

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

September 26, 2007, LLRC

1:30pm—3:00pm

BBN Attendees: Mary Beth Lampe, CSTS
Paul Sher, Legal Services
Pat Parker-Self, Veteran Services
Christina Oliver, SOS Community Services
Laurence Simmons, HARC
Moonson Eninsche, County Treasurer
Heather Mooney, County Treasurer
Alex Bailey, Community Action Network
Annette Wilde, DHS
Mel Batkins, DHS
Sandy Reeber, ETCS
Laurie Wechter, JFS
Shirley Tarvis, CSTS
Julie Young, Turner Health Systems
Minsu Longiaru, Pediatric Advocacy
Jennifer Brown, Salvation Army
Michelle Leaphardt, SOS
Helena Prince, Friends in Deed
Harriet Bakalar, Housing Bureau for Seniors
Angela Edmonds, Women's Center

Staff Present: Mike Scholl, Staff Coordinator HSCC

Guests: Derrick Jackson, Wireless Washtenaw

I. Welcome/Introductions

- Co-Chairs opened the meeting

II. Announcements

- Moonson Eninsche of the County Treasurer's office announced upcoming educational events including "My Home, My Future," on October 2 and October 24.
- The event educate residents on homeownership and foreclosure issues, more information is online at <http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/treasurer/MFP>
- Mike Scholl, Barrier Busters staff, announced that he has accepted another position within the County and will no longer be working with Barrier Busters as of Monday, October 22.
- Mike will be working with the co-chairs to ensure a smooth transition.

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III. Agenda and Minutes

- Moonson Eninsche offered a motion to approve the agenda and minutes that was seconded by Paul Sher. The motion was approved unanimously.

IV. Public Comment

- None

V. New Business

a. B&B Payee Services – Contract approval

- B&B Payee Services has been the payee service for Barrier Busters for the past two years.
- We are doing our annual renewal of his contract and the Barrier Buster Action Group will need to provide a motion to support the renewal.
- The renewal will expire in September of 2008 and a new contract will need to be entered into.
- *Moonson Eninsche offered a motion to support the official motion (see attachment) that would extend the contract for B&B Payee services that was seconded by Paul Sher.*

Motion was approved unanimously

b. New Member Introduction – American Red Cross

- The American Red Cross recently joined the Barrier Busters Group.
- They will be represented by Mari Howard (MariA@wc-redcross.org)
- The Red Cross is looking forward to participating in Barrier Busters; they have been involved in community responses to things like the Lurie Terrace Fire.

c. Digital Inclusion Task Force

- Derrick Jackson presented on behalf of the Digital Inclusion Task Force.
- Derrick indicated that the Task Force was borne out of the Wireless Washtenaw Initiative.
- Recognized the need to link all county residents with technology to promote the quality of life.
- They are looking at a Food Gatherers model as a distribution mechanism
- The Digital Inclusion Task Force would collect the computers from large providers such as Washtenaw County, EMU and UofM.

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- The task force would then partner with local agencies much like some of the food programs.
- Mike Scholl staff indicated that Barrier Busters was identified as a possible distribution mechanism because of its work with agencies and individuals.
- Computer requests would be considered similar to cash requests that could be handled with the online application.
- Agencies would need to build it into their programs and have some facilitation mechanism to make it all work.
- Laurie Wechter asked about the required information for groups to be part of the program.
- Harriett Bakalar asked about the progress of Wireless Washtenaw and when we will have internet access.
- Derrick clarified that the program is looking for a distribution mechanism that would include both individuals and agencies.
- They have also looking at Community Technology Center's (CTCs) to assist people.
- Start up cost for Wireless Washtenaw is been with the County to try to provide high speed wireless to the entire county.
- Mari Howard commented that most people that they deal with have some type of computer; it is the access to the internet and education that is the bigger problem.
- Derrick indicated that there is discussion about setting up a Tech Support store front through an existing youth program that would provide an ongoing relationship with the individuals.
- The county accepts and reconditions 300 computers per year that is 300 families that could benefit.
- If you look at the Universities and other business it could be a real benefit to the community.
- Derrick Jackson can be reached at jacksond@ewashtenaw.org or 222-6781.

d. Co-Chair nominations

- Andrea Plevak, MSU Extension nominated herself to be co-chair to replace Beth Manuel.
- Paul Sher asked if anyone had any other nominations and to see if the group wanted to add a third co-chair.
- Paul indicated that we could have an email discussion and table this until the next meeting.
- Moonson Eninsche proposed that we should just vote to accept Andrea as the co-chair. She has a long experience with Barrier Busters and would make an excellent co-chair.

