also informed us that we can expect to continue receiving funding beyond the ten years, probably for an additional five beyond that. Our hope is to get the program started this year and in the coming years turn it into what it was initially envisioned to be.

Clackamas County has received ARPA funds and a comprehensive community survey was done to determine how these funds should be prioritized. These funds do need to be spent on COVID

recovery related uses and the Federal government will be issuing some final guidelines regarding how these funds can be used, which we are hoping to see soon. Any updates on how ARPA funds will be spent will be discussed at the Board of County Commissioners meetings so we strongly encourage anyone interested in this topic to monitor upcoming agendas.

Q: Will the upcoming RFP be more structured and specific so we do not submit proposals that go off in the weeds or think too big and has there been any thought into how the programs and services grow out from the RFP?

A: The upcoming RFP will be very specific and limited in nature. Staff's plan after that RFP is to look at how Washington County did their RFPQ which qualifies providers for specific areas and see what we can learn. We encourage providers to also look at that RFPQ, available on Washington County's website, and give us feedback as to whether or not that is something you would like us to model ours after. It's our intention to have the RFPQ done after the RFP this year.

We also aim to eventually enter into multi-year contracts and commitments with providers because we know that if you're going to work hard on standing up new systems or programs you're not going to want them to end in one year. The upcoming RFP does allow for those types of commitments.

Q: Can the applications from the previous RFP be used for the new one so organizations don't have the barrier of reapplying and is there an updated timeline on when funding will be available?

A: Using previous applications for the new RFP was explored but unfortunately was not possible as once the initial procurement was cancelled the applications or other related documents could not be used. However, the upcoming RFP is much more streamlined and will be easier to apply to given its more limited nature, the applications will be much shorter.

We are also working on an implementation timeline which is based on current funding levels and we hope that can change soon with additional funding and services. While this timeline is not quite ready to share yet, it will be soon. Our plan is to first take it to the Continuum of Care Steering Committee because they are the local oversight body for this fund, and after that it will be made available publicly.

Q: In regards to staffing issues, one of the detriments of not following suit with Multnomah County and Washington County in filing paperwork for a loan to cover the funding gap would be the loss of great talent, both in the non-profit and County governances, to Multnomah and Washington as they begin to put out job opportunities for this work. And we risk losing those in need of our services to these counties that are moving ahead to serve them. Meaning, in short, that Clackamas is at risk of losing citizens and workforce/expertise. Is this something the commissioners have considered in their decision making process and how sure are we that we can find the \$14.5 million gap in funding in a timeframe that does not see these sorts of consequences?

A: A few Commissioners are in attendance, so if they were not already considering that fact before they likely are now. In regards to the funding gap, Metro continues to assure us that by next year we will be receiving the full \$24.5 million for the program.

Q: We recommend expanding opportunities for community partners to flesh out the big picture vision of what we can do, but we're worried that a RFPQ process might create fewer opportunities for that because it will just compile a list of organizations that make sense.

A: We agree with that and it's one of the reasons why we're starting out with a focused and narrow RFP. We're just starting out and building teams and developing a network of providers that can all work together. The funding situation is uncertain and we always knew that this first year or two would be challenging. Our aim is to eventually issue the types of RFPs and RFPQs that are being posted by the other counties so everyone can work together in alignment, we're just not quite there yet and need a little bit more time.

Q: What about PSH clients in hotels with COVID money but housed by community based nonprofits, not Metro 300 or the county, they appear to be the same population that was prioritized for this first amount?

A: We are currently focused on identifying the initial programs. We received direction from the Board to not allow delays in funding to folks in COVID or term-limited programs. Folks that are currently still in hotels and have not been transitioned into housing by other community partners are the priority and that's why that focused was identified.

Q: We feel strongly that providers should be working together proactively and not reactively. Providers should be working with the County and the County should be working with providers to develop a better service system. We won't get anywhere by staying in silos and that's the point of the Measure.

A: We agree and express this same sentiment, it will require some thought and creative collaboration moving forward.

Closing remarks

At the conclusion of the question and answer portion of the session, Commissioner Schrader provided closing remarks. The Commissioner thanked staff for maintaining stability in the face of uncertainty and offered clarification on the County's past and current circumstances. Clackamas County did not receive the same level of CARES funding as the other two counties and because of our size the funding we did receive was provided via reimbursements after we spent it, not via direct allocations. We are also looking at ARPA dollars but are trying to be cautious to ensure we can indeed use those dollars for these types of services. Commissioner Fischer is working on that and she has been listening in on this session. We've been working with the National Association of Counties and the Treasury Department to figure out how we can use the ARPA funds.

Commissioner Schrader continued her remarks and reminded attendees that the County needs to be careful with its reserves due to the previous disasters the County has faced and the need to be prepared for potential future disasters. Clackamas County is a rural and suburban/urban frontier county and last year had one of the largest fires in the state that burned over 200,000 acres. The County is trying to be cautious to ensure that should we have another event of that scope that our reserves have the funds available to cope with something like that. Commissioner Schrader assured attendees that the County supports this program and does want to be a regional partner, we just need everyone's patience while

we work through this. Staff have been working overtime to ensure this happens and all colleagues want to see it happen as well. Commissioners Schrader and Savas have been working on a rollout plan with HACC and Commissioner Fischer has also done a stellar job working with the team. Commissioner Schrader concluded her remarks by thanking the attendees and asking for their continued patience and assured them that the program will be implemented to the best of our ability.

Jill Smith and Vahid Brown also provided closing remarks. They began by thanking everyone for attending and assured them that we understand there is a housing crisis and while being patient in such a time may be difficult, we should stay focused on the great opportunity that is coming our way. They extended a special thanks, echoing comments from Clackamas Women's Services, to recognize and honor the hard work service providers and their staffs have done throughout the pandemic, wildfires, and the ice storm. Ms. Smith and Mr. Brown concluded their closing remarks by encouraging attendees to reach out to them if there is any interest in organizing smaller meetings to discuss these topics further.