




Date: October 3, 2019

To: Municipal Assembly

Thru: Nicole Lebo, Human Services Division Manager

Thru: Janet Johnston, Community Systems Program Manager *jmj*

From: S J. Klein, HHAND Chair 

Subject: 2019 HHAND Commission Annual Report to Assembly

HHAND Commission Report to address homelessness

Item 10 of AMC subsection 4.60.260B states that the HHAND commission shall provide an annual report to the Mayor and Assembly to address homelessness. The internal auditor's sunset report dated August of 2019 makes the point that this commission has never issued a report to address homelessness. We have also failed to achieve most of the other 11 items that are under the purview of the commission. This is understandable, as we are a volunteer commission that meets an hour and a half a month and has limited staff availability to help us achieve these goals. It should also be noted that there are an impressive number of committees working on homelessness at this point: The Mayor's Taskforce represents the administration's energy and focus on the issue. The Assembly committee has provided a forum to educate and air issues related to homelessness for over five years. The Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness provides a potential umbrella to coordinate all non-profit organization activity toward their end and has become the city's conduit for Continuum of Care funding. Considering all of this, what value is another commission addressing homelessness? We have spent time as a commission exploring this very question. As a publicly appointed commission representing a broad range of interests in Anchorage, we feel we have a unique perspective to add to the conversation. However, the purview of the HHAND commission is so broad as to be unwieldy. Issues related to neighborhood development, zoning, support services, construction policies all relate to each other and it is possible to get lost in the morass that is housing in Anchorage. At a retreat this past spring, the commission decided to make homelessness the focus of the commission in the short term. This aligns with the goals of the administration and the acute issues our city is currently facing. That said, we welcome the auditor's report, and Chair Rivera's invitation to provide such a report. The HHAND commission would offer a different format for such report than an annual June address of homelessness. We would rather offer this initial report, with quarterly updates as we investigate different parts of the homeless issue. This will bring focus to our work and could result in actionable findings that the Assembly and Mayor's office can move forward with. Anchored Home The Municipality of Anchorage has produced reports on homelessness ad-nauseum, often with little follow-up action. The current plan,

Home, draws ambitious goals and attempts to bring resources from many different factions to bear. HHAND has moved a resolution in support of Anchored Home, with particular focus on the work to bring usable data to the plan, and with the adoption of the goals of Built for Zero, we believe the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness is moving toward building a tool they can use to be both accountable and successful. HHAND has expressed confidence in the director of the Coalition and intends to give the Coalition space to develop these tools before spending significant time focusing on their efforts. Other pillars The work of the Coalition represents the second pillar of Anchored Home, Housing and Support System. There are three other pillars to which we also intend to focus attention, and we intend for our first area of focus to be the third pillar, Public Health and Safety, which is under the purview of the Municipality of Anchorage. In so doing, we intend to spend the next three meetings having guest speakers involved in Coordinated Entry, EMS and Mobile intervention, peer outreach, case management, and the other goals of this pillar. We plan to find areas where the Municipality can focus more resources in order to better achieve the goals of the pillar, and will offer an update in four months, after we have had the opportunity to undergo our commission process. Our intention is to focus on a different pillar and give a report on impediments and successes every quarter.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer this report and look forward to many continued updates.

Approved to forward to the Assembly and Mayor's office unanimously on October 2, 2019



S J. Klein, Chair
Homelessness, Housing and Neighborhood Development Commission
Municipality of Anchorage



Municipality of Anchorage

Austin Quinn-Davidson
Acting Mayor

Homelessness, Housing and Neighborhood Development Commission

HHAND report on Homelessness
to the Anchorage Assembly and Mayor
Municipality of Anchorage
December 15, 2020

Item 10 of AMC subsection 4.60.260B states that the Homelessness, Housing, and Neighborhood Development Commission (HHAND), is charged with providing the Anchorage Assembly and Mayor with an annual report to address homelessness. The Municipality has a number of groups charged with overseeing homelessness, including the Mayor's task force on homelessness, the Assembly work group on homelessness, the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness, and countless other State and local organizations committed to the cause of ending homelessness.

That said, as a publicly appointed commission, we at HHAND feel that we have a unique role to play in oversight and review of the Municipality's response to homelessness. Our neighbors perceive, and the data confirms, that homelessness has not abated, despite tremendous resources put toward it from federal grants and programs, state resources, and municipal funds totaling hundreds of millions of dollars annually. COVID-19 has acutely redirected the focus of most Municipal resources related to homelessness as well. As a commission made up of residents of impacted neighborhoods, advocates for programs and services, and people working in related fields, we intend to bear on the issue with a variety of perspectives, in hopes to advance the discussion and seek better results from the resources we put toward the issue.

