

# Allegheny County Homeless Advisory Board

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## **CoC Bi-Monthly Meeting**

July 25, 2023; 10:00AM to 12:00PM

Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting *and*

1 Smithfield St, Pittsburgh, 15222 (HSB, Lower Level)

**Purpose:** The Homeless Advisory Board (HAB) is a public/private partnership formed to assist and recommend to Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh, the City of McKeesport and the Municipality of Penn Hills on public policy, programs, activities, data and all other efforts that will eliminate homelessness and improve the wellbeing of persons and families who are homeless.

### **HAB Members**<sup>1</sup>

Nicole Anderson

Shawlane Heffernan (P)

Gale Schwartz (P)

Breanna Benjamin (P)

Matthew Grayson

Katie Stohlberg

Damian Butler-Buccilli (P)

Brian Knight (P)

Pam Turner (P)

Kwabena Danso-Ayesu (P)

Dave Lettrich (P)

LaVerne Wagner (P)

Chase Archer Evans (P)

Amy Plant (P)

Michael Yonas (P)

Melissa Ferraro (P)

Raymond Prushnok (P)

Andy Halfhill (P)

Susie Puskar (P)

In addition to the below notes, the [meeting recording can be accessed here](#).

### **Minutes**

- **Welcome and Introductions—Gale Schwartz**

Gale Schwartz, HAB -Chair, welcomed meeting participants, and raised the March Meeting Minutes for vote. No revisions to the minutes were raised. ***The minutes were approved by the HAB, with three (3) present member abstaining and all other present members voting in favor.***

- **Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT)**

Representatives from PRT provided an overview of PRT programs and services. Amy Silbermann, Director of Planning and Service Development introduced PRT and provided a snapshot of transit planning, bus shelters and ways PRT can be an active partner in community development opportunities. Melissa Girty, Government Affairs Liaison, and Deborah Phillips, Community Outreach Manager, spoke to PRT's Affordable Fare Programming. Finally, Shawn Hudzinski, Deputy Chief of Transit Police, reviewed the role of the transit police officers and the relationship building efforts underway with homeless services stakeholders, particularly shelters and street outreach teams. Slides presented can be found in Appendix A.

In closing their presentation, the PRT representatives asked HAB members and CoC participants how PRT can better engage homeless and unsheltered populations and better connect to services.

The following comments were raised:

- Recommendation for bathrooms that are safe and accessible. There are design examples from across the country that should be considered in
- Encouragement of the linkages/partnerships that have been made.
- Interest in opportunities to try programming for shelter residents/people who do not have permanent residence. Recognition that currently, homeless service providers do not have

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<sup>1</sup> (P) indicates HAB members who were present for the meeting.

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the budgets to broadly cover bus passes for all participants, but it repeatedly was identified as need.

- A participant inquired if there are plans for the establishment of a non-police team that can respond to service calls, allowing the Transit Police to focus on law-enforcement related issues. Deputy Chief Hudzinski said no. Other participants recommended further connections the Transit Police could make, highlighting street outreach teams, as well as Pittsburgh Police in Zones 1 and 2.

## Contacts:

Deborah Phillips  
Community Outreach Manager  
[dphillips@rideprt.org](mailto:dphillips@rideprt.org) | 412-566-5325

Shawn Hudzinski  
Deputy Chief of Transit Police  
[shudzinski@portauthority.org](mailto:shudzinski@portauthority.org) | 412-255-1139

- **IO Update—Andy Halfhill**

Andy Halfhill provided the following updated from Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS):

### *HUD CoC Program*

HUD announced CoC Program awards from the FY22 CoC Program Competition (i.e., the annual application submitted in Fall 2022 for program funding beginning in July 2023), and the Allegheny County CoC was awarded full funding, approximately \$23 million. The funding award included all renewals requested and three (3) expansion projects. The three expansion projects included two Permanent Support Housing program expansions, and one Rapid Rehousing program expansion.

### *HMIS*

Allegheny County DHS, as the HMIS Lead for the CoC, is transitioning to a new vendor for the CoC's HMIS. Green River, which has been working with the CoC for a few years on the backend reporting for HMIS data, will be the full HMIS vendor. The new system will retain existing functionality, and all HUD requirements will continue to be met, but the expectation is for the system to become more user friendly. The new system will go live by October 1, 2023, and providers will be repeatedly engaged with training opportunities.

