



Sustainable Housing Work Team  
Kick-off meeting May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013 – Minutes

Attendees:

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Joe Perkins	Washington Hancock Community Agency
Susan Farley	Washington Hancock Community Agency
Scott Shaw	Maine Sea Coast Mission
Wendy Harrington	Maine Sea Coast Mission
Lou Esposito	The First, NA
Betsy Fitzgerald	Washington County Government
Jon Calame	Thermal Efficiency - Eastport
Rebecca Hobbs	The Next Step DV Project
Scott Harriman	Washington County Community College
David Grainger	Down East Maine Mission
Al May	Maine CDC
Bobbi Harris	Washington Hancock Community Agency
Judy East	Washington County Council of Government
VIA SKYPE:	
Deborah Poulton	Eastern Area Agency on Aging
Noelle Merrill	Eastern Area Agency on Aging

Meeting started with introductions around the table and via Skype.

Judy presented a Powerpoint (slides distributed and posted at <http://www.gro-wa.org/sustainable-housing> ) summary of the project task/timeframe, issues, background data, trends, and existing strategies to address the housing need.

Discussion then proceeded for the remaining 1.5 hours of the meeting time based on the final slide:

- Programs/initiatives/people we missed?
- Programs/initiative under development?
- Given budget realities – best next steps?
- Use of work group meetings (2 more)?
- Job creation opportunities

Healthy – Affordable – Efficient

The notes are organized in the order of the discussion; however where items were raised that related back to earlier conversations they are grouped together.

**1. Programs/initiatives/people we missed in the slide deck:**

**Next Step's Shelter**; note that nationally the cause of homelessness for 63% of women is domestic violence; Next Step is also in partnership with WHCA to provide transitional housing to enable a long term housing solution

**Eastern Area Agency on Aging** – provides emergency meals for free and sells meals at \$4/meal;

- provide several hundred Amish heaters to low income families;
- homeowners have fears that if they improve their house then their taxes will go up;
- they often wont apply for benefits because they are afraid they will lose their homes; EAAA spends a lot of time debunking these kinds of misperceptions
- clients are looking for a safe, affordable handy person to do manual labor (raking, shoveling) – work with schools?

**Family Futures Downeast** – teaches living skills

## **2. Discussion of gap between what programs provide and the documented need:**

**Maine Housing Home Repair Network** - Bobbi noted that it is funded at \$73K in 2013; this level allowed work on 6 houses in 2012 for both counties. **(4 of the 6 homes repaired were in Washington County)**

**Weatherization Program** operated 2008-2011 (ARRA Stimulus funded at \$3.5 million and weatherized 454 homes – 65 percent of the homes weatherized were in Washington **County**); **2012 funding levels are now funded at pre-2008 levels (approximately \$500K; can now only help ~50 homes/year)**

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Home Repair Network** contributes \$135K/year

Clearly the need outstrips the available funds by a significant margin; Bobbi and Joe estimate a roof repair costs \$6000; with 140 roofs, the need is ~\$1million

All agreed it would be useful to estimate the total need (from the weatherization and other housing assessments) and compare it to the available funding to quantify the gap – ***Bobbi and Judy to work on this before the next meeting***

Jon Calame noted that it would also be instructive (though perhaps harder to quantify) to describe the externalized costs (health care costs; excessive fuel costs paid to foreign sources) relative to the cost of repair as this would better describe the cost to society of not repairing/replacing the homes in disrepair. ***Jon to work on this before the next meeting***

## **3. More detailed discussion of programs that are working or could serve more:**

**At Home Downeast** program: Joe described Blue Hill pilot project:

- available to all income levels;
- 54 members by April, 2013 surpassing membership of 50 projected for September 30;
- program will look different in every community but has similar guiding principles
- part of health care system by providing medicines (or ensuring they are taken), nurse visits, ensuring appointments are kept, some transportation; referral service
- much cheaper than hospital or institutional care
- addresses isolation as it is strongly supported by volunteers and the community

- Aging in Place is recommended nationally in Housing America's Future: New Directions for National Policy, Bipartisan Policy Center, Economic Policy Program – Housing Commission, Feb 2013 (post to [www.gro-wa.org](http://www.gro-wa.org))
- Includes home safety assessments - relative to carpets, stairs, handrails but not yet water, air, healthy home issues
- Staff include Program Manager, p/t Office Assistant and 15 community volunteers that form a Steering Committee (meets every 2 weeks; for 3 years); typically 65-70 years old; younger volunteers do manual work (raking, shoveling; assisting with technology)
- Membership is by fee with sliding scale; often paid for by the adult children of members who live in different state
- Funding also from donations and grants