The timing of our report coincides with two important items: The gap analysis from the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH), and the Assembly's initiative to direct funding from the new alcohol tax. The gap analysis provides data related to immediate needs in supporting people stuck in the continuum of homelessness. The alcohol tax provides an opportunity for many organizations to come forward looking to advance their programs and services. As a commission, our goal is to provide qualitative direction to the Mayor and Assembly as to how to deploy the many resources that are available.

Since our first report in October 2019, we have focused on the third pillar of Anchored Home, the Municipality's plan to address homelessness. The third pillar, Public Health and Safety, is the purview of the Municipality of Anchorage, and we have committed a portion of each of our public meetings to investigating the Municipality's role in Anchored Home. The rest of this

report is devoted to our findings, in hopes that they can provide a qualitative accompaniment to the data provided by the gap analysis from ACEH.

This report is not comprehensive. As a volunteer commission without significant staff support, we are unable to do more than provide another set of eyes to issue. We have spent the last six meetings looking at the Municipality's role in responding to homelessness and have identified gaps that we see in the framework the City is developing. As such, we hope that the following areas get more attention and focus as the Mayor and Assembly consider how to deploy resources toward homelessness. It should also be noted that these notes are the interpretation of the HHAND commission, and not necessarily the testimony of the named individuals.

AHD and the Consolidated Plan: Janet Johnston and James Boehm

- approximately \$4MM is directed through the consolidated plan
- there are lots of compliance hoops to jump through, preventing smaller organizations from applying for grants
- staff support is limited, preventing significant technical assistance with compliance and application
- input and direction on execution of the consolidated plan are limited, especially considering compliance issues

Recommendations:

- consider more resources to assist organizations in applying for HUD funding
- utilize GAP analysis from ACEH to assist in prioritizing direction of funds

Mayor's Task Force/MOA/Public Health and Safety: Nancy Burke

- City is tasked with abatement, allocating resources, responding to acute situations
- idea is to create space for longer term solutions, provided by others with Municipal support
- data collection and coordination is not happening between DOC/Partners/and AKHMIS
- there is a shortage of housing/beds for single adult chronic homeless

Recommendations:

- utilize GAP analysis to direct resources, with attention to details responding to community concerns/comments
- see recommendations under abatement/MIT/CAP and commission comments

CAP team: Officer Jones

- she is the only CAP officer on staff at the time of her testimony (others were pulled off task or on leave)
- CAP team is responsible for abatement and citations of infractions, trespass, code enforcement
- CAP team does not deal with stolen property
- has witnessed significant untreated mental health issues, substance abuse
- abatement does not happen in the winter
- 10-day abatement notice gives campers time to move, resulting in a game of "whack amole"
- abatements have the unintended consequence of driving campers deeper into the woods, where it is more difficult to provide resources and provide for health and safety

- perhaps 10% of campers are criminals.

Recommendations:

- increase funding for both MIT and CAP

- find ways to accommodate campers until permanent solutions can be provided, to prevent campers from going further into the woods

- change interaction with campers to provide for enhanced health and safety, both for campers and for the public

- provide a way for the public to report stolen property/identify stolen property in the camps

Mobile Intervention Team: Melina Breland, APD

- the Mobile Intervention Program was embedded within the Municipality approximately three (3) years ago with the Homeless Camp Outreach

- the team would circle the city and abatement sites to check in with individuals and refer them to shelters. However, the team did not operate using a caseload list, making it difficult to follow up on the City as a whole

- the program no longer does camp outreach

- having Coordinated Entry Packets and Homeless Action Response Team (HART) Forms used by APD resulted in duplication of questioning that was not helpful. Homeless individuals are often facing substance abuse and mental health issues; some have criminal backgrounds, and some do not

- many have multiple substance abuse and/or mental diagnoses and there is a significant difference between summer and winter months regarding needs

- the current need is for more general outreach because there are grants allotted to specific populations

- currently there is only one grant that allows for general outreach

- generally, pushing the camps deeper into the woods does make efforts more difficult, however with the camp reporting app we are able to pinpoint where those camps are

- verified that they are no longer doing camp outreach

- sanitation of the camp is really the only safety issue the program has noted at this time. A question on general safety issues within the camps was deferred to APD

- everyone needs more staffing. The program is transitioning into new role and members are mindful that additional staffing should not be requested during the interim

- there is funding for one position. At this time they are widening the recruiting search to fill it.

- Mobile Intervention is now working with the high utilizers of emergency resources and/or people who are in acute psychiatric distress

- the team works closely with the fire department to prevent redundancy or duplication.

