



DANE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Madison-area Urban Ministry Committee report on possible Alternative sites for Occupy Madison

DATE: July 9, 2012

To: County Board Supervisors

From: Linda Ketcham, Committee Chair

Re: Committee report on Alternative Occupy Sites

We are providing you with this copy of our report. Members of the Committee are available to present at your meeting on July 12th.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (608)256-0906, ext 304 or email at linda@emum.org

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Overview of Occupy and the MUM Committee Process

MUM Committee Process

At the request of the Dane County Board of Supervisors, Madison-area Urban Ministry convened a committee of community members and organization representatives to explore possible alternative sites for Occupy Madison. A list of Committee members, committee meeting dates and other informational meetings held is listed in Appendix A.

As part of our process we examined the larger context of housing and homelessness within our community, including other reports prepared for the County Board, the evolution of Occupy Madison, the data on available shelter, shelter use, transitional housing availability, service gaps addressed by Occupy Madison, service gaps that remain in our community, and the need for expanded transitional and affordable housing options and programs throughout Dane County.

The committee felt strongly that our report should not only identify possible sites for the Occupy Madison residents, but should also share additional insights and recommendations to be considered by the permanent committee being formed by the City and County.

Occupy Madison

Occupy Madison began in the fall of 2011 as part of the larger Occupy Movement. The original protest movement in Madison occupied Reynolds Park in Madison. At that time the Madison Police Department began a multi-agency collaboration with Dane County Public Health, Mayor Soglin, Park District, Risk Management, Building Inspection, Occupy Madison participants and others to find a more suitable location for the protest movement as Reynolds park had numerous restrictions that the City and Police felt were not conducive to a long term presence. From Reynolds Park the group moved to State Street near the Veteran's Museum. For a number of reasons, including vending zones and Freakfest, the group then moved to Monona Terrace. The City Attorney's office was consulted to identify the 800 block of E. Washington as a longer term site for Occupy Madison. The city sought a variance from the State of WI to approve and use the site as a camp ground. The variance was granted through April 30th, 2012. As Occupy Madison evolved it became clear that the site was filling a gap in our community in terms of shelter, support and empowerment of people who are homeless. On April 30th the site was closed and residents were forced to leave the site.

In response to the question: what worked at Occupy Madison, we received the following answers from Occupy residents and protesters:

1. Residents felt empowered
2. Residents created a community of neighbors who looked out for one another
3. Safety in numbers
4. Offered shelter to individuals unable or unwilling to access the shelter system for any reason

In response to the question "what would an alternative site need?" the Committee generated the following list:

1. Electricity
2. Bathroom facility
3. Water
4. Kitchen
5. Cooperative management
6. Land for gardening

7. Supportive services available to residents
8. Private and common space
9. The ability to enforce site rules and guidelines
10. Easy access to public transportation
11. A building to provide safety in case of severe weather.
12. Space for vehicle parking
13. Secure storage for personal belongings

In response to the question “what are the gaps?” we received the following answers:

1. Storage for personal belongings
2. Day shelter where services may be accessed
3. Day shelter that offers a place to sleep for people who work third shift
4. A wet shelter for people under the influence
5. Shower access for people not in shelter

According to the Madison Police Department, during the first few months of the Occupy encampment on East Washington, there were only a few police calls for assistance. At that time the number of individuals living on the site was relatively small, perhaps 30-40 people. The Police Department noted that it was not until the day shelter opened on the 700 block of East Washington that the number of individuals residing at Occupy began to increase significantly, making it more difficult for the residents of the site to maintain the governance model, the supervision, accountability and boundaries that they had established within the site. Chief Wray noted that some of the reports of drug use on the site offered to the public were inflated, but that the number of calls from February through April had begun to increase as more individuals with substance abuse histories arrived.

As we posed the question to Captain Gloede and Chief Wray about what worked at the Occupy site they felt that the group had been able to create a supportive community on the site with residents trusting and watching out for one another. The consensus model empowered residents to have a voice in their governance, and that what also worked was the cross-functional team that met with Occupy residents regularly, including community members, police, social service agency representatives. Asked what would be needed were another site to be identified, Chief Wray and Captain Gloede both indicated that any potential site would need to be far enough from a residential area to avoid issues with possible noise, have bathroom facilities, capacity for safe trash disposal, electricity and a building that could be used in case of severe weather conditions.

