



I. CALL TO ORDER

Nancy Backus called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM.

ROLL CALL/ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Executive Board members present: Nancy Backus, City of Auburn; Traci Buxton, City of Des Moines; Xochitl Maykovich, King County; Victoria Schroff, City of Maple Valley; Carmen Rivera, City of Renton; James Lovell, City of SeaTac; Eric Zimmerman, City of Normandy Park; Kristina Soltys, City of Covington.

Others present: Jeff Tate, SKHHP Interim Executive Support; Dorsol Plants, SKHHP Program Coordinator; Menka Soni, SKHHP Advisory Board; Ashley Kenny, SKHHP Advisory Board; Kent Hay, SKHHP Advisory Board; Maria Arns, SKHHP Advisory Board; Olga Lindbom, SKHHP Advisory Board; Hamdi Abdulle, SKHHP Advisory Board; Rumi Takahashi, SKHHP Advisory Board; Zaji Collins, SKHHP Advisory Board Alternate; Angie Mathias, City of Renton; Nicholas Matz, City of Normandy Park; McCaela Daffern, King County.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was provided.

III. APPROVAL OF JUNE 14, 2024 MINUTES

James Lovell moved to approve the June 14, 2024 minutes as presented, seconded by Carmen Rivera. Motion passed (7-0)

IV. AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

No modifications to the agenda were made.

V. BOARD BRIEFING

a. PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO STOP THE CYCLE OF HOMELESSNESS

Menka Soni expressed gratitude for the opportunity to present to the Executive Board and to provide practical solutions to the homelessness crisis. Before going over the solutions, the hope is to give a picture of the current model for someone to exit from homelessness. In an ideal world, an individual or family that becomes homeless for various reasons would connect with a service provider who can provide temporary accommodation. From there, that person can move to transitional and eventually permanent housing. Once the individual or family reaches permanent housing, the thought is that they have received the support needed to end their risk of homelessness. Unfortunately, some challenges to this system need resolution.

The first 'H' in SKHHP speaks to our ability to end homelessness by providing capital funding for affordable housing. SKHHP has committed funds for 550 housing units for our homeless neighbors in the last two years. This is important because SKHHP has been working to end homelessness by providing this capital funding.

The cycle can continue when a factor called “income shock” occurs. With the reduction of financial support after the COVID-19 pandemic, income shock is becoming very acute. With all the job situations, people are losing their jobs. There is also a lack of mental health support, which can result in a return to homelessness. There has also been an increase in Domestic Violence, which further creates housing instability. Factors such as these, a medical condition or injury, which form a financial burden, are why we are seeing an increase in homelessness even as we see an increase in affordable housing.

Because of these income shocks, even though they have a home, they cannot maintain it. While there is an ideal system to exit homelessness, we know there is leakage, and something needs to be done to break the cycle. The presentation intends to show where some leaks are occurring and where additional support could be provided to help our neighbors retain their housing.

Ashley Kenny continued by introducing the first solution to stem the return to homelessness: rental and financial assistance. The cost of housing is very high, and more than half of households that exit homelessness are not able to find housing with supportive services due to a lack of supply. Many of these households exit homelessness into 60% AMI units or market-rate homes, which means they are rent-burdened from the onset. Our area's rent continues to increase, and household incomes cannot keep up. So, when an income shock like sickness, job loss, or a car breaking down occurs, missing even just one month's rent can put that household on a path to eviction. We know that not every household that experiences income shock becomes homeless, but research shows that households that have exited homelessness before are more likely to fall into homelessness again. Often, these households lack a family or social safety net, which is what resulted in their first instance of homelessness.

Homelessness is expensive for everyone. Research shows that providing rental assistance, sometimes with supportive case management, can be far cheaper than allowing the household to fall into homelessness. Providing direct rental assistance can be challenging with scarce financial resources, but the alternative is much worse. A 2022 study of homelessness prevention in King County found that the average stay in an emergency shelter cost \$14,000 for an individual who ultimately moved to permanent housing.

When a household becomes homeless, in addition to the emergency shelter cost, there would be costs to the landlord, payment of past eviction debt, payment of new deposit and rent, and other actual expenses that are difficult to quantify related to the trauma of homelessness. Some of this trauma can include disruption to employment, school, loss of community, increased risk of physical or mental illness, increased risk of substance abuse, and even incarceration. This can be a big deal for anyone, but when there are children, the impact of the trauma related to homelessness will have lifelong consequences.

Another study conducted between 2019 and 2022 in Santa Clara County was a randomized control trial focused on the benefits of rental assistance. Households that received rental assistance were shown to be less likely to become homeless. On average, households were provided \$4400, and after subtracting agency overhead costs, the study determined that there was a benefit not just to the recipient but that the community saw cost savings of around \$2605. With scarce financial resources, rental assistance may be a more cost-effective strategy.