### *Shelter*

Noting the recent announcement that the shelter run at Smithfield United would be closing, Mr. Halfhill update meeting participants that the County was coordinating with a number of partners on plans to add capacity to the shelter system. In particular, Light of Life, East End Cooperative Ministry, and Second Avenue Commons would be opening overflow space. Additionally, Unity Recovery would be opening shelter space in Homewood in June. Additional sites and partners were in discussion but were not finalized for announcement yet. In total, the additional spaces were planned to accommodate the 125 identified regular users of Smithfield United. It was also noted that a shuttle service was being piloted to provide a transportation between shelters and other service entities. The shuttle would regularly run a circular route, connecting the offerings. Erin Dalton, DHS Director, was additionally present to answer questions. She cited the decision to close was from the County and the closure related to current operations, stating that a decision on opening a winter shelter at Smithfield United has not been made yet.

The following comments and discussions were raised:

- Multiple HAB members and meeting participants raised concerns about the timing of the decision and the numbers being used to plan for adjusted shelter space. They inquired

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about the rationale for not letting more natural attrition lower the numbers at Smithfield before closing, requested that more notice time be given to Smithfield stayers before closing, that there be a more definitive plan on where new shelter options would be and what the long term plan for Smithfield United be before closing, and that clear plans for the “not regular” stayers be made before closing. Ms. Dalton responded that the situation is fluid and locking in decisions about the long term future at Smithfield were not possible, but that the plans for alternative accommodations for the coming six months were responsive to the number of people regularly needing shelter.

- These participants also raised concerns about the closing of the shelter in relation to encampment closures in the fall, which together create a context that is criminalizing/removing spaces for people who do not have a permanent residence to be.
- A question was raised about the HAB’s role in decision making, and if the closure decision was done in a process that circumvented the HAB and/or CoC’s authority. Meeting participants were reminded that the HAB has authority in relation to CoC Program funds through HUD, and does not extend to all services and entities that touch homelessness. Emergency Shelters in Allegheny County, including winter shelter at Smithfield, are funded through other funding. Where the HAB’s direct authority ends, strong partnerships continue and work to support coordinated engagement around planning and operating systems to meet the needs of Allegheny County residents. This is done in the context of recognizing that ending homelessness requires a community-wide, cross-sector response. The HAB, and the CoC at large, utilize their expertise to provide input and guidance to other entities and systems. While this engagement cannot drive every decision, there is meaningful and impactful planning happening across entities.

In the interest of other HAB business needing attention, Ms. Schwartz moved the meeting discussion forward. She proposed an additional meeting be set for the HAB to understand the decision making process for the closure; where shelter capacity is planned; how people will be connected to shelter and services; and plans for individuals who continue to present at Smithfield.

- **CoC Program Renewal Evaluation Tool—Hilary Scherer**

As part of the annual HUD CoC Program NOFO application, a ranking of projects is required. To facilitate the ranking, a renewal project scoring tool has been developed. The proposed 2023 Ranking Tool was developed through the HAB’s CoC Analysis and Planning Committee, utilizing the expertise of CoC members and an analysis of the effectiveness of previous ranking tools. The recommendations were shared with the HAB and CoC in advance of the meeting, and are included in Appendix B. ***The 2023 Ranking Tool was approved by the HAB, with one present member abstaining and all other present members voting in favor.***

- **Committees**

Committee updates were quickly presented. Below is a listing of Committee meeting schedules, and cited updates.

*CoC Analysis and Planning Committee (COCAPC)*

- Update: 2023 Ranking Tool as cited above.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday, 2:00-3:00pm
- IO Contact: Ciara Stehley ([ciara.stehley@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:ciara.stehley@alleghenycounty.us))

*Communication and Education Committee (CEC)*

- Update(s): The Committee is working on building connection with other stakeholder groups, like PRT. The group is also seeking to do outreach for provider members, including

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a goal to share list of events. Additional area for short term focus is an audit of communication channels for the CoC.

- 4<sup>th</sup> Monday, 3:00-4:00pm
- IO Contact: Remy Harris ([remy.harris@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:remy.harris@alleghenycounty.us))

## *Homeless Outreach Coordinating Committee (HOCC)*

- Update(s): Held its first reconvening in May, and focusing on community building for outreach workers.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Monday, 5:00-6:30pm
- IO Contact: Gabe Krivosh ([gabriel.krivosh@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:gabriel.krivosh@alleghenycounty.us))

## *Provider Committee*

- Update(s): Restructuring meetings to include provider spotlights as an opportunity to learn about our partner organizations, particularly in recognition of the significant staff turnover in the past two years. Further considering appropriate subcommittee structure to be responsive to where provider perspective can be meaningful in information planning.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday, 2:00-4:00pm
- IO Contact: Rob Eamigh ([robert.eamigh@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:robert.eamigh@alleghenycounty.us))