In our meeting with Mayor Soglin and his staff it was clear that the Mayor is committed to exploring permanent long term solutions to addressing homelessness. The Mayor is not supportive of development of another tent city site or of car camping. While we agree with the Mayor that camping, whether in a tent or car in Wisconsin is not a long term solution to homelessness, we also recognize that many of the individuals who were living at Occupy are now without a residence or shelter. Some of the individuals are camping in county camp sites but due to County ordinances regarding camp sites they are forced to relocate every 14 days creating additional stress for the individuals.

Mayor Soglin did indicate his support for increasing the Housing First program availability, exploring expanding the availability of SRO's and exploring the feasibility of developing cooperative housing. One of the concerns expressed by the Mayor is that the majority of services for individuals who are homeless are based in Madison and that the City of Madison supports those programs while the majority of other municipalities in Dane County do not, even though residents of those communities who become homeless often come to Madison to be able to access services. The Mayor's point being that homelessness and its solutions need to be a County wide effort. The Committee members agree with this assessment.

We also met with several clergy from around Dane County to discuss additional engagement and support from faith communities in addressing the challenge of homelessness and affordable housing in our

community. There is interest among a number of faith communities in exploring the development of co-operative housing to provide affordable housing to individuals and families.

In addition to individuals from other Dane County municipalities who come to Madison to receive services, corrections policy in WI requires that an individual released from prison be released to the community in which they were arrested and convicted regardless of whether the individual was from the community to which they are being released. As a result, a number of individuals who were not residents of Dane County prior to their incarceration are released from prison to Dane County, further stressing the shelter and housing services.

We used the input from the former Occupy residents, Mayor Soglin and the Madison Police Department and clergy, to inform our efforts to identify possible alternative sites, recognizing that every site identified may require some ordinance, policy, or zoning revisions as well as collaboration with the City of Madison.

Recommendations from the MUM Committee

Possible Sites for Occupy Madison

Below is a list of possible sites. A more complete table outlining the details of each site is included as an attachment.

- Alliant Energy Center
- Lakeview Park
- Labor Temple
- Lake Farm Park
- Mendota Park
- Token Creek
- Lake Kegonsa
- Dane County Human Services Northport

Additionally, several congregations in Madison and Dane County have indicated a willingness to consider setting aside 2-3 parking spots overnight in their lots for car camping. There would be zoning and ordinance issues to review with this type of arrangement but the model has been used elsewhere. Car camping may also be a consideration at some of the sites listed above.

Responses and Strategies To Address Needs and Gaps in Services

Immediate:

1. Select at least one of the identified alternative Occupy spots for individuals involved in Occupy to reside through November 30th, 2012.
2. Extend 14 day camping limit in County parks to 60-90 days for those living on campsites:
 - a. Reduces stress of having to move personal property every two weeks for those homeless using campsites;
 - b. Allows for a greater focus on improving life conditions as opposed to worrying about moving every two weeks.
3. Identify and establish locations for utilization as storage space:
 - a. Would assist individuals as they search for work not to have to carry all of their belongings with them;
 - b. Would secure personal property safely.
4. Decrease the number of violation tickets given to individuals who are homeless:
 - a. Stop ticketing homeless individuals solely for engaging in life sustaining activities;
 - b. Review county ordinances that may defacto make being homeless a crime;

- c. Work with the City of Madison and other municipalities in Dane county to review municipal ordinances regarding penalties for certain activities.
- 5. Establish car camping sites or parking spots for those living in their cars;
 - a. Identify spots on county owned property, businesses and faith communities parking lots;
 - b. Follow other successful car camping models from around the United States. Examples include Santa Barbara, CA, Eugene, OR, Portland, OR, Los Angeles, CA;
 - c. Create a registration process for those who would like to camp in the available car camping spots;
 - d. Develop a community outreach program to engage neighbors and address concerns regarding car camping in the neighborhood.