A challenge for rental assistance programs is that funders put too many restrictions on using funds. An example of this is the common requirement that households cannot access

assistance until they are on the verge of eviction. This means that households must wait until the last minute to apply, which puts them at risk of not receiving the benefit in time. This delay can also sour relationships between tenants and landlords. Ashley Kenny's focus is supporting households with children; usually, the family knows they cannot cover the rent before it's due. These households reach out for assistance right away to support their families and are told by agencies they must wait for the formal eviction process to begin or even wait until an eviction court summons is issued. Taking a moment to place ourselves in the shoes of that parent and each day fearing your children will become homeless is a terrifying day. Would you be able to function with that fear hovering over you? Could you be a patient employee or a loving spouse? If service providers had more flexibility with financial assistance, the agency could better design a program that meets the specific needs of who they are serving and reduces their trauma.

Another challenge with rental assistance can be that funders set a low limit on the amount of funding that can be provided. Limits in our areas can be around \$2,000 to 3,000 dollars. Unfortunately, the need for this can be very high in our current market. Landlords are seeing eviction processes take longer or are genuinely trying to work with the family, which causes the debt amount to increase. During this time, attorneys will also suggest that landlords not accept partial payments. These delays can cause the debt amount to exceed the service limit, and if service providers were given more flexibility to design their programs, they could better meet the household's individual needs.

For many households, one-time rental assistance can prevent them from experiencing or returning to homelessness, but some may need additional assistance to stabilize, and our next solution seeks to provide that support.

Kent Hay began doing homelessness outreach for the City of Auburn in 2020, and on one of his first trips, he began working with a young lady in her thirties with six children who had been in and out of homelessness for years. After working with the family, he supported her getting into an apartment. Usually, when a service provider supports a family in getting into housing, there is limited to no post-service support. The trauma that the family had experienced as part of their homelessness can make it difficult to accomplish tasks such as checking her mail due to the high levels of anxiety she experienced. This would result in her getting behind on rent and utilities and Kent Hay's team needing to continue support to prevent her return from homelessness. In 2024, the family is at risk of being evicted, and without the support over the last four years, the family would have lost housing.

Comprehensive Case Management is essential for families like Kent Hay mentioned, who have been working to help put things in place and connect people with services that help address their needs. This support can include health education, workforce development, and other support to keep families in their homes. One clear example is Homeless Stability Payee Services, which can address the problem associated with how homelessness exacerbates financial instability and challenges managing household finances.

For the family Kent Hay has been supporting for four years, she was provided a housing voucher that sets her rent based on her income, which is around \$300 and \$400 with utilities. Unfortunately, she still experiences challenges paying these amounts on time. Payee services support the family by ensuring those bills are paid while empowering them through financial literacy and budget classes. The goal is still to foster eventual independence for our neighbors.

The program aims to tie financial assistance with payee services. The payee coordinates with the household and ensures that rent, utilities, and other essential housing costs are met first and provides the remainder for the household to spend. This frees these households from the fear and anxiety of falling back homeless, allowing them to stabilize their families. The payee also teaches household budgeting and other financial skills that help the family better handle their money. This keeps a household from returning to homelessness and works to support them to achieve complete independence.

Kent Hay continued that there is one solution to homelessness that we don't often consider: affordable homeownership. Usually, the process gets someone into rental housing, and the service support ends soon after. We often don't talk about the next step in housing, homeownership, which has been shown to provide better long-term stability.

Homeownership creates stability by providing a permanent living place where you can't get evicted. Utilizing a fixed-rate mortgage or other subsidy prevents your monthly housing cost from fluctuating as rent constantly increases. Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) can be used to create down payment assistance programs. Often, jurisdictions will spread general fund dollars around, providing a lot of money to agencies doing different work. There could be an opportunity to use those funds differently, such as a household that utilized a payee service program that helped them cover their current household needs while saving for a downpayment to purchase a home eventually. Local and federal funds could support downpayment and other homeownership programs.

Another advantage to homeownership is that it allows for generational wealth building. Once you own your home, you begin to build equity, creating a financial safety net. The house itself and the equity it generates are also things that can be passed on to other family members, creating generational stability. Research has shown that homeowners fare better during times of financial distress when compared to renters. By creating a path out of homelessness that ends in home ownership, we can end generational cycles of homelessness and focus better on the folks on the ground.

If we can work to prevent households from becoming homeless, it will enable our direct service providers to better focus on the homeless outside.

Kristina Soltys joined the meeting.

Maria Arns provided a personal story demonstrating how housing instability can impact anyone.

Previously, as a homeowner, Maria Arns was a licensed practical nurse (LPN) who had an on-the-job injury in 2008 or 2009. She opted out of the surgery, which only had a 50% success rate, so she lost the Labor and Industry (L&I) benefits. Shortly after that, she lost unemployment even though she could not hold a full-time job without significant pain or poor performance. She was advised to sue the company as she did her job covering for a partner who was off the unit without her knowledge. The patient lived, but the agency does not keep LPNs with the injury she suffered.

