

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
GEORGE WASHINGTON REGIONAL COMMISSION**

October 24, 2022

GWRC Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT: All Attending In-Person: **Chair**, Jason Graham, **City of Fredericksburg**; Jeff Black, **Caroline County**; Matt Kelly, **City of Fredericksburg**; Cathy Binder & Annie Cupka, **King George County**; Lori Hayes (Alternate) & Tim McLaughlin, **Spotsylvania County**; Meg Bohmke & Darrell English, **Stafford County**; Attending: Virtually: None

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jeff Sili, **Caroline County**; Chris Yakabouski, & David Ross (Alternate) **Spotsylvania County**; Crystal Vanuch & Pamela Yeung (Alternates), **Stafford County**

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Attending In-Person: City of Fredericksburg, Jon Gerlach, Alternate; Chris Payton, Brisben Center; Meghann Cotter, Micah Ministries; Jan Erkert, Micah Board; Anne Little, Tree Fredericksburg; & Julie Anderson & James Banta, Virginia Supportive Housing; Attending Virtually: None

STAFF: (Attending In-Person): Chip Boyles, Michele Dooling, Kate Gibson, Ian Ginger; Meredith Keppel, Sarah Oldaker & Sam Shoukas

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Graham called the GWRC meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with a quorum present; which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF GWRC MEETING AGENDA – October 24, 2022 (Action Item)

Upon motion made by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Ms. Bohmke, with all other members concurring, the October 24th GWRC meeting agenda was approved as submitted.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

a.) September 26 2022 GWRC Meeting (Action Item)

Upon motion by Ms. Bohmke and seconded by Mr. Kelly, with all other members concurring, the minutes of the September 26th meeting were approved as submitted.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

a.) Monthly Financial Report (July 2022) – Michele Dooling

Ms. Dooling presented financial reports to include: Balance Sheet, Agency-wide Income Statement, Dashboard & Cash Flow statement for both the month of September, 2022 and the Quarterly Year-To-Date for July-September, 2022 as included in the agenda packet. There were

no questions asked of Ms. Dooling from the GWRC committee members that required further reporting from staff.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:

a.) Anne Little, Fredericksburg, VA

Ms. Little was speaking on behalf of the Thurman Brisben Shelter and concern for potential funding reductions as described in a recent article in the Free Lance Star. Ms. Little stated Thurman Brisben is a facility that provides temporary housing to residents facing homelessness. However, to be considered for services, residents need to be both alcohol/drug free. Ms. Little stated Thurman Brisben does not receive any funding from the CoC and its funding is based on locality contributions. Ms. Little advised the City of Fredericksburg is steadfast in its support for Thurman Brisben; however, the other localities within the region are considering reducing the funding previously allocated in past years. Ms. Little stated Thurman Brisben provides families and individuals an opportunity of becoming positive and productive citizens by providing temporary services, life skills, job training, etc. to ensure a permanent homelessness situation does not occur. Ms. Little asked that the other jurisdictions in Planning District 16 re-consider continued financial support to the Thurman Brisben Shelter.

b.) Chris Payton, Thurman Brisben

Mr. Payton also spoke in regard to the recent article in the Free Lance Star. Mr. Payton stated that jurisdictional funding allocations for Thurman Brisben should not come under the CoC review board. Mr. Payton stated that the Thurman Brisben Shelter and the CoC are actually competitive agencies and entities. Mr. Payton stated each entity has different approaches and missions and should therefore be funded separately with each having its own level playing fields in place.

There were neither no written public comments received prior to tonight's meeting nor any additional verbal comments presented during the October 24th GWRC meeting.

PRESENTATIONS:

a.) Virginia Supportive Housing-Micah Ministries-Continuum of Care Housing Partnership – Sam Shoukas

Ms. Shoukas advised that as a result of the Unsheltered Homeless Summit that occurred in September of 2021, the ultimate goal is to eliminate homelessness. Ms. Shoukas relayed this region is the fastest growing homeless population within the State of Virginia. Ms. Shoukas advised the solution to preventing homelessness is to provide homes.