**Washington County Community College** – Scott Harriman indicates 3 programs that could contribute to this effort:

- Building Construction
- Residential Electric
- Plumbing /Heating
- Ready stock of interns to do work; they are looking for experience
- Also do certification training
- Issues faced by students – attrition in attendance based on their inability to keep a house together (buy food, pay fuel, buy gas) and show up; calls come into WCCC “just paid Tamaro \$1000 and I cant afford to come to class”; must choose between going to the Dr. or getting to work

#### 4. Additional Data Needs

**Homelessness** – the point in time count (January in shelters) undercounts the homeless population in Washington County; there is another measure from 2009 that estimates the number between 120 (HC) and 180 (WC) - *Al to follow up with Rebecca to get data source*

**Higher Risk for Poorer Health** – data from UK indicate a phenomenon of “excess winter morbidity” resulting from cold stress from low indoor temperatures; negative health impacts associated with cold stress; exacerbates health issues (diabetes, circulatory problems - called Fuel Poverty – common problem among the low and very low income is between medicine, food and fuel; *Jon will provide UK data sources;*

**Retention/Attrition** – one stress takes away from another need: Heat or Eat (reference #14 in Healthy Energy-Efficient Housing article by Kuholski, Kate et al); how to track? One suggestion: create a Survey Monkey to businesses or institutions who receive these calls eg Food Pantries; assemble anecdotal information on the reasons for making the trade-offs noted above. Jon Calame has data and can assemble caloric intake over winter for low income families.

#### 5. Education needs

**Private Loans** – there are programs to assist people; many need basic education to get ready to buy a house – to make them “bankable” (saving, interest, budgeting)

- Target audiences: High School Seniors; College Freshmen, WCCC first year budgeting; referral network among providers

#### 6. How do we Work Together? What are the near term solutions?

- there is a need BOTH for more affordable housing AND home repairs
- how do we address the sheer magnitude of the problem?
- THAW Fund – private donor funding can help with essential needs and is less restrictive than many public programs
- Recipients are expected to “pay it forward”
- “Raise the Roof” Campaign – fix a roof; recipient has to put in something and/or pay it forward
- We have the capacity for a year round repair group (ME Sea Coast Mission pays for materials) students could earn internships; supervised by local contractors
- We should interview the contractors – invite them to these meetings
- Need input/representation from municipal people as well (Deb – EAAA)
- Jon Calame - If renovations/repairs are to happen in the near term we need volunteers; but if it is to get to scale then it needs to support contractors
- Jon C - If we replace oil as our primary heating fuel with renewables we create jobs in the local/regional/State economy (rather than sending it offshore - \$852Million/year statewide); would decrease the pressure on the household income trade-offs; huge potential source for jobs producing and using alternative fuels.
- Location dysfunction: Housing===Employment===Food and Services

IDEAs for new Forms of Housing options:

- Re-purpose old buildings (commercial and large residential) for cooperative housing
- Rehabilitate trailers
- District heating (an idea that has been around since the 1920s)
  - Shared infrastructure and/or equipment
  - Isolation geographically + Independence culturally === Cooperative Housing as solution
  - Shared septic

<p><b>Next meetings</b>          May 28 – Machias (DHHS)          June 18 – Calais (WCCC)</p>	<p><b>New invitees:</b>          Eric Bush, Four Directions          Sean Thibideau – USDA          Joella Theriault – NMDC Housing Director</p>
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**Tasks at May meeting:**

1. Review/refine questions to ask of contractors, Code Enforcement Officer, Local Plumbing Inspectors, Public Health Officers, Emergency Medical Technicians, Contractors

Draft Questions to be developed for review by Committee at May 28<sup>th</sup> meeting by:

- a. For Local Plumbing Inspectors/Public Health Officers/Emergency Medical Technicians: **AI**
  - b. Code Enforcement Officers – **Judy**
  - c. Private building Contractors - **Bobbi**
2. Review data on scope of need vs. paucity of funding to address it (Bobbi to generate; Jon Calame to add data on fuel poverty impacts and winter cold impacts)
  3. Review/refine policy ideas