Maria Arns was homeless or unstably housed with her mom and son for several years. Eventually, in 2015, her Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) came through, and she rented a house that was in foreclosure and had to move in August 2016. Her mother passed away in July, and her son had gotten some roommates, so she began to rent rooms. In

December 2018, the male owner of the house decided to expose himself, so her son rented a one-bedroom with Maria Arns so she could qualify. The Seattle Urban League found the apartment for her. In December 2019, after suffering a heart attack, her son decided he would stay with her another year. So, they moved to a two-bedroom apartment in December 2022. While the apartment was not ideal, she was stably housed. She would have to spray outside the unit to keep the roaches from coming and would witness crime, drugs, and violence. She was asked not to move because of how much of a model tenant she had been.

In December 2022, Maria Arns moved after being gainfully employed by a group working with her disability. The job was not funded for 2024, so her pay was sporadic, and then she received \$2000-2600 a month from July to September. Her position was dissolved in November 2024. Today, her housing is at risk monthly, and it has caused increased physical symptoms and severe depression. Her son is still with her but restarted a new job at \$18 an hour. With her \$1840 from Social Security, they don't qualify for most places. She is grateful that her lease has been renewed, although the rent is \$2600. They don't qualify for assistance from most places. If she could even get help with one month's rent, it would make all the difference in the world to their situation. The stress of being behind in the bills every month is overwhelming. Having at least one month's rent would allow her to get caught up and even get fresh produce -- which is a treat.

She is housed, but it is an experience trying to pay all her bills. If she didn't have a property management company, she could let the power go and use the fireplace to cook and heat. So, she is currently in a better position than her neighbors on the streets. If she had to, she would sleep in her car again. Couch surfing or renting rooms is out. She has been raped couch surfing, and after her last experience renting a room from a couple and the man when they were home alone one day deciding to drop his pants, she doesn't want to think what could happen.

Nancy Backus thanked Maria Arns for sharing her story and demonstrating her strength and resiliency.

Victoria Schroff asked if the homeless stability payee service was a specific service or a type of service. Kent Hay responded that payee services exist, such as at the ARC of King County or Social Security, which allows a person to opt into those services or can sometimes be court-ordered. Those services currently do not have a direct connection to housing, which could be a potential solution to our current crisis.

Nancy Backus asked if there was a way to connect payee services with housing. Kent Hay responded that there was a path forward, which could be achieved by creating a payee service or connecting with existing services and property managers to connect those pieces.

James Alberson asked how utilizing general fund dollars to support down payment assistance aligned with state law, which prohibits the gifting of public funds. Kent Hay responded that the jurisdiction could create an application process for service providers to apply for down payment assistance. The jurisdiction would not provide direct payments but contract with providers like other financial assistance contracts.

Xochitl Maykovich added that the King County Housing Finance Program does provide some funds for homeownership and participants are required to meet income qualification requirements. This prevents concerns around the gifting of public funds as the program functions like other financial assistance programs.

VI. BOARD BUSINESS

a. DEVELOPING A SHARED PHILOSOPHY ON HOMELESSNESS IN SOUTH KING COUNTY

Nancy Backus updated the Executive Board that the King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA) will appoint a new CEO in the next couple of weeks, and there was a need to prepare for the next chapter. A meeting has been scheduled for the following week to convene the mayors and business leaders of King County to talk about what KCRHA will look like in the future. There are various opinions about that, and the Chair wanted to discuss this with the Executive Board. SKHHP has a second 'H' in our name and has often felt silent in our work.

Nancy Backus would like to hear from the Executive Board what they hope to see out of KCRHA and a discussion on whether to respond to issues as individual cities or through SKHHP. Decisions would not be made at the SKHHP level on behalf of cities, but South King County is one of the KCRHA subregions, and SKHHP could serve as a focal point. She continued that it was important for SKHHP to understand how each partner approaches homelessness and if there are ways to align some of our work. An example is how some SKHHP cities have had emergency shelters or services placed in their jurisdiction without the city's knowledge. If there were a desire by the Executive Board, one option would be to establish an ad hoc committee.

Eric Zimmerman said he felt it was wise to try to represent the cities through SKHHP, and there was strength in providing a regional voice. If that requires a working group or another investment of effort, SKHHP should do that since this is a unique opportunity to help an organization course correct in a way that truly benefits South King County.

James Lovell agreed that a unified policy platform without partners deferring their authority on decision-making made sense. Partners may deviate from the platform based on each city's unique characteristics, but policy-wise, there may be more alignment between SKHHP partners.

