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12/5/08*

Bernard F. Lynch
City Manager

Date: December 3, 2008

To: Mayor Edward "Bud" Caulfield
And
Members of the Lowell City Council

From: Bernard F. Lynch, City Manager 

Re: **CC Motion of November 25, 2008 by Councilor Kazanjian**
"Request the City Develop a Strategy to Address the City Homeless"

As you know, the City of Lowell joined hundreds of cities and small towns across the nation in creating a 10-year plan designed to end homelessness, as we now know it, in our community. To undertake this effort, an unprecedented group of over 100 public, private and non-profit leaders volunteered to develop a 10-year, multi-sector strategy to address concerns and recommend solutions to end homelessness in the city. *The Partnership for Change: Action Plan to End Homelessness*, released June 2008, is based on the principle that there is nothing more important than having a home.

A core group of public, private and non-profit leaders continue to work on the implementation phase of the plan. Attached is an update from Linda King, Community Development Specialist, DPD regarding the implementation plan. Much of the current work is focused on finding housing opportunities for clients as well as strategizing rapid-rehousing opportunities. In addition, there has been an effort to look at this issue and seek solutions from a regional perspective.

While the *10-year Plan to End Homelessness* is working hard towards a long term solution to this issue with an emphasis on regionalization and *Housing First* initiatives we cannot forget that we have a very real challenge now. I brought together a group of over 20 first responders, health professionals and social service agencies on November 25th to address the announcement by the Lowell Transitional Living Center that due to insufficient funding the shelter would cut "winter protocol". Included were representatives from the LTLC, Lowell Police Department, LGH, Saints Medical, CTI, Community Health Center, Lowell House, Trinity Ambulance, Pathfinders, and the Wish Project. "Winter protocol" refers to the LTLC practice of providing shelter to approximately 40 individuals in extreme weather who would otherwise not meet the dry shelter requirements between the months of December and April. Given the dismal economy, rising unemployment rates and the foreclosure crisis, this winter promises to be particularly difficult for more people than ever, straining bed limits notwithstanding the impact of winter protocol.

Without the option of the shelter, first responders such as police and emergency room personnel are left to find a place for these individuals or leave them outside, where they run the risk of literally freezing to death. Aside from the very real humanitarian concern this is a financial drain on public institutions in terms of increased arrests and incarceration, higher risk of fires in abandoned buildings, costly ER visits and expensive ambulance transports. Hospital personnel framed the problem in this way, it costs approximately \$30 per night to shelter an individual whereas transports and emergency room stays can cost in the thousands of dollars. A nurse from the Community Health Center added that last winter she referred a homeless person with frostbite to the emergency room where an amputation was ultimately performed. The cost for this surgery alone would likely fund the "winter protocol" practice for a number of months. Those on the front lines of the issue discussed this potential crisis and worked to develop of a short-term strategy for this winter.

I'm pleased to report that what came out of the meeting was a commitment by LTLC to establish winter protocol for December with the hope of securing funds for the remainder of the winter. Short term measures included appealing to the state for restoration of funding for winter protocol. Other social agencies in attendance offered help in terms of supplies and assistance towards a concerted fund raising effort. I was gratified that afternoon as we discussed the issue from all sides, with the people that face the very real cost of homelessness; the human, societal and financial every day. As we work towards those long term solutions we must also attend to the critical and I'm grateful for a community of people who are so willing to work together towards a solution.

Updates will be provided to the Council on a regular basis as the *Action Plan* moves forward. Please contact me with any questions in this regard.



MEMORANDUM

TO: BERNIE LYNCH, CITY MANAGER
FROM: LINDA KING, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST
SUBJECT: NEXT STEPS 10-YEAR PLAN: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
DATE: 12/5/2008

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1. **SYSTEMS ANALYSIS/ADMINISTRATION& OVERSIGHT:** Committee meeting December 11th to prioritize actions. Steve Pealswig, George Proakis and I are also working on a web-based survey that will be sent to all members of the Executive Committee for their input. The next meeting of the EC (February 26th at 8:00 AM) will be to discuss the results, identify action steps to be completed first, goals and priorities, and benchmarks for Implementation Plan steps.
2. **LITC HOUSING:** Currently working with DMH, Peabody Properties, LITC and IHA to create housing opportunities for clients. In the HUD 2008 Continuum of Care grant (submitted in October) we included two applications for funding (1) Samaritan Bonus \$348,468 for 8 units over 3 years, and (2) Shelter Plus Care \$689,260 for 12 units over 5 years. In addition we're working with DMH and Peabody Properties to submit a grant to DMH's Facilities Consolidated Funds, the number of units has not yet been determined. Totals: \$1,037,728/20 Scattered-Site Units
3. **RAPID-REHOUSING FOR FAMILIES PILOT:** In HUD 2008 CoC grant the city partnered with CTI on a submission requesting \$422,784 for 11 units of family housing over three years.
4. **THEODORE EDSON PARKER FOUNDATION GRANT:** The grant is to create and begin implementing a "conversion" strategy for moving from a shelter to a housing based system of addressing homelessness. Peabody Properties and the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC) have reviewed the proposal based on Chicago's model, have confirmed that it represents what they're seeing nationwide, and are interested in participating. At the suggestion of Peabody Properties, I've also contacted the Corporation for Supportive Housing to talk with them on the project as well.
5. **MEDICAL INSTITUTION DISCHARGE INTERCEPT PILOT:** DMH has initiated a pilot project with the cities of Lynn and Lowell with the purpose of reducing discharges to homeless shelter. We're currently working to schedule the first meeting.
6. **CRIMINAL JUSTICE DISCHARGE SUBCOMMITTEE:** Similar to above working with DMH, Middlesex Sheriff's Office, MA Parole Board and Harvard. Next meet Dec. 3rd.
7. **REGIONALIZATION AND PREVENTION:** Karen Frederick/CIT is leading the effort on these two important initiatives.
8. **SENIORS COUNT:** Lynne Brown Zounes is leading this key initiative.
9. **OTHER NEW SUBCOMMITTEES IN PROCESS INCLUDE:** Asset Building and Education, and Behavioral health. Others to be determined by prioritization process.