## *Lived Experience and Community Voice*

Last year, the Consortium of Recognizing Experience (CORE) was started as an initiative to help center those who are utilizing or have utilized homeless services in CoC planning, administration, and evaluation processes. CORE was set up as a regular, open forum immediately following each bi-monthly CoC/HAB meeting, and a document was maintained outlining the input and ideas shared by CORE participants. While fruitful input was gathered in the first year of the effort, there were challenges in establishing effective mechanisms for meaningful collaboration within the CoC structure and consistently maintaining participation from people with lived experience. At least one CoC member also raised concern regarding equitable access to CoC decisioning making by people with lived experience compared to homeless system professionals and other stakeholders. HAB member, and CORE Co-Lead, recommended that the role of incorporating lived experiencing voice be put into the efforts of the HOCC, acknowledging that Street Outreach teams are already established in the space of engaging people experiencing homelessness and connecting with them daily. HOCC Co-Chair, Dave Lettrich, said this would be discussed with the HOCC.

Recognizing the importance of lived expertise in CoC planning, administration, and evaluation, the CoC signed up to participate in a HUD Community Workshop on partnering with people with lived experience with homelessness. HAB members Chase Archer Evans, Amy Plant and Andy Halfhill, along with CoC member Aubrey Plesh, each committed to the workshop series and will share back with the CoC on lessons learned.

- **Public Comments/Announcements**

None

### **Next CoC Meeting**

July 25, 2023 from 10:00am to 12:00pm  
1 Smithfield St, Pittsburgh, 15222 (HSB, Lower Level) and  
Microsoft Teams

## Appendix A PRT Presentation Slides



# Homeless Advisory Board

## Pittsburgh Regional Transit Overview

May 30, 2023

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# Transit Network Study and Future Changes to Service



### Current:

- PRT is operating almost 200 operators below budgeted levels; we are offering hiring incentives and focusing on stabilizing our current service and ensuring scheduled service is on the street

### Next 2 years:

- Starting this summer; almost 2-year project with lots of community input
- Will look at transit routes and current travel patterns and suggest changes to routes to better meet the needs of how people are moving around our County today and in the future
- A few connection opportunities identified in the long-range plan are shown in the map to the right



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## Bus Shelter Program

- PRT owns and maintains 327 shelters throughout Allegheny County
- Another 424 bus stops have shelters that are privately owned or are publicly owned by the municipality such as through an advertising contract (the largest of which is the City of Pittsburgh)
- 11% of PRT's stops and stations are sheltered
- PRT has proposed to add additional shelters through a new contract to begin in our FY2024 budget year

P Pittsburgh  
R Regional  
T Transit



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## PRT's Role in Community Development

- PRT can be a **SPONSOR** for joint development on our property
- PRT can be a **STAKEHOLDER** in any development that occurs within the "zone of influence" of current or future stations
- PRT can be an **ADVOCATE** for sustainable land use decisions along all transit corridors in the Pittsburgh region

P Pittsburgh  
R Regional  
T Transit



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# PRT Property Opportunities for Joint Development



Provide New Affordable & Workforce Housing

Increase Transit Ridership

Add Commercial Uses

Community Resource Space: Library, Job Training, Day Care

Revenue Streams from Property to Support PRT Operations, Maintenance, and Community Goals

Create Recreation and Play Spaces, and/or Public Gathering Spaces



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# Affordable Fare Programming



- Low Income Fare Program Pilot
  - Allegheny County Dept of Human Services
- Bulk Pass Program Pilot
  - Heinz Endowments grant
- Pass accessibility
  - Ticket vending machines
  - Mobile Ticketing Services
    - Ready2Ride App
    - Transit App
- Other Fare Programs (Age 65+, Children, riders with disabilities, U Pass programs)



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## Safety and Security



- Police Force
  - Police supervisors and officers have and continue to meet with representatives from unhoused shelters and street outreach teams, such as Allegheny Health Network in an effort to establish relationships that foster a cooperative relationship between law enforcement personnel and social services. These relationships help officers to better recognize the specific needs of unhoused people and where those needs could best be met.
  - Officers assist unhoused bus and rail patrons with obtaining resources such as food, medical, or shelter.
  - Officers regularly do welfare checks on unhoused patrons at the start and end of service in and around the subway stations and bus stops to assist them with obtaining resources such as food, medical, or shelter.
- Operations
  - Crisis Awareness Training is completed by all Operators

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# How can we Engage?



