



TOWN COUNCIL
Committee to Assess Homelessness in the Town of Barnstable

Selectmen's Conference Room

July 17, 2017

6:00pm

MEETING MINUTES

I. BUSINESS

A. Roll Call:

Members present: Chair of Committee Councilor Jennifer Cullum, Vice President of the Council, James Crocker Jr.; Councilor Frederick Chirigotis; Councilor Will Crocker Jr. **Others in attendance:** Town Manager Mark Ells, Chief Paul MacDonald; SGT. J. Ellis, Barnstable Police; Mark S. Ells, Town Manager; **ABSENT:** Member at Large, Deb Krau. Councilor Debra Dagwan

Discussion with Daniel Knapik, Administrator, Town of Yarmouth regarding the homeless population in the Town of Yarmouth

Vice President James Crocker Jr. Councilor Fred Chirigotis Councilor Will Crocker

Discussion with Daniel Knapik, Administrator, Town of Yarmouth regarding the homeless population in the Town of Yarmouth

Elizabeth Wurfbain wanted to thank the Barnstable Police for the patrols they have out, it has truly made a difference in Main Street Hyannis. Trip advisor had us in a pretty unfavorable in the past, but this summer about 99 percent have been in the positive this year, comments such as fun family night, great Main Street, great shops and restaurants, so it is great to finally get us from not so good to excellent this year.

Chair of the Committee explained to Mr. Knapik what the Village of Hyannis is facing with regards to the Homeless population, and thought that this committee would share with the rest of the Town Managers from the Cape a chance to possibly tell us what they face in their own towns and possibly share ideas or concepts of how to partner together to help the situation not only in Hyannis but in your Town as well. Mr. Knapik explained that Yarmouth's biggest problem is chasing individuals that have longer stays at motels, hotel along Route 28. Our problem is making sure that our inspectors in the winter months re inspecting the hotels to make sure that no one is overstaying so we chase individuals from spot to spot. Yarmouth doesn't have a Main Street where people can gather unlike Hyannis has the Main Street. We can't really nail down how many individuals are involved, so we don't have an accurate census. The lack of affordable housing or step up housing, and with the amount of drug use we have right now on the Cape is a huge issue that is on everyone's mind. In Yarmouth we just dismantled the camp that was quite large by the Cape Cod Hospital, but that has been removed and we are cleaning it now. We have a lot of the population staying with friends or people they know, so they are not on the streets which makes it very difficult to get an accurate count, until those individuals that house them get tired of it and they kick them out, then they have nowhere to go so we can sometimes get a hold of them then and ask questions, but most of our issue is in house chasing.

Chair of the Committee Councilor Jennifer Cullum explained to Mr. Knapik, that this is why this committee was formed because Barnstable had such a problem with camps everywhere, and the conditions of these camps and the conditions that people were living in was horrific, so this Committee was formed to get a handle on the camps and get them cleaned up and get the individuals help if they needed it or wanted it, but made it very clear that these types of camps were no longer going to appear in Barnstable, so thankfully they have not as of today been any more active camps going up or still in existence. It really is a shell game. Mr. Knapik said that Yarmouth has Ordinances for these hotels so in the winter months they can house or cant house depending on the issue. Mr. Knapik stated in Westfield where he was before he has a lot of network contacts, there were facilities he could place individuals, there were people he could call at whatever time of the night to get them help or the shelter they needed for the night until the caseworker could meet with them in the morning. Mr. Knapik stated he had the resources there, here he does not have the same network or people, it is a little more disconnected here than it was in Westfield, so we really didn't have huge issue there because the resources were in place to handle the homeless population. We had a lot of food pantry's there too, so there was more attraction to us as well.

Chair of the Committee asked about the changes to the zoning Mr. Knapik spoke about, and if he could just explain what those changes were. Mr. Knapik stated the changes in the zoning for the hotels in the off season were a hotel motel could apply for the zoning exemption for the winter months to give someone shelter for 30 days but no more than 30, Some of the hotels have gotten together so they receive those individuals on a rotating basis through each of the hotels so that no one is staying at the same hotel for more than 30 days, usually within this time frame the individual does not move on to another hotel, they are offered help and often take the help. I have placed people on a bus and sent them back to where they came from so that the family can help them; obviously I am in contact with the individual on the other end so we are clear they are being sent home. Most of our hotels/motels are obeying the bylaws and we do not have any issues, but we notice the same car parked in the same lot for a long period of time then we know there is someone staying past the time allowed.

Town Manager Mark S. Ells asked if he hears any complaints from any of his residents involving the homeless population. Mr. Knapik answered no not really, the only complaint we usually get is because someone who was good enough to take someone in is now at the point that the person has to leave and a fight ensues and we have to go over and figure out who really lives in the house hopefully by providing a lease and comparing the names on the lease with who is actually there, and if anyone there is not on the lease we ask them to leave and move on. We have a lot of these types of properties that are rentals that are three bedrooms but there ae 7 people living it, so are they homeless, or are they not because they claim they live there, in Yarmouth we have 102 properties listed on our quality of life problem properties. In the city Mr. Knapik stated we had a quality of life ordinance that basically gave the Bard of Health the reason to shut down of condemn a piece of property based on this ordinance because it had more teeth that the bylaw did in the town. The other department we had in the city was a housing court; this allowed us to remove people with a magistrate's order, Mr. Knapik stated he notices the Cape does not have one, but this is a huge help in removing these individuals and also to clean up the problem properties. The other difficulty is the landlords, a lot of the time it takes quite a few times to contact them or even to find out who owns the house. A Housing Court is what we need here, we have to go before the Town Meeting to get assistance in this issue which takes a lot of documentation to support the current bylaws and ordinances in place today, where as a housing court gets results right away because you have experts in the courtroom who have done this for years now making the decision.

