

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE OF SARASOTA COUNTY

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH
STAKEHOLDERS' CONSORTIUM**

Transitional Housing Committee

November 9, 2006

Members Present:

Audrey Chestnut	Sarasota County Government
Tobey Hockett	Public Defender's Office
Andrea Kenzig	Sarasota County Government
Jim McFadyen	Sarasota County Government
David Morris	Transitional Resources
Bob Piper	First Step of Sarasota
Bryan Pope	The Salvation Army
Charley Richards	CASL-Housing
Rev. Skip Ritter	Sarasota County Sheriff's Office
Beverly Stockton	Jobs, Etc.
David Sutton	The Salvation Army
Adam Tebrugge	Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness
Ron Trytek	Three Quarters Recovery Homes
Ann Voorhees	Department of Children and Families

Staff Present:

Pam Meunier	Health and Human Services
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Status of the \$754,000 CDBG/SHIP Grant

Tobey Hockett, the chair of this committee, advised the group on the current status of the \$754,000 CDBG/SHIP grant awarded to Coastal Renaissance, Inc. (CRI). CRI is in the process of purchasing two, three-bedroom, two-bath homes. The residences are located at 4681 McEachen Boulevard and 5027 Seville Drive in Sarasota and will be available to Voluntary Interim Placement-Enhanced Recovery (VIP-ER) Program graduates. There was no representative from CRI to answer questions about this project.

Charley Richards of CASL introduced himself to the group and outlined the mission of CASL which provides affordable rental housing to individuals with developmental disabilities. He said he has worked closely with Scott Eller of CRI in the past but said he did not have any information on this new housing endeavor. At the present time, CASL does not work with the population being

served by CRI or VIP-ER. Charley offered to assist CRI or anyone else who would like to get into the rental housing management business who might need some pointers on identifying potential properties, managing properties, and raising funds to support the program. Tobey explained that the two housing providers that are willing to expand their services to Sarasota County, Transitional Resources and Three Quarters Recovery Homes, are unfamiliar with the area and could use some help in identifying potential properties in Sarasota. Charley offered some recommendations to assist in connecting with existing non-profits that do similar work and may be able to help.

Community Alternative Residential Treatment (CART) Initiative Update

Tobey Hockett and Bob Piper of First Step of Sarasota gave an overview of the Community Alternative Residential Treatment (CART) Initiative. Bob advised the group of the current status of the Addictions Receiving Facility (ARF) which is Phase 1 of the CART Initiative. Phase 2, the 10-week, intensive, residential substance abuse treatment program at The Salvation Army, known as the VIP-ER Program, is working with the tenth and eleventh classes of 15 participants (in each class). Class ten will be graduating from VIP-ER November 24 and class eleven will graduate five weeks later. Bob explained that there are always two classes running at a time with a group waiting at The Salvation Army to enter the next class.

Ron Trytek, with Three Quarters Recovery Homes, advised the group that he and David Morris, of Transitional Resources, had visited the VIP-ER Program and were impressed. Through their work in Manatee County, they were familiar with a number of the clients that are currently attending the program in Sarasota.

Transitional Housing Proposal

Pam reviewed the Phase 3 Transitional Housing Proposal that will be presented to the Sarasota Board of County Commissioners (BCC) for funding soon. This sober housing model would consist of 15 leased or owned properties that would offer transitional housing to five VIP-ER graduates in each house, for a total of 75 beds. This is the number of beds that appear to be needed to accommodate VIP-ER Program graduates who have no where to live when they complete the program. One additional resident in each house would be an individual who has maintained a year or two of sobriety and would act as the house manager, benefiting from free or reduced rent. There can be no more than six residents in each house to comply with the local zoning ordinance. The length of stay for any individual will not exceed 18 to 24 months.

Based on staff research, it appears that the biggest obstacle in getting a sober house up and running is the cost of first and last months' rent, a security deposit, utility deposits, and furnishings. Staff estimates that these costs will total approximately \$10,000 per property, or \$150,000 for 15 houses. There will also

be a management fee of \$8,000 per house per year as an incentive for the housing providers, for a total of \$120,000 a year. A rent voucher program is also being proposed to cover the rent for a VIP-ER graduate who is unable to pay their weekly rent for a valid reason. The provider would receive rent payment for up to 13 weeks per year per bed to cover the cost (\$125 a week) of any VIP-ER graduate who has been approved for a rent voucher. The voucher program is estimated to cost around \$150,000 for the first year.

Pam mentioned to the group the requirement established by the County Administrator that anyone who takes advantage of the rent vouchers needs to pay back at least half of the amount owed. They would be required to pay \$15 to \$25 per week with balance forgiveness once half of the loan is paid back. Discussion ensued on this issue with the consensus against such a move. Pam suggested that this provision could be revisited if it is later determined to be too much of a burden on the clients. Bob Piper suggested that this pay back not be a contractual requirement, but be an expectation of recovery. As a part of their commitment of working the steps toward recovery, they could pay it back on their own. A number of other suggestions were made. The decision of the group was to have Pam e-mail each person who attended the meeting today to get their feedback on this issue and present it to Bill Little and Chip Taylor prior to the presentation to the BCC. It was also requested that the e-mail include the confirmed time, date and location of the BCC meeting when the item is being discussed.

Discussion ensued regarding how the properties will be identified and what criteria will be applied to determine if a residence is suitable for the program. It was agreed that the minimum requirements for residences needs to be established for the program. Pam advised that there will be guiding principles that will include a checklist of criteria that qualifies a property for the program. It was suggested that the VIP-ER Project Management Team assist in the development of this criteria.

Discussion ensued regarding the dilemma faced by Rev. Ritter and the Sarasota County Jail Administration when clean and sober substance abusing individuals are ready for release, but will face homelessness and subsequent re-arrest due to the lack of safe and affordable housing. Bryan Pope suggested establishing an adult rehabilitation center in Sarasota. Bob Piper suggested that not all of the slots in the VIP-ER Program be reserved for ARF graduates. His recommendation was to set some slots aside for this population and other programs in the community that treat substance abusing individuals.

Florida Supportive Housing Coalition Conference Information

Pam attended the Florida Supportive Housing Coalition Conference and noted that she was the only representative at the conference from Sarasota. She brought the information on affordable housing, permanent housing, and

supportive housing for the committee members to review. If anyone is interested in reviewing or having copies of this housing information in the future, please contact Pam at 861-2578 or Pam_Meunier@doh.state.fl.us.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Transitional Housing Committee will be held on January 11, 2007 at the Health Department, 2200 Ringling, Room 227 at 3:00 p.m. Pam asked that suggestions for the January meeting agenda be e-mailed to her.