Intermediate:

- 1. Make available one or more sites to provide day shelter within the next year. These sites should include:
 - a. A safe and secure place to be managed by a nonprofit organization with the ability to control access to the site;
 - b. Access to public transportation and services;
 - c. Strong ongoing partnership with community services including police, healthcare, and social services;
 - d. Strong ongoing partnership with the university, Edgewood, and Madison College as an opportunity for internships, service learning, and other creative interactions benefitting homeless individuals and providing learning experiences for students;
 - e. Storage areas for individuals to keep possessions locked safely.
- 2. Partnerships with the UW, Edgewood, and Madison College
 - a. Bus passes that are not being used by students could be transferred to homeless individuals to increase access to services and employment possibilities;
 - b. Services may be provided to the homeless population through partnerships with faculty managing internships and service learning opportunities for classes. Opportunities for partnerships are broad and may include: medicine, law, social work, engineering, and others.
- 3. Community garden spaces
 - a. Vacant spaces on campus, downtown, near public transportation, and existing shelter spaces and public services should be converted to food growing spaces;
 - b. Garden spaces need to have access to water and simple gardening tools;
 - c. Provide healthy food;
 - d. Offer an opportunity to build a sense of community.

Long Term:

- 1. Create additional low income or cooperative housing:
 - a. This housing may be created from existing vacant units;
 - b. Partnerships with the Madison Community Cooperative or other co-ops should be explored to assist with the creation and ongoing ownership and maintenance of the units;
 - c. Explore development of additional Single Room Occupancy space as transitional housing;
 - d. Expand support of the existing Housing First programs in Dane County;
 - e. All units should have access to public transportation;

- f. All efforts should be made to incorporate the sites with the surrounding neighborhood to ensure positive interactions with the community and build opportunities for homeless individual to contribute positively to the community they live in.
2. Develop a wet shelter. The site should include:
 - a. A safe and secure place to be managed by a nonprofit organization with the ability to control access to the site;
 - b. Access to public transportation and services;
 - c. Strong ongoing partnership with community services including police, healthcare, and social services;
 - d. Strong ongoing partnership with the university, Edgewood, and Madison College as an opportunity for internships, service learning, and other creative interactions benefitting homeless individuals and providing learning experiences for students.
3. Partnerships with area businesses
 - a. Partnerships should be built with area businesses that will create opportunities for homeless individuals to provide services and engage in the building and maintenance of shelters and other services through job training programs that also provide service and positive promotion for the businesses engaged. (i.e. construction companies training homeless people in construction in building the shelters, food service providers training homeless individuals in cooking, serving, and other tasks, etc).

Central Components of All Responses and Strategies

Our discussions throughout this process with members of Occupy, service providers, law enforcement, clergy, and others affected, as well as our research of models across the country to address homelessness have led us to recognize the following key components to any successful work to address homelessness.

- A sense of connection to the larger community must be developed and nurtured
- Individuals using the services provided must be a part of the decision making process and feel a sense of ownership
- Positive ongoing relationships must be developed between those using services, law enforcement, and service providers

Policy Initiatives

1. Revision of 14 day rule regarding duration at one camp site
2. Implementation of all recommendations of the Dane County Task Force on Poverty Report including making the Task Force a permanent committee
3. Implement a Vacant Property Registration fee and process:
 - a. Encourages landlords to maintain vacant properties up to code thereby protecting the property values of surrounding properties;
 - b. Encourage landlords especially on foreclosed on properties, to consider renting vacant housing units, increasing available housing within the community;
 - c. Use the revenue generated to support housing programs within Dane County.

Among the communities that have implemented such fees: St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota, Chicago, IL, Madison County Kentucky.
4. Preserve human services funding for 2013. Funding to human service agencies has been cut each of the last 11 years. From 2000-2010 the Human Services budget realized a surplus at the end of each of those fiscal years. However cuts to services were not restored with that

funding, the funding was pulled from GPR to zero out human services and used to fill holes in other budget areas.

5. Create a human services reserve fund using any human services surplus dollars in a fiscal year.
6. Consider development of a Community Housing Loan fund to assist individuals with security deposit.
7. Explore collaboration with City of Madison CDA to identify vacant city owned residential properties for development of coop housing and single room occupancy sites.