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- *Moonson Eninsche offered a motion to make Andrea Plevak co-chair that was seconded by Laurie Wechter.*

Motion was approved unanimously

e. Referral Issue

- Jennifer Brown, Salvation Army asked for time on the agenda to discuss some issues related to referrals to the Salvation Army.
- She is concerned that agencies are contacting them asking for people to be considered out of the order in which they applied.
- Jennifer indicated that they have a system for consideration and they try to address each one in a timely manner.
- Harriet Bakalar indicated that the client is required to do multiple intakes and that they end up with clients when the Salvation Army cannot get to them quickly enough.
- Jennifer indicated that they have a process that they have to go through that includes a full social work assessment.
- Lisa Anderson indicated that many agencies including hers are trained social workers that do full social work assessment. She wondered why they couldn't send the assessment to Salvation Army to avoid the duplication of effort.
- Mel Batkins indicated that DHS also has similar issues and they just lowered the SER amounts to \$350 for heat/\$350 for water.
- Helena Prince indicated that they get numerous requests and have similar issues to Salvation Army.
- There was a consensus that the group should look at a fuller discussion at a future meeting because it is a critical issue.

VI. Fund Update

- The funds are very low at this time.
- We are waiting to hear back from the State regarding our ES contract for \$75,000. Once we get confirmation, we can release funds.

Adjourned 3:00 pm

***The Next Meeting is scheduled for
Wednesday, October 24, 2007 - 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm***

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Washtenaw County Space Planning--Key Questions

Barrier Busters, 8/23/06

Jail

Should we expand the jail? If so, how large?

If we expand the current facility, should the existing building be brought up to the standards used in the expansion?

What alternative sanctions or diversion methods should be funded to support reduction of the jail population?

We need to focus on early education programs, fund alternative options such as community service as an alternative to incarceration. There should be more structured and perhaps more extensive work programs, even house arrest, as alternatives. There is a perception that some people will not do community service since they know they might be released early because of the over crowding problem at the jail; we need to be sure that those who can do community service, do it.

Farming people out to other jails is not an answer to the jail over crowding problem. It is more costly, cuts people off from local services and from their families.

How many people at the jail are there pre-trial? (perhaps thirty percent of those at the jail on average.) Are there ways to reduce that number, opening beds for those who have been adjudicated? Are there alternative ways to handle those that are returned to jail for probation or parole violations?

Can we distinguish between those who are incarcerated for violent offenses—who present a threat to themselves or to others—and handle them differently than others who might not need to be jailed?

We need to develop and fund (or perhaps revitalize) a street outreach program to support prevention efforts. We should develop an Options Center where people can be referred to local nonprofits for the help they need—mental health or substance abuse—rather than placing them in jail.

The state is developing a re-entry program to address the recidivism problem and we need to aggressively partner with them. We should be thinking about connecting any proposed jail expansion with efforts to support improved alternative diversion efforts.

Ultimately, we have to trust the recommendations of those who work in the jail and who provide services—the criminal justice officials have a better handle on the issues—and they need to provide recommendations on what needs to be done. And, they need to do a better job sharing information and making the case.

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Courts

What should the 14A1 District Court look like? Should the Juvenile Division of the Family Court be centrally located with other areas of Family Court? If not, where should it be located?

How might the existing Trial Court building downtown be improved?

There are real safety and security problems at the court at the Service Center; crime victims and families are abused a second time when they have to come face to face with accused or adjudicated felons.

The 14,1A court is a disaster—it needs to be at the top of the list in terms of funding priorities.

Parking is a problem at the downtown facilities; when we go down there to provide services there is no place to park, especially after 11am, or the alternatives are costly and come out of our pockets, cutting into the services we can provide.

We should avoid splitting up court responsibilities unless there is a strong recommendation for keeping family and juvenile responsibilities separate from other courts.

Towner

Should the 555 Towner facility be converted to Health campus and delivery center?

Would your clients or constituents benefit from satellite service delivery?

If converted to a health campus, where should the ETCS administrative offices be located?

The Towner facility is not currently client-friendly.

Providing a “one stop” service delivery center makes sense; we need to think holistically about client needs and provide access to services in an effective and efficient manner. This should include DHS and social services as well. At the same time, programs offered in cooperation with other organizations, e.g., faith-based and nonprofits, can also improve access and efficiency.

Some ETCS services are provided at the Towner facility—the “thaw” program, weatherization, and emergency cash assistance. It may make sense to link these services to the health services that are provided at Towner.

Does it make sense to consider co-locating some of the family support services at the jail site? Would this also be a way to improve service delivery?

Funding

How should we fund these proposed space initiatives?

What would be the impact of not funding these space initiatives?

A “big cookie sale”

There are no easy answers to the funding problem. A new millage would provide additional revenue to support infrastructure and facility needs, although there may not be sufficient support for it. Borrowing money using current funding streams could potentially mean a reduction in support for human and social service programs, which may limit our ability to provide the services that can really make a difference in people’s lives.

Whatever recommendation emerges, we need to do a much better job of communicating the need; the “story” in the earlier campaigns wasn’t being told effectively.