Carmen Rivera said that she was in overall agreement but wanted to check in with her fellow City Council Members. There may be some policy differences across the diverse cities, but there is strength in communicating as a region. After the presentation provided by the Advisory Board, she sees more of a reason to tie housing and homelessness together, and having a subcommittee focused on connecting those two would be something she would support.

Traci Buxton said she agreed, and SKHHP was formed because of its strength in approaching issues regionally. SKHHP should maintain the second 'H', and an ad hoc committee would help as the topic of homelessness continues to evolve in our region by supporting asylum-seekers and other communities in need.

James Lovell volunteered to participate in the ad hoc committee and was for keeping the second 'H' in SKHHP. He currently works for an organization that provides services directly related to KCRHA. There is a federal policy reason why Native people are chronically homeless, which changes the way Chief Seattle Club serves their community. SKHHP could work on several local policies that can address the source of homelessness from a regional level.

Kristina Soltys thanked the Advisory Board for the presentation and Maria Arns for sharing her story. She agrees that cities have a better voice when combined at a regional level. Kristian

Soltys continued that homelessness has such a vast meaning. When it comes to what SKHHP does, perhaps a second 'P' should be added so that our title is South King Housing and Homelessness Prevention Partners. SKHHP could be more effective if it focused on preventing homelessness, which helps clarify SKHHP's role.

Victoria Schroff agreed that it was wise to stay as a regional voice and that homelessness should remain in the name. She also supported the ad hoc committee and would support adding prevention to SKHHP's name.

Nancy Backus confirmed with SKHHP staff what Executive Board members were absent and offered to send out an email to the whole Board for everyone who might be interested in serving on the subcommittee.

Traci Buxton stated she was interested in the ad hoc committee.

Xochitl Maykovich stated that as the King County representative, she would be open to direction from the Executive Board on whether King County should serve in the ad hoc committee or whether the focus should be on city partners. Nancy Backus said having King County's perspective would be good.

Carmen Rivera said she would happily serve on the ad hoc committee.

Victoria Schroff said she would be interested in serving on the ad hoc committee if it were appropriate for an alternate to attend.

Nancy Backus confirmed with SKHHP staff what a quorum would be and determined that the subcommittee could have six members or fewer.

b. GENERAL UPDATES

Jeff Tate provided a few brief updates since the June Executive Board meeting. The Staff Work Group met at the mid-point between Executive Board meetings to address any follow-up from the previous meeting and develop the agenda for the upcoming meeting. The Staff Work Group comprises staff representing each jurisdiction and is committed to their time and work, which is essential to SKHHP.

Dorsol Plants participated in several critical meetings in our region, including the King County Public Funders meeting, the Housing Interjurisdictional Team Meeting, the WA State Homeownership Affinity Group, and others related to affordable housing. He is present in many spaces that provide SKHHP and our member cities with representation and keep our region on the radar.

Dorsol Plants also supports the SKHHP Advisory Board, including the presentation by the Advisory Board today. He has also been coordinating and holding meetings with developers who have funding commitments from SKHHP or are interested in applying for the 2024 Housing Capital Fund. These meetings have had the support of city staff when a project is in the jurisdiction. Additionally, Dorsol Plants attended several City Council meetings to support the 2025 Work Plan and Budget presentations or to present when necessary. He also completed the annual report for SHB 1406 funds pooled by SKHHP.

Planning is underway for the Affordable Housing Tour in September, which will be on September 20 from 1:00 to 3:00 PM, and Dorsol Plants has been responsible for coordinating

each site visit. On June 26, Dorsol Plants facilitated the South King County Joint Planners and Developers meeting focused on faith-based partnerships for affordable housing and included planners, developers, and faith-based leaders from our region. He also facilitated training at the July SokiHo meeting on the Affordable Housing Inventory Dashboard and is coordinating an update of the system as part of the 2025 Work Plan.

Nancy Backus thanked SKHHP staff Claire Goodwin, Dorsol Plants, and Jeff Tate for supporting SKHHP.

VII.UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nancy Backus updated the Executive Board that Jeff Tate would be retiring in August, and the July Executive Board meeting was his last. Jeff Tate's work has been critical not only to SKHHP but also to the City of Auburn and all of South King County.

James Lovell updated the Executive Board that he has proposed a bill at the City of SeaTac to start a Housing Opportunity Fund using some surplus funding to make a combination of homeownership and low-income multi-family housing for the city to act on. The city has a good housing plan and sound data, but SeaTac needs more tools. He will update the Executive Board as the bill takes shape and the lessons learned. If an SKHHP city is interested in the process, James Lovell offered the opportunity to learn alongside SeaTac. This work should not take away from participating in SKHHP but allows the city to begin focusing on strategies specific to SeaTac.

VIII.ADJOURN

Nancy Backus adjourned the meeting at 2:15 PM.

Dorsol Plants

Program Coordinator-SKHHP