

Houselessness Action Committee Meeting Notes

April 26, 2021 at 5:30 pm

Agenda

- Introductions and announcements
 - Public trash can location survey
- Neighborhood action sharing
- Guest speaker: Robyn Burek, Portland Street Response
- Final questions/wrap up

Introductions and Announcements

- Eaen – city looking for input on new trash can locations, share with networks and encourage neighbors to fill it out with current camps in mind
 - Ties into Dave’s previous conversation about providing services during cleanups
 - Other organizations like Detrash Portland and Adopt One Block exist
 - Dave: SOLVE seems overwhelmed
- WE SHINE submitted application to Joint Office of Homeless Services
 - Announcements made end of month (hopefully)
 - Hoping to get grant, move onto phase 2 – looking for places for shelter clusters (churches)
- Sunnyside also waiting on update on grant

Portland Street Response Presentation

Robyn Burek

- Started 2/16/21, launched in Lents with a team of 4 people
 - Dispatched through 911 and non-emergency line
- Criteria narrow to start with
 - Call types: Folks yelling, needing face to face mental health assessment, folks who are unresponsive
 - Outdoor-specific, looking to expand
- Specialize in mental health related calls, but also a multi-disciplinary team
- Community health workers don’t automatically come, only when needed
 - Usually 2 people come out
- Staff have lived experience and have been doing work in community for a long time
- Majority of folks they work with are houseless
 - Calls from businesses common
 - Trauma-informed approach – bring snacks/water, check if first aid is needed, offer other supplies (tents, blankets). Building rapport/relationships
 - Partnership with Street Roots Ambassador Program

- Recently expanded boundaries – based on Fire Management Area boundaries originally but now using police boundaries
 - <https://www.portland.gov/streetresponse> – lets folks check their address to see if it is covered
 - Also expanding call types: behavioral, illegal burns
- Folks are often chronically unhoused and have fallen through the cracks
 - Able to connect people with services for the first time
- Able to usually build positive rapport, folks are not resistant despite usually having PSR called on them
- Shared metrics – last week was busiest week
 - Usual response time is 22 minutes (best practice standard is 1 hour)
 - About an hour spent (90% of the time) on each call
 - Most calls do not result in transport
 - Will have van soon to help transport folks to services
 - Reducing non-emergency calls that would have traditionally been responded to by police/fire
 - Statistics shared on what types of calls they receive (around mental health, chronic health issues, referrals given) and heat map to show response areas
- Oregon ranked last in terms of mental health/substance use treatment – presents a barrier
 - Trying to capture what the gaps are in the system – where are things broken? What are the barriers to accessing services? What is the quality of services?
 - Bringing back to city council/county, using data to inform conversation
- Adding 2nd team in August, will work evenings and weekends
 - Saying in same geographic area due to resources
 - Currently working on their own radio channel (sharing with fire right now), after this is complete in September this service will be 24/7
 - Waiting for dedicated dispatcher to be hired and trained
 - Will be able to go city-wide in March 2022
- Dave: Was there an estimate of how many calls received before the project started?
 - Anticipated 4-5 calls a day, ebbs and flows (anywhere between 1-6 calls a day, haven't noticed trends)
- Dave: Was police shooting in this area? Was PSR called?
 - Don't get called when a weapon is present
 - "Weapon" needs to be defined better, many people carry knife for protection/survival
 - Pause to consider purpose
 - Tension in community between being separate from police
 - Without police co-response they are limited in which calls they can respond to
- Cat: Do you ever get dispatched when not specifically requested?
 - Yes, most of the time. People are still learning about program
- Cat: Stance on coercive holds and transports?

- Right now it's a totally voluntary service, team has approached about wanting that ability
 - Approval through county + community meetings needed
 - Cat: Interested to see how that plays out, other groups are very against involuntary holds
 - Concerns about leaving the scene when people are potentially going to cause harm to themselves
 - Pros and cons to both, need to figure out what is best for Portland/their team
- Cat: What help does Street Roots give when they come?
 - Ambassador Program builds rapport because of folks' lived experience
 - Partnered with SR and PSU to do focus groups and interviews around PSR
 - Canvased camps in SE and Lents to let them know about services, laying groundwork
- Cat: How has PR/public outreach impacted expansion?
 - Communications manager shares examples of types of calls, lots of interviews and community groups
 - Handing out pamphlets to businesses
 - Weekly update for city council
 - Community perception of services can differ from what is possible in a pilot program
 - Follow social media for updates, website FAQs also frequently updated
- Stuart: Are there things neighborhood representatives can do that would help?
 - Houseless community oftentimes isolated, lack of conversation between housed and houseless folks
 - Building community with everyone involved is key
 - Just become someone is houseless doesn't need they need to move along (like sleeping in the park)
 - Call and request PST if needed, can give them contact information and they will follow up
- Stuart: This committee functions as an exchange of information, helps to break down silos – everyone is working in the same direction but not always together
 - Regular calls with Joint Office of Homeless Services, talking with Portland Street Medicine
 - Ability to align with other agencies in training, handoffs, data collection
- Dave: Which commissioner is above you? Is there anything you're working on with them?
 - Commissioner Hardesty, weekly calls with staff
 - Conversations on PSR's identity (what they offer), geographic boundaries, brainstorming around volunteer program
 - Every change/decision goes through Commissioner Hardesty's office
 - Weekly updates posted on Commissioner's Instagram
- Stuart: Thank you! Let us know if we can share information or support in other ways

- Can email Robyn with questions/concerns/ideas: robyn.burek@portlandoregon.gov
 - Would like to share updates in the next couple months, can bring in other team members

Planning for Next Meeting

- Next meeting: May 24th at 5:30 pm
- Focus on developing priorities that SE Uplift should direct action towards
 - **Homework: think of 1 or 2 mission/vision ideas (what should we support? Example: Homes for everyone)**
- Tina: Houselessness was listed as a high priority in board survey results