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 Dettrash 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
  o [https://www.portland.gov/streetresponse](https://www.portland.gov/streetresponse) – lets folks check their address to see if it is covered
  o Also expanding call types: behavioral, illegal burns
• Folks are often chronically unhoused and have fallen through the cracks
  o 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
  o Usual response time is 22 minutes (best practice standard is 1 hour)
  o About an hour spent (90% of the time) on each call
  o Most calls do not result in transport
    ▪ Will have van soon to help transport folks to services
  o Reducing non-emergency calls that would have traditionally been responded to by police/fire
  o 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
  o 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
  o Saying in same geographic area due to resources
  o Currently working on their own radio channel (sharing with fire right now), after this is complete in September this service will be 24/7
  o 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?
  o 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?
  o Don’t get called when a weapon is present
  o “Weapon” needs to be defined better, many people carry knife for protection/survival
  o Pause to consider purpose
  o 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?
  o 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?
  o Ambassador Program builds rapport because of folks’ lived experience
  o Partnered with SR and PSU to do focus groups and interviews around PSR
  o Canvased camps in SE and Lents to let them know about services, laying groundwork
• Cat: How has PR/public outreach impacted expansion?
  o Communications manager shares examples of types of calls, lots of interviews and community groups
  o Handing out pamphlets to businesses
  o Weekly update for city council
  o Community perception of services can differ from what is possible in a pilot program
  o Follow social media for updates, website FAQs also frequently updated
• Stuart: Are there things neighborhood representatives can do that would help?
  o 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)
  o 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
  o Regular calls with Joint Office of Homeless Services, talking with Portland Street Medicine
  o 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?
  o Commissioner Hardesty, weekly calls with staff
  o 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
  o 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
    o 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