Appendix A:

Committee Members:

Daniel Callahan, Occupy Madison resident
Sofia Martinez, Occupy Madison resident
Jon Terre, Occupy Madison resident
Allen Barkoff, Occupy Madison community supporter
Rev. Eldonna Hazen, First Congregational United Church of Christ
Rev. Stephen Marsh, Lake Edge Lutheran Church
Z Luke Haukeness, Operation Welcome Home
Nathaniel Abrams, Operation Welcome Home
Bruce Wallbaum, Occupy Madison community supporter
Brenda Konkel, Tenant Resource Center
Heidi Wegleitner, Dane County Board Supervisor
Maurice Taylor, Citizen
Donna Asif, Madison Homeless Initiative
Greta Hansen, Community Action Coalition
Chelsea Rolfzen, UW Student Intern, Madison-area Urban Ministry
Amy Mondloch, Madison-area Urban Ministry
Linda Ketcham, Madison-area Urban Ministry

Committee Meeting Dates:

April 25th at St. Mark's Church, Madison
June 4th, at MUM
June 11th at MUM
June 18th at MUM
June 25th at MUM
July 9th at MUM

In addition to larger committee meetings, sub-group meetings occurred focused on program models and possible sites.

Committee Members also met with:

Mayor Paul Soglin
Sally Miley, Assistant to the Mayor, Mayor's Office, City of Madison
Don Marx, Office of Real Estate Services, City of Madison
Mark Woulf, Alcohol Policy Coordinator, Office of the Mayor, City of Madison
Chief Noble Wray, City of Madison Police Department
Captain Gloede, Madison Police Department
Lauren Cnare, Madison Common Council
Jeff Pertl, Dane County Board of Supervisors
Rev. Mary Pharmer, St. Mark's Lutheran Church

Additional contacts included:

Lynn Green, Dane County Human Services
Dave Mahoney, Dane County Sheriff
Rob Dicke, Dane County Housing Authority
Natalie Erdman, Madison Community Development Authority
Numerous clergy regarding possible car camping sites and possible involvement in cooperative housing

Appendix B: Research links

i. Tent cities:

Seattle, WA

<http://www.seattlecourant.com/section/news/189>

Portland, OR

http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/entry/view/dignity_village/

<http://news.opb.org/article/dignity-village-place-call-home/>

ii. Car Camping

Eugene OR

<http://streetroots.wordpress.com/2010/03/12/happy-legal-campers5e2580594-eugene-oregon/>

<http://www.housethehomeless.org/homeless-camping-in-eugene-oregon/>

Los Angeles, CA

<http://sustainablecitiescollective.com/nextamcity/14170/los-angeles-curbs-homelessness-safe-overnight-parking-lots>

San Diego, CA

<http://www.dreamsforchange.org/services/safe-parking/>

Santa Barbara, CA

<http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Homeless-find-haven-in-their-vehicles-3231633.php>

iii. Vacant Building Registration Fee Programs

Vacant & Abandoned Buildings, Best Practices – U.S. Conference of Mayors:

www.usmayors.org/bestpractices/vacantproperties08.pdf

Vacant Properties Registration Fee Program

<http://innovations.harvard.edu/awards>

<http://ci.minneapolis.mn.us>

iv. Use of cooperative housing model to increase long term affordable housing:

National Association of Housing Cooperatives: www.coophousing.org

www.news-record.com/content/2009/03/26/article/homeless_housing_co_op_launched

<http://www.examiner.com/article/cooperative-living-as-a-way-to-address-homelessness>

v. Dane County Task Force on Poverty Report:

http://pdf.countyofdane.com/commissions/Task_Force_on_Poverty_Report.pdf

vi. Misc. articles re: homelessness:

Project 50: The Cost Effectiveness of the Permanent Supportive Housing Model in the Skid Row Section of LA County: www.LaHealthaction.org

Housing as a Platform for Improving Education Outcomes among Low-Income Children:
<http://urban.org/uploadedPDF/412554-Housing-as-a-Pladform-for-Improving-Education-Outcomes-among-Low-Income-Children.pdf>