

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: May 13, 2009

CALLED TO ORDER: 5:35 p.m.

ADJOURNED: 6:09 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

ATTENDING MEMBERS

Mike Speedy, Chair
Maggie Lewis
Kent Smith

ABSENT

Paul Bateman
Susie Day
Benjamin Hunter
Doris Minton-McNeill

AGENDA

Presentation on Lifelong Living Communities - Dave Sander, Director of Community Initiatives and Policy Development, Central Indiana Council on Aging (CICOA)

Presentation on Dayspring Center Holy Family Shelter – Lori Casson, Director of Dayspring Center

Presentation on Holy Family Shelter - Bill Bickel, Executive Director of Holy Family Shelter

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The Community Affairs Committee of the City-County Council met on Wednesday, May 13, 2009. Chair Mike Speedy called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. with the following members present: Maggie Lewis and Kent Smith. Absent were Paul Bateman, Susie Day, Benjamin Hunter and Doris Minton-McNeill.

Presentation on Lifelong Living Communities - Dave Sander, Director of Community Initiatives and Policy Development, Central Indiana Council on Aging (CICOA)

Chair Speedy stated that Mr. Sander is unable to attend tonight's meeting and will be rescheduled at a later date.

Presentation on Dayspring Center and Holy Family Shelter

Lori Casson, Director of Dayspring Center
Bill Bickel, Executive Director

Chair Speedy stated that Mr. Sander is unable to attend tonight's meeting and his portion of the presentation will be rescheduled at a later date.

Ms. Casson stated that Dayspring Center provides emergency shelter, clothing and three meals a day for homeless families with children in central Indiana. She said that 1,500 children in Indiana do not have a home. The average age of a homeless person is nine years old. Ms. Casson stated that 40% of the homeless are families, and they are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population.

Ms. Casson stated that the mission at Dayspring is to lovingly connect families with the resources they need in order to address their homelessness and to bring about a change. She said that 60% of the families that Dayspring serve consist of single mothers with children, 10% to 15% are single fathers with children, and the fastest growing category is couples with children. Ms. Casson stated that Dayspring is the only shelter that accepts couples.

Ms. Casson stated that in addition to meeting the basic needs, Dayspring tries to provide families with the tools to make permanent changes in their lives and to become and remain self-sufficient. Ms. Casson stated that with the declining economy, the rate of homelessness among families is increasing at an alarming rate. She said that Dayspring is seeing families that would have never considered coming to Dayspring. Ms. Casson stated that, unfortunately, they are at capacity at their location 99% of the time. She said that at this time last year, they were turning away anywhere between five to ten families per day that were seeking shelter. She said that currently, they are turning away anywhere between 15 to 20 families.

Ms. Casson stated that Dayspring has seen a dramatic decrease in funding. She said that they serve about 150 families, and that equates to about 500 to 600 people per year. She said that without Dayspring Center, those families would have nowhere to turn.

Ms. Casson stated that the City will be submitting an action plan to Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP). She said that the draft of this plan concerns her because of the percentage and the portions of the homeless clients that the plan will serve. She said that at the initial release of the HPRP, they were really excited. Ms. Casson stated that in looking at the city's estimated amounts for the HPRP, they were disappointed to see that the city was only considering about 20% for the supportive services. She said that the other 80% were being considered for homeless prevention dollars that would go directly to individuals in their homes by paying rents and utilities. Ms. Casson stated that on the surface, that is not a bad thing to do. She said that what they have found as a community is that the provision of the funds without any type of support is not really helpful. She said that in a recent survey conducted at Dayspring Center and Holy Family Center, they found that about 80% of the clients had actually received homeless prevention funds. Ms. Casson stated that those funds did not keep them from becoming homeless because they did not have the supportive services that are needed to affect a permanent change in their lives. Ms. Casson stated that the current draft of the HPRP is a recipe for disaster. She said that there are other funds that will be provided through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other sources that do provide homeless prevention dollars with rent and utility assistance, but there are no funds to provide supportive services. Ms. Casson stated that given the massive need in Indianapolis, these HPRP funds would address those with low-to-medium barriers of housing stability who would benefit from the type of temporary assistance that these funds could offer.

