July 15, 2021 Continuum of Care meeting minutes

The July 2021 meeting, which took place virtually (due to the ongoing pandemic), via a Zoom conference call, was called to order and began at 11:02 am. The minutes from the May meeting were reviewed and unanimously approved.

The guest speaker was Kellyann Gallagher from the Raritan Food Pantry. The Food Pantry was started with a grant from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) CV-3 fund. Food distribution began during the pandemic, when extra meals at Bridgewater-Raritan HS were taken and delivered to the school nurse at JFK Elementary School in Raritan, where 25% of the students are from economically disadvantaged families. The need for a food pantry was recognized and, after a Raritan Council member mentioned the grant, Kellyann worked with the school nurse to start the pantry.

After being run from Kellyann’s garage for a period of time, the pantry opened on Thompson Street on April 3, 2021. Initially, they made bags for pick-up by residents. In June, the pantry opened to the public, with shopping carts/wagons for clients. Once word got out in the community, more clients began going to the pantry for assistance. They now serve 120 households representing over 400 total clients, most of whom live within walking distance.

Volunteers ages 13 and older are able to work at the Pantry on Tuesdays and Fridays from 6-8pm. Clients ages 18 and older can come in on Wednesdays and Saturdays. They are also accepting donations of food and funds.

Paul Grzella gave the Committee an update on the Coordinated Entry Committee. There was a webinar on June 29 – attended by approximately 30 people – that provided instruction on how to use the system and also received feedback on ways to make it better/easier/more effective. The CE Committee continues to work with agencies to help them use the CE system.

Kimberley Copeland from RPM Development came before the Committee to ask for a letter of support for a 70-unit development in Montgomery. This development will have 70 one-bedroom units, all of which will be age-restricted (55+). There will be 5 units set aside for homeless, with some age flexibility for those units. Assisted living services will be available on-site to allow residents to age in place. The Committee voted on and approved the letter of support.

The Technical Review Committee will be reviewing CoC Applications within the next month and is looking for volunteers to serve on the Committee. Anyone interested should let Kim Cowart know by July 23rd.

Announcements:

* Robert Wood Johnson hospital is looking for low-income individuals and people with disabilities to take a survey regarding their needs and what they want Somerset County to focus on. Participants can be paid $35 to participate in a workshop in late July/early August
* Alternatives has several vacancies at its Franklin House property, which is located in Franklin Township. This property houses homeless mothers and children that are receiving either TANF or SSI, and women that receive General Assistance who are single and pregnant.
* Soldier On announced that there is a new residential building for veterans going up in Tinton Falls in Monmouth County. Units are available for all income levels up to 80% AMI. They are taking names for an “interest list” – there are no official applications yet. They hope the housing will be open for residents by November.
* If you would like more information about the Raritan Food Pantry, you can visit their website at [www.raritanfoodpantry.org](http://www.raritanfoodpantry.org) or you can email Kellyann Gallagher at kellyann.gallagher8@gmail.com.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00pm.

Attendees:

Jeremy Hirsch Linda Rapacki
Kim Cowart Megan Tyler
Ed Prior Linda Porcaro
Sandra Escobar Paul Grzella
Amanda Agwuegbo Meg Isbitski
Kristina Portella Joni Owen
Kellyann Gallagher
Heather Bielefeldt
Jackie Blake
Christine Esposito
Susie Suter
Gema Diaz
Heather Pullen
Joanne Hala
Lisa Barnes
Mike Frost
Jill Lombardozzi
Maria Marnell
Jay Weintraub
Joanne Fetzko
Zack Berliner
Cynthia Ramsey
Joanne Kemp
Linda Porcaro
Ana Diaz Lopez
Kimberley Copeland