



**Poverty/Jobs Task Force  
Minutes of April 7 2020  
ZOOM Online Conference**

**Attendance:** Larry Knox, Chair; Anne Kriz, Recording Secretary; Betty Hancock, Organizer; Margret Roberts, Carolyn Conrow, Liz McGriff, Sr. Janet Korn, Rev. Peter Peters, Rev. Hans Irmer, Dorian Hall

The meeting commenced promptly at 6 pm via our first online ZOOM conference.

Rev. Peters opened with a beautiful prayer for those who are being directly affected by the Corona Virus and those who are going without because of it. This became the subject of much of our agenda for this meeting.

Larry Knox reminded us that many of those we advocate for in this task force are suffering greatly and need our support and affirmation. He then asked each of us in attendance to give updates on our own personal health (several of us have had illness of some sort, not being able to be tested for Covid19, or have family members or friends who have actually had the disease.) He reminded us to check on those we know who are most vulnerable and to thank all medical personnel and first responders for all they are doing to combat this disease.

**Agenda items:**

**Housing Advocates updates:**

Liz McGriff reported that City Wide Tenants Union (CWTU) has sent letters to Mayor Lovely Warren and Monroe County Executive Adam Bello asking for their response to people getting Covid 19 losing their jobs and thus being unable to meet their rent payments.

On April 9th there is to be an educational update on homelessness and housing broadcast on Zoom with a CWTU link on Facebook and on April 14th a rent strike may take place. Congressman Joe Morelle's website is pushing for a 3 month rent cancellation with no rent money required by landlords. Homeless needs are not being addressed since Peace Village was dismantled; its residents have decided they want to be in housing, not tents.

Rev. Peters expressed concern for Federal assistance education forthcoming on money for rent. (His REACH newsletter was forwarded to us and was posted online as was Liz McGriff's update. We should all have received them by now.)

Monroe County is providing hotel rooms for those in poor health during this Covid19 crisis; they are gradually moving people into hotels or permanent housing. Sadly, apartment owners are warehousing apartments to save their money.

Public housing for people with limited incomes exists in Europe. In the US we have invested in housing subsidies. REACH is trying to change this narrative: People who are homeless through no fault of their own should be labeled: Not "homeless" but "housing deprived." REACH has a presentation on housing with slides for our Roc/ACTS church and organizational groups.

Discussion followed: Margret Roberts said that housing is subsidized but not for the truly poor. Betty Hancock asked if the REACH presentation was available for a Roc/ACTS meeting. She said the religious leaders are also meeting.

### **How to advocate during the Covid19 Crisis:**

Larry Knox said that this information is not available just now.

### **What to do as the Covid19 Crisis ends?**

Larry said our Roc/ACTS and Poverty/Jobs Task Force connections and actions will help lead the conversation. Larry is limited in what he can do travel-wise. We are now witnessing a captive audience restricted public, so we must all rely on ZOOM conferences for our meetings.

People are calling elderly shut-ins. Union members are too. PPE's (Personal Protective Equipment) like much needed masks and body/clothing coverings are huge issues right now. There is great fear for those on the front lines.

Daycare help is needed for Home Healthcare Workers and is being discounted by the county. Hospital workers are beyond stressed and need to hear they are appreciated if we know them.

Discussion followed: Margret Roberts reported that her church can get Larry into its Go Fund Me Campaign. Sr. Janet Korn reported that the Sisters of Mercy National and International groups met to discuss how important it is for groups like us to stick together in numbers to fight Capitalism and be committed to building a world that's more kind and caring. Betty Hancock said our umbrella group, Faith in Action, is doing training for organizing by phone and that our work must continue. Liz McGriff reported that phone calls by CWTU and United Way together are being made to reach out to all tenants. They are pushing the need to put money in the budget for public housing, for those on DSS (Department of Social Services) to receive permanent housing, and to put money in the budget for what is needed such as coops. There were 87 signatures on the letters to Mayor Warren and County Exec Adam Bello. There are 300 on the list. They are working on a structure place. Anyone wishing to make phone calls?



## Other Business:

**Grant proposal:** Roc/ACTS President Dr. Gayle Harrison asked us to assist in coming up with an **activity or event** that would lead to a Community Forum in which we would make the case that we're working on issues during the Covid19

Crisis that will lead to **action** after the crisis is over. We would invite other groups to attend the forum and make use of the work we have been doing on Housing, Jobs and sustainable Wages for Home Healthcare workers, Fight for 15 and Corners to Careers over the past 6 years. There are **grants** available to fund such an activity, a \$10,000. grant with a **deadline of May 1st 2020** being the one we are focusing on right now. We need to hear from our members on **what ideas or activities** that would lead to **action** we can propose. Please feel free to reply to this request with your suggestions ASAP.

See Conclusion below: OUR Homework for how to respond. [I have already submitted my suggestion for a television documentary on our PJTF activities over the past 6 years in which all our key contributors would be interviewed on the subjects of housing, homelessness, rent issues, redlining, land ownership and how racism and low wages have created the poverty that causes these issues. Dr. Gayle has asked me to go ahead on this and I have submitted a detailed outline of what this would involve if we have the grant money to support it.]

Discussion followed: Rev. Peters said a good communicator is needed to put ideas together in a presentation. Our PJTF housing and poverty reports with guests such as Shane Weigand and Roc/ACTS member Bill Wynne's work on Sacred Conversations on Race have led us to this point. Betty Hancock said that Colgate Rochester Divinity School already has a location where we could hold our Community Forum. She would get our Faith In Action people to help us organize it. Larry said we could involve AmeriCorps at University of Rochester. Anne Kriz suggested we incorporate the Sisters of Mercy, REACH and CWTU's suggestions and efforts into our proposed action.

Rev. Peters said we should not just focus on analysis but emphasize that the poor cannot continue to live this way especially learning what we have over this Covid19 Crisis and that we must emphasize some aspect of what this crisis has shown us. **Ongoing action** is what we're proposing: an **active NOT an historical document** and **WE** must exert our objectives over this action; we mustn't let the FIA organizer control this.

Liz McGriff said that City Council is working on a bill to house the homeless and would we be willing to sign on to it? We answered "Yes" unanimously.

Margret Roberts and Rev. Hans Irmer agreed to form "community buds" through their respective Lutheran Churches.

Dorian Hall came late because he was attending a City of Rochester Presidents group meeting where they all decided to move to Zoom meetings during this crisis. PLEX and these other groups won't be doing community unity projects right now because of the quarantines.

**Conclusion:**

Our Community Forum after our Zoom conversations would constitute our next big Public Meeting.

**Our Homework** is to think HOW to get this going. Suggestions for actions may be emailed to: [akriz@rochester.rr.com](mailto:akriz@rochester.rr.com). Please put "PJTF suggestion for activity/event **actions**" in your subject heading. Thank you.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm

Our **next Zoom online meeting** is tentatively scheduled for **Tuesday May 18, 2020 from 6-7:30 pm**. Wait for an email invitation to join from Larry.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Kriz, Recording Secretary for the Poverty/Jobs Task Force