

POVERTY/Jobs Task Force Minutes

1199 SEIU Office, 259 Monroe Avenue, Rochester 14607

January 21, 2020 Meeting

Attendance: Larry Knox, Chair; Anne Kriz, Recording Secretary; Rev. Hans Irmer, new member from Messiah Lutheran Church in Greece; Carolyn Conrow, Sr. Nancy Whitley RSM, Sr. Jane Schur RSM, Rev. Peter Peters representing REACH; Betty Hancock, Roc ACTS Organizer; Dorian Hall, PLEX; Marilyn Thaler, Jeff Thaler, Dr. Deni Mack; Liz McGriff, Rochester City Wide Tenants Union

Opening Prayer: Psalm 16 read by Anne Kriz

Introductions

Old Business: Larry Knox updated us on the Home Healthcare Workers' (HHCWs) meeting with the Monroe County Legislature. There is a Grant application put together by Common Grounds with community partners for our region which includes a Study for improving working conditions, training and workers' pay. The rising of HHCWs came out of the Union and includes creating a Healthcare Commission which is now in the works. Today they went to Albany to lobby legislators on issues important to them. The Homecare workers got a grant to implement using a paid for LYFT account to get to work as they need transportation to be provided so it is no longer an out-of-pocket expense for HHCWs. It's a pilot program. On February 18th there will be a Healthcare Workers Commission meeting from 5-7pm at the County Legislature Chambers to testify about working conditions and possible solutions that need to be made public. On January 28th there will be a meeting at the Democrat and Chronicle offices concerning a D&C article being put together regarding Home Healthcare. 1199 SEIU will be there. Larry urged us to take more cards to our parishes/communities to alert any Home Healthcare Workers in our congregations about these meetings so they may attend and add their voices.

New Business: Larry updated us on the Adam Bello transition to the Monroe County Executive position as a result of his November 2019 election victory. The Monroe County Legislature needs activists on its Subcommittees. Housing needs attention. They are looking into County Healthcare Services contracts and seeing if they pay more than minimum wage and benefits. The Request for Proposal (RFP) needs more detail. Larry will try to get Adam Bello to attend one of our Poverty/Jobs TF meetings over the next 6 months as he needs to become engaged with what we are trying to get accomplished. This is critical before Adam prepares his next budget. Deni Mack will work on inviting the newly elected Monroe County Legislator representing Perinton and East Rochester, John Baynes, to one of our meetings as well. John is well known in both communities and has worked with Deni in the past on

Church related matters. He will be a vital advisor to Adam Bello as regards issues of poverty that need to be addressed.

Housing: Rev. Peter Peters, who represents REACH, (formerly Rochesterians Emergency Action Committee for the Homeless, now REACH Advocacy) which was formed 5 years ago after Rochester's Tent City was bulldozed destroying people's property, went to Albany this week on behalf of the Poor People's Campaign (PPC). [He said we should all thank Assemblyman Harry Bronson for his Housing Stability Bill which addresses sanctions and keeping vulnerable people supported. This bill currently sits on Gov. Cuomo's desk. Also, the PPC program called MORE is coming here and we need to publicize that.] REACH Advocacy's goal is to create permanent housing for the poor vs shelters which they hope will be done away with. Their vision is:

- 1) to run a pilot program in the city, which has lots of vacant land that could be used. The city is interested.
- 2) to provide shelter in the winter for the chronically homeless from mid-November through mid-April.
- 3) to address the lack of truly affordable housing in the area where 10,000 households live below standard housing levels. Nine Tiny Houses are needed for this. St. Paul Street is the base of these operations. They are in conversation with Catholic Family Center to get this moving.
- 4) They have developed a REACH Advocacy Committee now, which our Chair, Larry Knox, belongs to. Sanctions is the main focus now. (i.e. the Department of Social Services (DSS) cancels support for those in need from 6, 8, or 10 weeks as a punitive program rather than helping those in need.) Dr. Harry Murray, Professor of Sociology at Nazareth College is currently doing a study on this issue. At today's meeting, the City's 2034 Plan for Housing was unveiled. The prime desire is that they want Public Housing with support systems for the very poor. The priority is to stop talking about "Homeless" people because the situation is not the fault of the victim, but to refer to them as "housing deprived." Rev. Peters said that he grew up in public housing in England but was able to attend school with wealthier children, which made all the difference in his life. He feels that this is an important model for future public housing models going forward. On Wednesday, January 22nd the same meeting will take place at the Phyllis Wheatley Library. The subjects are Economic Development in the morning, Housing in the afternoon and a public meeting in the evening.

Liz McGriff, co-founder of the Rochester Citywide Tenants Union (RCTU), amplified the urgent nature of challenging DSS sanctions since support for renters is withheld when it's the landlords who haven't kept up their property. RCTU is still fighting the landlord who previously owned the Cadillac Hotel; the city still hasn't acted. More protections for renters are needed. New York City and Buffalo have this under the Emergency Tenants Protections

Act (ETPA) and Rochester is trying to opt into this. These protections allow people to stay in their rental homes instead of being put out when landlords don't meet their responsibilities. The ETPA was passed in the city of Rochester. The RCTU is working to implement this on the State level as this service hasn't changed in 10 years. They are also supporting Tenant Opportunity to Purchase (TOPA) so tenants can purchase homes they have invested in and appoint property managers as well.

A Stabilize Rochester meeting for ministers will take place on February 24th at 6:30 pm. Betty Hancock will get someone from RCTU to attend the Religious leaders Caucus. Liz approved this.

Dorian Hall, who represents PLEX and is now president of Many Neighbors Building Neighborhoods, the neighborhood development organization, reported that he was told, "Nothing will change unless you submit something," so you must establish a neighborhood maintenance team to fix things needed to keep the neighborhood up. The city needs advance notice for these meetings. Dorian reported progress is being made on the Brownfields Project which is now okayed. The community wants the Level 2 contamination removal adopted for this cleanup. Other projects involve Exxon Mobil redeveloping PLEX Park and Foodlink donating land for a community garden. The address for this is Flint and Exchange Street, the only vacant corner. The goal is to use this land and possibly build a greenhouse.

Other Business: Both Rev. Dr. Marvin McMickle and Dr. Leonard Brock have resigned and moved on from Rochester Monroe Anti-Poverty Agency (RMAPI). Brock's job will be posted and Jerome Underwood is the new Co-chair.

Closing Prayer was given by Rev. Hans Irmer.

Next meeting: will be held on **Tuesday February 18, 2020**
6:30-8 pm
1199 SEIU Offices, 259 Monroe Avenue.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Kriz
Recording Secretary
Roc/ACTS Poverty/Jobs Task Force