

City of New Haven

Homeless Advisory Commission

May 2, 2024

Attendance:

Members Present: U. Muley, S. Bass, L. Starkes, J. Huettner, T. Streeter, Y. Chauhan

Ex- Officio:

Staff: S. James

Guest: C. Yun- New appointed Executive Director for Christian Community Action Inc.

Members Absent: J. Edwards, A. Jaramoga, N. Torres

Excused Absent: V. George-James,

No representation present: YHHAP, CAN

The meeting was called to order by U. Muley at 6:29pm with a late start due to technical difficulties. The chair made a motion for the meeting to be extended for an additional 5 minutes due to the late start in order to accommodate all agenda items. The previous meeting minutes reviewed. The motion to accept minutes -S. Bass and seconded by Y. Chauhan. Motion accepted unanimously.

Introduction: U. Muley, welcomed C. Yun to the HAC commission. C. Yun shared her role as Executive Director at CCA. C. Yun gave an overview of the agency and the services offered. C. Yun shared since the inception in 1967, CCA has been a source of hope and strength in the Hill Community of New Haven, CT. C. Yun shared that they strive to express faithful witness by providing help, housing, and hope to families who are experience homelessness and need a stable and supportive place to get them back to self-sufficiency through their apartment style emergency housing shelter and the New Hope Program which is a housing partnership between agency and the New Haven Housing Authority. C. Yun shared the other services provided by CCA are food pantry, diaper bank, energy assistance, operation fuel, and short-term motel placement. C. Yun shared that CCA is committed to promoting a grassroots and public policy agenda through their AEP (Advocacy and Education Project) and its initiatives. C. Yun shared that in this sixth decade of service, CCA continues to be a force for community building and social change.

NEW BUSINESS:

Supreme Court Ruling on Encampments: Y. Chauhan and J. Huettner were tasked to investigate the matter regarding the supreme court ruling on evicting unhoused individuals in encampments on public land. Y. Chauhan reported on their findings. It must be said that the way cities approach homelessness has the potential to change radically depending on the U.S. Supreme Court rules in **Grants Pass v. Johnson**, which has been called the “most important Supreme Court case about homelessness in at least 40 years” (Howe 2024). In this case, the Court will decide whether it is constitutional for a city to “effectively make homelessness a crime,” by banning “blankets, pillows, or cardboard boxes for protection from the elements while sleeping within the city limits” (Howe 2024). The very future of not just the homeless sleeping alone in public areas but also those residing in encampments is at stake. If the Court were to rule in favor of Martin, cities such as Los Angeles and Houston would have dramatically fewer degrees of freedom in vacating encampments, while the detached policy in cities like New Haven would be the norm across America. Furthermore, it is not just cities but also states that would be affected by this ruling. For example, the supposed Florida “initiative that would ban public camping throughout the state, “even if made law, would be preempted by this ruling, and have no power (Litz 2024). But the ultimate takeaway from this case is far broader, for it suggests that while local governments might interact most directly with homelessness, they are not the only governmental actors involved and are still subject to the decision-making at higher levels. There is a broad range for what the Supreme Court could ultimately decide, Rabinowitz said. It could uphold the 9th Circuit’s decision saying civil and criminal punishments against homeless residents for being homeless are cruel and unusual. It could say people can

be fined but not arrested, or it could overturn *Martin v. Boise*. While there appeared to be little appetite for it in the courtroom, the court could go so far as to say it has wrongly interpreted the Eighth Amendment in cases like 1962's *Robinson v. California*. That could make way for laws criminalizing other involuntary statuses." Y. Chauhan and J. Huettner shared that they would continue to follow this matter and present any new developments to the commission as they become available.

Downtown Bathroom Project:

S. Bass gave a brief update of the downtown bathroom initiative. She shared that the focus of this meeting was on the urgent need to clean up Porta Potties and look for a more immediate term solution. The group discussed the nature of the filthiness especially of late, prompting people to relieve themselves right outside the structures rather than go inside. Many have complained about the poor condition of the potties, including bus drivers. The idea is to go back to the contractor and see if they could be cleaned up more often and possibly hire personnel. Currently the contract lists cleaning for Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. In addition, on the day of the April DBSG meeting the porta Potties had been tethered shut apparently without notice and caused a stir but later it was learned that it was for cleaning. There was reiteration of the ongoing discussion of funding for longer-term solutions naming potential donors such as Yale university, Yale-New Haven Hospital, Connecticut Transit, the Chamber of Commerce, CMHC Foundation and downtown businesses. Plus, the group would like to get more city involvement from departments other than from homelessness, like economic development, so this issue is not just seen as a problem for homelessness but for the public.

Shelter Updates:

S. James shared that the last of all warming centers closed on April 30,2024. S. James shared that the Full Court press initiative which purpose was to connect warming center guests to employment, education, and housing case management. This initiative, which was designed to help guests toward self-sufficiency, continues to allow clients to fulfill long term goals even though the warming centers are now closed. S. James shared that the family triage is still in operation and there is no closing date established yet.

Encampments:

S. James shared that since the last meeting, the encampments located at Warren St/Legion/ Ella T. Grasso and State/Ferry Street has since been cleared and occupants were offered services. S. James shared that two of the encampments were on state property, nonetheless, this clearing was a collaborative effort between the city and State DOT. S. James shared that there were a few more encampments scheduled for clearing within the coming weeks due to health and safety concerns.

CAN Update: No representation present.

YHHAP Update: No representation present.

Announcements: None.

Adjourn– 7:07pm