- they respond to the medical needs component and refer individuals to services that meet their level of need

Recommendations:

-increase outreach into homeless camps, either through MIT or other organizations to bring into AKHMIS

-the goal should be two-way: to increase the by-name list, and to get people into help and programs

Other Commissioner recommendations:

-when the Municipality contracts with an organization for shelter (Brother Francis or Beans Cafe), there are going to be off-site impacts that result from the gathering of individuals that need to get served. The Municipality is still responsible for the safety and wellbeing of the businesses and residents around homeless services, and is currently failing to provide safety around the services. This will make it harder for the municipality to place distributed services throughout the Anchorage Bowl

- the capacity of Sullivan Arena means that there is no excuse for leaving camps unabated. However, abatement needs to happen in a way that does not drive campers further into the woods

- the Municipality should consider ways to make camping safer for both campers and the public

- petty theft by campers is a significant problem in the neighborhoods surrounding camps. Currently, the municipality is failing to respond to this

Respectfully submitted

Homeless, Housing and Neighborhood Development Commission

2022 HHAND Report and Recommendations

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Below is a comprehensive timeline taken from the Municipal website documenting all the actions the Mayor and Assembly have taken around homelessness from 2018-2022.

https://www.muni.org/Departments/Assembly/Documents/2022-1003%20Detailed%20Timeline_MOA%20Action%20on%20Housing%20and%20Homelessness.pdf

Here are some timeline highlights:

March 24, 2020: Mayor Berkowitz and Assembly fund \$5.4M for the Home for Good pilot program, an intensive supportive housing initiative

2020: Voters approve Proposition 13, authorizing a 5% sales tax on alcohol sales, to create a steady funding stream for programs to prevent and address problems associated with substance misuse and the lack of mental and behavioral health services, including housing programs

Spring 2020: COVID-19 hits and heightens the existing shortage of emergency shelters. The Municipality converts the Sullivan and Boeke Arenas to emergency shelters, creating 560 temporary spaces for adults, and contracts partners to open spaces for families with children

2020: Anchorage Assembly and Mayor Berkowitz utilize \$37M in federal relief funds through the CARES Act in AR 2020-221, As Amended, EO 2020-04(S1) and AR 2020-271(S), As Amended on housing programs

July 2020: Mayor Berkowitz and Assembly utilize CARES Act and proceeds from the ML&P sale in AO 2020-66(S), As Amended to authorize \$22.5M for acquisition of Beans Café for a downtown homeless engagement center, Tudor Alaska Club for a midtown shelter and engagement center, Golden Lion Hotel for a treatment center, and America's Best Value Inn as housing with a resource center. The deals on the Alaska Club and America's Best Value Inn later fall through and are not completed

September 29, 2020: Assembly adopts the Anchored Home plan as the municipal's guiding document for homeless response and appropriations (AO 2020-338, As Amended); while the plan had been in use by the community for several years, the COVID-19 emergency response revealed that the Municipality was using the plan in its response, but had not yet formally adopted it

Mayor Bronson vision/Facilitated Work Group

The **From Homeless to Stably Housed** project is a collaborative process with several Anchorage Assembly members, the Bronson administration, and community partners. Members worked from August 2021 to June 2022 to develop solutions to transition away from mass care at sites like the Sullivan Arena, toward an integrated client and community-centered approach. The components of that plan include:

- **Complex Care Shelter** – the former Sockeye Inn, operated by Catholic Social Services, opened this past June

- **Navigation Center and Shelter** – in design; funding approved by the Assembly in April through AR 2022-111(S), As Amended - construction pending passage of AM 496-2022
- **Substance Misuse Residential Treatment**
- **Workforce and Supportive Housing** – the Guest House, funded through AR 2022-22 with ARPA funds
- **Housing for Special Populations** (couples, elders, women and LGBTQ+)

Source *muni.org*

Navigation Center

On May 10, 2022, by a vote of 6-4, the Assembly appropriated funding for Mayor Bronson’s proposal to construct an adult shelter and/or navigation center with no more than 150 beds, plus an emergency surge capacity of 50 beds, by reappropriating \$4.9M in CARES Act funding and \$1.3M in alcohol tax fund balance (AR 2022-111(S), As Amended). A condition of funding requires the mayor to make a firm written commitment to make a good faith effort to operate the former Golden Lion Hotel as a substance misuse treatment center.

On October 25th, the Assembly voted to not fund the Nav Center, and chose the Sullivan to reopen.

Alcohol Tax spend

2021: First year of new alcohol tax include \$6.3M allocated for housing programs: \$2,000,000 for operational costs for shelter, day center and/or treatment center \$1,800,000 for Pay for Success/Home for Good housing program
 \$750,000 for day engagement/shelter operations
 \$700,000 for Healthy Spaces - expand camp abatement to year-round to include storage \$500,000 for operational costs for shelter, day center and/or treatment center
 \$360,000 for overnight shelter for 150 individuals
 \$117,494 for new Homelessness Program Manager
 \$30,000 to add full year non labor funding for homelessness and housing administration *Note: final spending does not necessarily match allocations*

HUD Funding

One of the purposes of the HHAND Commission is to review and make recommendations on the proposed allocation of all federal, state, and municipal revenues targeted for housing and community development programs managed by the municipality. Our concerns are the money that has been left year after year and not spent.