What recommendations does the Advisory Board have for how we can better engage homeless and unsheltered populations? Better connect to services?

- Community Outreach Department
- Police and Operations
- Amenities and Service

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## Appendix B Renewal Projects Ranking Tool Recommendations

### ***Overview of 2023 Ranking Tool***

As part of the annual HUD CoC Program NOFO application, a ranking of projects is required. To facilitate the ranking, a renewal project scoring tool has been developed.

The proposed 2023 Ranking Tool was developed through the Homeless Advisory Board's (HAB's) CoC Analysis and Planning Committee, utilizing the expertise of CoC members and an analysis of the effectiveness of previous ranking tools. The analysis of previous ranking tools included a review of previous Ranking Tool scores, including a review of mean, median and high/low scores, as well as the distribution of projects across scores, a review of system performance across measures, and a comparison of the measurements and point values utilized in previous tools.

The proposed 2023 tool is organized around the following performance measures: (a) unit utilization; (b) housing performance; (c) income, employment, health insurance and non-cash benefits outcomes; (d) length of time in program; (e) project serving hard to serve participants; (f) recidivism; (g) data quality (h) timeliness of data; (i) programmatic monitoring performance (j) fiscal administration; and (k) cost effectiveness. Data for each measure is scored and weighted to balance the ranking tool results around a consistent scale.

Data to populate the tool for each project will be extracted from HMIS, except for sections (i), (j) and (k). Fiscal data maintained through DHS will be used to complete sections (j) and (k), and 2022 monitoring documentation will be used to complete section (i).

DHS will populate the tool for each renewal project. Projects will then review their tools and be able to provide comment on the recorded performance, for consideration by the Evaluation Committee.

### ***Recommendation for the 2023 Ranking Tool***

Based on the CoC Analysis and Planning Committee's analysis and discussion, following is being recommended:

1. The measures and accompanied definitions utilized in the 2022 tool be maintained for 2023, excepted for the PSH measure described in the next bullet.
2. For Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) projects, update the weight distribution of the previous measure of "Exits to or Remaining in Permanent Housing" for 15 points into a higher weight for successful exits: (1) Remaining in Permanent Housing worth 5 points; and (2) Exits to a Permanent Housing worth 10 points. This update will continue to award points for maintaining permanent housing among the projects' service participants, but more fairly awards projects for successful exits from PSH to permanent destinations.
3. Increase the value of Cost Effectiveness from 5 points to 10 points to reflect the importance of effectively utilizing the CoC's limited financial resources.
4. Make the measure regarding serving vulnerable clients a bonus measure. This measure was originally added to the Ranking Tool as bonus points but over time was moved into the list of measures. The intent of the measure is to adjust for projects that serve a higher percentage of clients who are chronically homeless, have 2 or more disabilities, have zero income, or have entered the program directly from a place not meant for human habitation. While all other measures in the ranking tool reflect factors directly influenced by the administration and provision of services by

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the providing entity, the “proportion of vulnerable clients” measure was established in recognition of the influence of contextual factors—specifically the level of vulnerability of the clients served. Projects do not dictate the number of particularly vulnerable clients they serve, while a disproportionate level of particularly vulnerable clients can impact the performance outcomes of projects. Making this measure a bonus measure continues to recognize the impact of client vulnerability level, while distinguishing it from the other, performance oriented, measures.

5. Award points for each measure according to the comparative ranking among projects. For each measure, projects receive a score of 0-5, with 5 being the highest. Each measure then has an accompanying weight value, to make its total point value range from 2.5 to 15 points per measure. For example, Unit Utilization is worth 15 points—if a project scores 5 points on the 0-5 scale, they would receive 15 points for Unit Utilization. Historically, the allocation of points 0-5 for each measure was done by establishing a scale based on the distribution of scores from the previous year. For example, last year a project needed to have a unit utilization rate of 95% or above to get 5 points, with the 95% threshold being set based on the previous year’s utilization spread across projects. The recommended update will instead rank projects within each measure, and award 5 points to the top ranked projects for that measure, 4 points for the next group, etc. This approach continues the practice of awarding scores based on the local performance context, without having to apply outdated outcomes to set the scale.
6. Return to using the full CoC Monitoring Scorecard. In response to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, CoC program monitoring was modified, and a more basic monitoring scorecard was integrated into the annual ranking. Monitoring has returned to full capacity and scope and results are more effectively captured using the full Monitoring Scorecard.