Ms. Shoukas stated the CoC provides client-centered and individually tailored support services while also providing affordable housing opportunities. Ms. Shoukas advised providing additional housing inventory that targets the lowest income households within the region is the objective.

On-going from the September 2021 summit, the following items have been addressed; December 2021 – tours of successful Virginia Supportive Housing communities that are already established; March 2022 – discussion of current/future zoning regulations from each of the Planning District 16 jurisdictions; July 2022 – MOU endorsement between Virginia Supportive Housing, Micah Ministries, the City of Fredericksburg and Mary Washington Healthcare. Currently, we are in the property search phase. Ms. Shoukas stated that for a property to be considered for an affordable housing community, the following considerations need to be incorporated which include: a five-to-ten acre parcel; a site that is both accessible by public transportation and/or a walkable community for retail/employment opportunities; the land cost; neighborhood concerns; a favorable zoning endorsement from the locality where a site is selected; and consideration of development challenges such as environmental concerns, topography, noise, etc.

Ms. Shoukas stated the challenges to date have included the high cost of land on the main corridors; access issues; due to real estate market, properties were selling quicker than contracts could be executed; etc. Ms. Shoukas stated existing hotel buildings were explored for the purpose of converting individual hotel rooms into loft-type apartments was not a viable option as the hotels available were in a bad state of disrepair and were too costly to convert.

Ms. Shoukas stated that Mary Washington Healthcare continually supports Micah's respite care program and other program entities as housing (or lack thereof) significantly contributes to health issues. Ms. Shoukas stated Mr. Richardson from MWHC could not be at tonight's meeting; however, forwarded the following presentation for Ms. Shoukas to present on the agency's behalf.

Mary Washington Healthcare (MWHC) fully recognizes the importance of providing adequate and affordable housing. MWHC realizes the housing needs are important social detriments for ensuring health and wealth to the people in the community that we serve. MWHC continues to support the current plans for creating permanent supportive housing options for the region's chronically homeless populations and asks for endorsement from the GWRC commission for continued financial support for this initiative.

Ms. Cotter with Micah Ministries stated the local churches have coordinated care to assist the citizens both who are living on the streets or have experienced chronic homelessness since 2005. Ms. Cotter stated that homelessness is not the only issue as 42% of homeless residents also have chronic health conditions; 21% have special education needs; almost 50% have serious mental illnesses; and 68% have experienced four or more adverse childhood experiences.

Ms. Cotter stated the vision is for development of 30-50 small homes that also provide amenities for a community center, garden/green space environment, health clinic, memorial gardens, workshops for income development, market and support services. Ms. Cotter stated the MOU with Fredericksburg, Mary Washington Healthcare and Virginia Supportive Housing authority is for the identification of a property site for Micha's project for construction of a 60–80-unit apartment building by VSH that would require citizens to pay 30% of their income to off-set their housing cost.

Ms. Cotter stated the site identification of 10 acres or more is underway. Meetings and work have occurred between the partners which include engineers, local developers, a national architectural firm, the local Community Foundation fund. Efforts are underway for a community buy-in and for re-zoning efforts to occur. Ms. Cotter stated the cost of the project will be approximately \$8m and will come from private funding, house sponsorships, local governments, in-kind donations, and state/federal grants.

Ms. Anderson with Virginia Supportive Housing association stated the agency's goal is for permanently ending homelessness for good. Ms. Anderson stated that the supportive housing models that are already in place and have been continually successful across the State include an independent living environment that has wrap-around supportive services and provides permanent housing opportunities.

OLD BUSINESS:

a.) Resolution 23-01: Go Virginia Council Region 6 Capacity Building Contract (Action Item)– Ian Ginger

Mr. Ginger presented an endorsement request of Resolution 23-01 to the GWRC commission at the August meeting for review with a request for the resolution be adopted at the upcoming October 24th GWRC meeting. Mr. Ginger stated the resolution is a request for \$250,000 in capacity building funds that will be used for staffing, meeting sites, and project development. Mr. Ginger stated this is an annual program contract that is requested for renewal every year and the renewal dollars continue to be maintained at \$250,000. This funding is included in the approved FY23 GWRC budget.