Ms. Casson stated that she is asking the City of Indianapolis to consider allocating these funds to be more consistent with the needs of the community and with the process proven both locally and nationally. She said that the city was first in the country to develop a plan to end homelessness. This is a unique opportunity for the city to use this one-time influx of funds to accomplish the goal with the two-prong approach; homeless prevention and rapid re-housing with permanent supportive housing. Ms. Casson stated that Dayspring Center recognizes and understands the amount of responsibility and strain that the funds would create for the city. She said that they take their commitment to those in the community and seriously want to see that they are provided with the best services and strategies that have been proven. Ms. Casson asked the committee members to look at how funding will really affect the homeless and if it will really make a difference in their lives.

Ms. Casson invited committee members to the Dayspring Center for a tour to see the actual faces of homelessness and how the services they provide impact the lives of those they serve.

Chair Speedy asked if a couple has to have a child to receive shelter at Dayspring. Ms. Casson answered in the affirmative. Chair Speedy asked if Dayspring has living space right on the property and asked where it is located. Ms. Casson answered in the affirmative, stating that the property is located at the corner of 16th Street and Central Avenue. She said that it is more dormitory style living. Each family has their own dedicated living space with some shared facilities, such as kitchens, family room and dining room.

Councillor Lewis asked if the couples are required to be married. Ms. Casson answered in the negative, stating that if they are operating as a family in the community and have proof of that, then they are eligible to come to Dayspring.

Chair Speedy asked if they have to be the custodial parent. Ms. Casson answered in the affirmative.

Councillor Smith asked Ms. Casson to explain affordable housing in her opinion. Ms. Casson stated that it is estimated that a person who makes \$11 dollars per hour can afford a two-bedroom apartment or house in Indianapolis. She said that most families make minimum wage and live below the 30% Area Median Income (AMI) and cannot afford housing. She said that there is no public housing, and the wait list is both long and closed, so that makes it impossible to find housing. Ms. Casson stated that Dayspring is seeing an increase in the length of stay, which will in turn have an adverse affect on their funding because they are funded by the numbers they serve.

Councillor Smith asked Ms. Casson to give some examples of the supportive services to prevent homelessness. Ms. Casson stated that Dayspring helps families by looking at the root cause of what has brought them to the shelter (lack of employment, domestic violence, substance abuse, transportation issues or child care needs). She said that there are a lot of reasons why a family has become homeless, and without addressing those issues, they are going to be right back in that situation. Ms. Casson stated that Dayspring does a complete assessment of mental health, education and health issues to determine what is needed to get that person stabilized and re-housed as quickly as possible.

Councillor Smith asked if Dayspring is seeing very many veterans. Ms. Casson stated that they are not seeing a lot of veterans, because most of them go through the Veterans Administration (VA).

Councillor Lewis stated that where Dayspring refers families that they have had to turn away. Ms. Casson stated that Dayspring is referring them to other shelters, and unfortunately, those shelters are in the same boat as Dayspring. She said that Holy Family and Dayspring are the only two shelters that are able to take men. She said that some of the other shelters, being domestic violence facilities are unable to take them.

Chair Speedy asked where Holy Family Shelter is located and how they are different from Dayspring. Ms. Casson stated that Holy Family is located at 30 S. Palmer just off of South Meridian Street. She said that Holy Family is a part of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. She said that Holy Family is unable to accept couples who are not married. Ms. Casson stated that the mission and methods of operation for Holy Family and Dayspring are pretty similar. Chair Speedy asked if Holy Family is the same size as Dayspring. Ms. Casson stated that they are a little bit larger, and they are able to serve 22 families at their current facility.

Chair Speedy asked if Ms. Casson believes that the funds would be better served going to the service providers versus going directly to the family that is in crisis. Ms. Casson answered in the affirmative, stating that homeless prevention dollars would go to the landlords and utility companies, and that would allow the family to stay in their home; but giving that assistance without the supportive services attached, will only delay a person's homelessness.

Chair Speedy asked if Ms. Casson has had any opportunity to express her views on the proposal. Ms. Casson stated that representatives from the Shelter and Mental Health collaboration attended the Continuum of Care Advisory Board meeting and expressed their views there. She said that in addition to that, a letter has been drafted to Erica Aquila, Assistant Administrator, Department of Metropolitan Development (DMD), regarding concerns with the grant.

Councillor Lewis asked if Ms. Casson thinks that her agency and other agencies would receive some of those prevention and supportive dollars to offer a continued care. Ms. Casson answered in the affirmative.

With no further business pending, and upon motion duly made, the Community Affairs Committee of the City County Council was adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Speedy, Chair
Community Affairs Committee

MS/law