In 2021 HUD monies had more funding than expenditures. Much of the reason for this is due to a lack of applicants with qualified programs. The result is the same small group of service providers acquiring funds every year. HHAND would like to see more assistance for individuals running or starting a program that has never applied for grants before.

Source 2021 CAPER

	Funding	Expenditures
CDBG	\$1,948,478	\$1,610,689
HOME	\$1,036,644	\$441,497
ESG	\$155,133	\$49,262
HTF	\$1,579,222	\$784,384
CDBG COVID 1	\$1,070,086	\$57,129
ESG COVID 1	\$521,193	\$404,641
ESG COVID 2	\$3,774,024	\$1,730,637

Considering all the actions taken around housing and homelessness, the HHAND Commission has the following Observations and Recommendations:

Issue: Lack of protection for the community surrounding homelessness services.

Recommendations:

- Renew a focus on the health of the community at large. Ensure municipality acts to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of the businesses and residents around homeless services by providing security, waste services and clean up.
- Commit to keep community centers as a positive and safe place for the community to share. Community centers should not be used as sheltering.
- Improve communication between the effected communities and municipal services.
- Provide help to those businesses in assisting removal of chronic trespassers by connecting them to outreach services.

Issue: Funding isn't channeled to many highly effective private non-profit organizations that produce significant positive results.

Recommendations:

- Most government funds originate at the federal level where many stipulations deter/prevent highly effective organizations to be funded. Many faith-based organizations are currently self-sustaining from private donations. Supporting and boosting these organizations will create a higher rate of success.
- Expand access to alternative nonprofits with new ideas and new ways of doing business by education and streamlining the application process.
- Use success rate as a determining factor to provide grants.
- Increase accountability by establishing regular audits of expenditures and service results.

Issue: Unspent HUD funds.

Recommendations:

- Expand access to alternative/faith-based nonprofits with new ideas and new ways of doing business by education and streamlining the application process.
- Begin to think 'outside the box' and embrace new approaches and ideas.
- Prioritize housing grants over other services to address the root of the housing crisis.

Issue: Lack of services for those addicted to drugs and alcohol

Recommendations:

- Focus money and resources in opening a walk-in clinic and rehab for those experiencing addiction. Though not everyone who is houseless has addiction problems, it would help to service the segment that need help overcoming these issues and assist them with a permanent housing solution.
- Partner with the Alaska Mental Health Trust for resources and guidance.

Issue: No centralized Navigation Center to help people connect to services

Recommendation:

- Currently, there is no one permanent place a person can go to get connected with the different services needed. The Coalition provides 'pop up' navigation in a variety of locations, and the Sullivan is not a permanent solution. The HHAND has written and approved a resolution in support of the Mayor's Navigation Center. We believe it is needed to not only provide Navigation, but also help with sheltering.
- Although we support the specialized programs that have been created i.e. Sockeye Inn, there is still a need for a mass shelter (<350 capacity) that navigates people to the services they need.

Issue: No detailed housing plan

Recommendation:

- The HHAND Commission purpose includes to identify and address long- and short-term housing issues in Anchorage, including strategies to stabilize and monitor the housing market, achieve a range of housing options for sale and for rent and cost-effective and socially responsible strategies to preserve or increase the supply of affordable housing; advise the mayor and assembly on policies, practices, and legislation that impacts housing and community development issue, neighborhood revitalization strategies, and progress related to plans and program goals; advise the planning and zoning commission about relevant housing and community development issues and their connection with land use controls. With these purposes, we are redirecting our efforts to facilitate a long-range housing plan for Anchorage, and identify those policies, practices and legislation that stunts housing development.
- To effectively remove barriers of government regulation to new housing development, we feel a detailed housing plan is needed. Grant money needs to prioritize ways to create affordable housing, not only subsidized housing with wrap around services. This includes reviewing state and municipal zoning/building regulations that make building housing difficult and partnering with the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation to provide resources and guidance. The Commission has applied for a \$200,000 grant from the State of Alaska and the Municipality of Anchorage to provide a housing strategic plan to pull this problem together including measurement guides that report on the success or failure of the efforts.

The HHAND Commission appreciates all the service providers that have worked on these issues. The hope is that our perspective can assist in reducing the numbers of homeless and facilitate a broader view of the problem of housing.

The HHAND Commission would like to thank Vice Chair Julie Coulombe for the vast amount of work that went into this report. This report was adopted unanimously at the HHAND Commission meeting January 4, 2023.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



S J Klein
HHAND Commission Chair