Chair of the Committee asked if Councilor Will Crocker aka (Representative Will Crocker) could give an update from the State House regarding the Housing Court here in Barnstable; Councilor/Representative Will Crocker Jr. stated the Governor signed the million dollar expansion bill today having to do with funding a housing court for Barnstable, and they are working out the issues, but there will be a circuit judge coming here in Hyannis to handle such issues as this. Councilor Chirigotis is familiar with the housing courts min Brockton, New Bedford, they may use the Hearing room temporarily, but they will eventually set up somewhere because there is paperwork that needs to be filed

ad kept, so I imagine they will find somewhere where this can happen, possibly the courthouse in Barnstable on a certain day, they do not sit every day, depending on the issues, they may only be in Barnstable 1-2 days a week.

SGT. Ellis may have trained some of the Yarmouth officers on how to deal with some of these individuals when they encounter them in the street. SGT Ellis stated we work with a lot of agencies to move these people to where they need to go, but currently we go to the regular court now instead of a housing court, and they keep letting individuals out and it is a vicious circle of these individuals who keep circling through the system, but SGT Ellis sees the court as a block not a help, these individuals see it as there is no consequences for their behavior, we arrest they go before a judge and he lets them out and they violate again and again, we spend more time with the individuals than the court does, and they know that.

Chair of the Committee, Councilor Jennifer Cullum understands that Hyannis is always going to have this issue because the services are here the transportation is here, but because we bear the population for most of the Cape right here in Hyannis, this Committee and its members are looking for any help from any of our community leaders throughout the Cape to help us in the little village of Hyannis to share or shoulder some of the burden we have, or to collaborate with us and partner with us to help with this issue. Mr. Knapik stated that the other issue is resources; in the city I had unlimited resources in the city, here on the Cape you may see a lot of Social Service Agencies, but no resources for these Agencies, and your Police are the Social Service Workers which puts an incredible strain on the officers, that is not what they signed up to be they signed up to be police officers, not social workers, but the reality is they are. The amount of money it takes to run your police force is incredible because they are performing well outside the purview of an officer.

Mr. Knapik said we need affordable housing or workforce housing. That is what the number one issue facing us here on the Cape; there is no housing for anyone or any place to put someone if they need help. Town Manager Mark S. Ellis said that he and Mr. Knapik are going to meet on a regular basis and look at the various issues that connect us together and try and figure out the solution together. We may even need to create new resources between each other.

Chair of the Committee also would like to see more in education at the younger ages so that some of the curriculum can encumber this issue, because that when it is most impressionable is at the young elementary school ages.

Vice President James Crocker Jr. was surprised to hear that the issues of homelessness in Barnstable and the issues of homelessness in Yarmouth are of two very different spectrums and our borders touch. We in Barnstable really had a much bigger problem with camps in the woods than Yarmouth did, and we in Barnstable do not have the housing issue of chasing people from hotel to hotel Councilor Chirigotis said the people are the same, they move from town to town as they are displaced from one town and they move to another town, so it's a back and forth situation.

SGT Ellis said we need more crisis or mental health facilities for these individuals. That's the biggest resource we need.

Chair of the Committee asked about landlords and if Yarmouth has landlords that is willing to rent to these individuals. Mr. Knapik stated in the city he did have a list of resources, however here I do not because there are not a lot of landlords that will rent their home to these individuals due to the rental history of the individual and the process to remove them is most difficult.

When you look at who is being serviced, and the repeat offenders are you able to say that the non-profits are not in your town to help these individuals, Mr. Knapik stated that the only non-profit agency that is willing to help so far is Gosnold; Vice President James Crocker Jr. stated that we are hearing just the opposite from Commercial realtors saying that the non-profits are the ones looking for space to open and operate. Councilor Will Crocker said that the monies follow the services, so if the services are all centralized then the funding is greater, and if it is spread out then the money is spread out. Councilor Fred Chirigotis said that if everything is in one area and the services become only in one area then that

area becomes a service area for everyone and that is all it becomes is a service area and everyone comes here to be services, so if it is spread out people will go to the services if they are provided elsewhere.

Chair of the Committee asked if Yarmouth works with Housing Assistance Corp, Mr. Knapik said yes he does, they have several programs Yarmouth utilizes, and they have reduced affordable mortgages that people qualify for if they are not necessarily low income, but can't afford the gap between low income and high income. We have the Simpkins School that was turned into affordable housing for folks, so we have those types of living situations, but we need more.

ADJOURN: 7:00pm

NEXT MEETING: September 19, 2017, at 6pm Selectmen's Conference Room