

Plymouth Taskforce to end Homelessness  
President's Report  
2021

**Overnights of Hospitality Program**

Our seventeenth season of providing emergency sheltering began in the fall of 2020 and continued up through the beginning of end of March 2021. Due to the continuing pandemic, we were not able to use the churches as host sites. Therefore, with grant money and donations and in conjunction with Father Bill's/Mainspring, we rented 25 rooms at the Pilgrim Sands. FBMS provided staffed three shifts to cover 24/7 as the guests were allowed to stay during the day. There was little turnover due to the fact that guests were able to stay at the hotel all day. Stricter guidelines were put into place to govern behavior and to ensure CDC guidelines were followed. All guests were screened prior to being given a room. A waiting list was created once capacity was reached.

While renting the hotel, we had some challenges with managing the folks. However, we were happy to report that there were no COVID-19 infections among the guests.

**Statistics**

20-21 Season At Pilgrim Sands	# of days	# of beds	Avg./night	Different
	127	2,725	22	38

For the 21-22 season, we were able to return to the church host sites as COVID infection rates were declining. However, COVID 19 screening was added to the check-in process and CDC guidelines had to be strictly followed.

We are thrilled to report that St. Mary's Parish returned to hosting the Overnights by taking on two weeks for the 2021-22 season.

Meal Train Plus continued to be a valuable tool for recruiting individuals to chaperone and prepare and serve meals.

**Preventing Homelessness**

The Taskforce continued to provide rental assistance, gas cards, and funds for securing ID's and prescriptions. There was less need to put folks up into hotels as all three sites were able to accommodate women, beginning in the fall.

**Laundry and Shower Programs**

Due to COVID 19 the operation of our laundry and shower programs were inconsistent at best.

**Next Step House – 368-370 Court St.**

The Next Step was fully occupied with eight permanent residents and two house managers.

**Next Step II – 366 Court St.**

There were five formerly homeless women in residence with a house manager.

**Government Housing Support**

Over the last two years, FBMS through additional available state-funded subsidies, was able to move twenty-eight individuals from the shelter program into permanent supportive housing.

To date, there are 61 such supported units in the Plymouth area either in scattered site apartments or in the Taskforce-owned congregate housing units. Over time, many

others have been able to move on into their own Section 8 apartments or into senior housing.

### **Housing Solutions**

The Taskforce continued its search to buy a piece of land of about 1-3 acres, centrally located, on which to erect a building which would contain 12-15 studios, some commercial space for offices and a backdoor emergency shelter. There were a couple of promising properties that were investigated but unfortunately, became unavailable. Aside from looking for a major buildable project, the Taskforce continued to look for property similar to the ones it owns, but because of the tight housing market, as soon as property went on the market, it was sold the next day.

With the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), there is money available to develop affordable housing. It is critical that we find a suitable project as this money will be gone within three years.

### **Political Action/Advocacy**

Senator Susan Moran began a series of monthly Roundtable gatherings of local area stakeholders to determine the needs and challenges to develop affordable housing.

### **Point in Time Homeless Count**

During the annual homeless count on January 27, 2021 we were able to identify twenty-two individuals who were in the shelter. Eleven were known to be on the streets, - staying in tents, in the hospital or staying elsewhere for that night. The Point in Time count only captures what we know to be true for that one night only. It does not accurately reflect the total number of homeless in the Plymouth area.

### **Grants/Fundraising**

Fortunately, we were able to hold our annual golf tournament. We had ninety-seven golfers participate and we raised almost \$27,000 through golf fees, sponsorships and auctions, the most ever!

Donations continued to come in through institutions, grants, and individuals. Additional money available from COVID-19 relief funds enabled the Taskforce to rent the Pilgrim Sands for the 2020-21 season.

### **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

Since 2005, the Taskforce has been collaborating with FBMS on an informal basis. Areas of collaboration included the identification homeless individuals to qualify for subsidized housing, and the providing of support for our Overnights of Hospitality in the form of one paid staff person. In March, a more formal arrangement was developed through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). One new outcome of the MOU was the hiring of a part time street outreach worker with funds provided by the Taskforce. The Taskforce and FBMS is in the process of reviewing and revising the MOU for 2022.

### **Website Redesign**

The Board recognizing, that the Taskforce website needed a facelift, it hired Mavro Creative Designs. A sub-committee chaired by board member Nancy Carini led the development. The newly designed website was launched in April.

### **Taskforce Future**

As a result of a survey of board members, it was decided to hold a board retreat which was held in September to address some of the issues raised by the survey. These issues included the future direction of the Taskforce, succession planning, roles of board members. Certain tasks were assigned to board members to develop some

recommendations for going forward. At the very end of the retreat, a motion was made and voted upon to hire a consultant to take the lead and/or assist with the work of the Board. It was later decided that hiring a consultant would not be needed.

Subsequent meetings produced a new vision statement in January, 2022.

Vision:

*The vision of the Plymouth Taskforce to End Homelessness is to more strategically align with the Father Bill's and Mainspring organization, while enabling us to remain the face of solutions for unhoused individuals in the Plymouth area.*

*Our aim is to secure the long-term mission of the Taskforce, which is to provide service-oriented temporary shelter and permanent supportive housing for individuals who are currently unhoused in our area.*

There was much discussion relative to whether our alignment with FBMS would be in the form of a total merger or take some other form. Since there was not total agreement leaning to a formal merger, the issue was tabled for future discussion in 2022.

### **Goals for 2022**

- Develop a succession plan
- Expand board membership to include people who have skills in fundraising, communications, grant writing, advocacy and who have connections to community resources.
- Continue to explore property for purchase.

### **Thank You**

In closing, I would like to personally thank all of our board members who, in addition to attending monthly board meetings, also assisted in other ways:

- Alan Schwartz for overseeing our finances and for chaperoning above and beyond
- Jack Ryan for serving as Property Manager of the Next Step Houses
- Barbara Wojtkiewicz, for clerking, supporting the Overnights in many ways, and co-organizing the golf tournament
- Bob Hughes for helping with lunches at the Sands
- Nancy Carini for spearheading the redesign of our website
- Rick Edwards and Jewel Gilbert for obtaining grants
- Frank Mand for serving as communications resource
- Terri Reid and her partner, Diane Collins for assisting with the Golf Tournament

### **Board Resignations**

Three members – Rick Edwards, Nancy Carini, and Frank Mand submitted their resignations in 2021. The Taskforce thanks them for their contributions and dedicated service.

I would like to thank all of our donors , both large and small.

Finally, the success of the Overnight program was due to the many, many other people who volunteered their time to chaperone, to prepare a meal, or to assist in any other way.

Respectfully submitted,

Constance Melahoures  
President