Upon motion by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Ms. Cupka, with all other members concurring, Resolution 23-01 was adopted by the GWRC commission at the October 24th meeting.

b.) Resolution 23-02: Regional Housing Advisory Committee Framework (Review & Discussion only) – Chip Boyles

Mr. Boyles advised resolution 23-02 for development of a Regional Housing Advisory Committee as introduced to the GWRC commission at the September meeting. Comments and feedback were provided to staff from GWRC members. The resolution in tonight's agenda

packet is not for endorsement but is being provided to reflect the wording, edits, changes made from board members from the September meeting. Mr. Boyles stated a request to approve, or not approve, would be on the November GWRC agenda.

There was considerable discussion and comments from GWRC members that involved topics as to whether another advisory committee was needed; the purpose of an advisory committee; more information to be provided on what the advisory committee would be assigned to do; board members felt this was an item that needed full Board of Supervisor review and not an item that one or two locality representatives decided on; who would nominate members to serve on an advisory committee; etc.

It was recommended by the GWRC commission for GWRC management to bring this item up for discussion, revision, endorsement, etc. to the City Manager and County Administrators at the upcoming CAO meeting in early November to determine if there would be locality support.

NEW BUSINESS:

**a.) Employee Handbook, Personnel Policies & Procedures Revisions Introduction—
Chip Boyles**

Mr. Boyles advised staff is working on updating GWRC's employee handbook and as this is a large undertaking for staff, the revisions will begin occurring in November. Mr. Boyles stated that approximately five policy/procedure revisions will be submitted to the GWRC commission for endorsement at monthly meetings. Mr. Boyles relayed the policy component will be broader in nature whereas, the procedures will be detailed. For example, Mr. Boyles stated the dress code – the policy will state an appropriate dress code is in place for all employees and the procedures will allow discretion for GWRC management to determine if/when jeans are allowed, etc. Mr. Boyles stated the revisions are over-due and need to be modified; however, now the way the handbook is written every change/revision would require GWRC commission endorsement. Mr. Boyles stated an issue such as an appropriate office dress code is probably not something the commission members have any desire to monitor and would be comfortable leaving these decisions up to GWRC management staff to enforce. However, the Commission would be interested in knowing a dress code is included within an employee's handbook.

Mr. McLaughlin stated as GWRC employees are actually Stafford County employees as Stafford County processes pay roll duties, then why would staff just not be in compliance with the Stafford County employee handbook? Mr. Boyles stated staff does try to be in compliance with Stafford County as well; however, there are certain issues regarding finances such as leave time, additional holiday time-off, etc. whereby GWRC cannot be in compliance with Stafford because funding has not been accounted for within the GWRC budget.

b.) Calendar Year FY2023 GWRC Meeting Schedule – Chip Boyles

Mr. Boyles advised the GWRC meeting schedule for FY2023 is included in tonight's agenda packet. Other than the November meeting occurring on the Monday after Thanksgiving (which concurred with this November's meeting schedule with no locality conflict), it does not appear that any other GWRC scheduled meetings will occur on or around an upcoming holiday. Mr. Boyles asked locality representatives to advise staff if there is a scheduling conflict with individual locality conflicts and/or conferences, etc.

c.) Executive Director's Report – Chip Boyles

Mr. Boyles advised the Executive Director's report is included in the agenda packet for member review.

a.) Staffing Updates

Mr. Boyles advised that GWRC has hired an Environmental Planner and FAMPO has hired a GIS Planner, both of whom have recently come on board. Mr. Boyles stated GWRC is now fully staffed.

b.) Program Updates – Included in Executive Director's report for tonight's meeting agenda informational packet.

d.) Correspondence: None

ADJOURN GWRC MEETING – The October 24th George Washington Regional Commission meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m. The next scheduled GWRC meeting will be held on November 28, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. There is no GWRC meeting scheduled for December, 2022.

Respectfully Submitted, Chip Boyles, Executive Director
(Draft Minutes prepared by JoAnna Roberson)