

Community Cooperation Committee (CCC) Annual Report for 2008

Summary of Activities:

Facilitation Team: The CCC, out of a desire to facilitate consensus dialogues within the Lawrence community on topics and issues surrounding homelessness, has undergone mediation training and participated in role simulation exercises to better ensure that the group embarks on these facilitations in as professional a manner as possible. Although the CCC will act as facilitator, we believe that a special skill set, that held by trained mediators, would enable facilitators to better guide participants through potentially difficult and emotional discussions (for example, examining “Not-In-My-Backyard” attitudes toward a shelter) while avoiding stalemates and breaking impasses. The CCC now has a team of six people willing to facilitate.

Website: The Community Commission on Homelessness (CCH) now has an expanded presence on the City of Lawrence, Kansas web site. This new site includes information about the CCC and a list of services whose client base either is or includes people experiencing homelessness.

Facilitated Panel Discussion: The CCC held a facilitated panel discussion with some of the stakeholders surrounding homelessness, in part as a dry run practice in setting up and conducting a facilitated discussion. The goals were two-fold. First, as the CCC begins its outreach, education, and facilitation efforts, some fundamental background information is helpful. Presenters could use a list of answers to “Frequently Asked Questions.” Second, the CCC wanted to listen to stakeholders to better plan the direction and focus of the Committee’s activities.

Resource Library: The CCC has established a resource library which will be housed in the Planning and Development Services Department. It currently includes books on a layperson’s guide to mediation skills for negotiating difficult conversations, breaking an impasse, and running a consensus meeting. The library will also include role simulation exercises for facilitating community discussions on issues surrounding homelessness, copies of CCC and CCH meeting minutes, and binders for CCC members containing guidelines for facilitation and outreach. The library will be for in-house use.

2008 Budget (of \$3,000.00 allotted):

Mediation—core training, second payment	\$786.00
Role simulation training—three sessions	\$1,050.00
Resource books	\$232.40
P.O. Box annual fee	\$72.00
Domain name and host annual fee	\$119.40
Web design	\$175.00
Postage	\$294.00
Office supplies	\$215.21
TOTAL	\$2,944.01

Projects and Proposals for 2009:

Establish an effective web presence: The CCC's ultimate goal for a CCH website was, as part of its education and outreach efforts, to create a destination site for anyone using a search engine to find information on "homelessness, Lawrence KS." Anticipated users are service providers, people experiencing homelessness, people concerned about themselves or another becoming homeless, curious community members, or individuals conducting research. The current location on the City's web site is useful if someone knows about the CCH, but it might never be found by user groups unfamiliar with the Commission and its efforts. With the help of a University of Kansas student volunteer, the CCC is developing a new web site, www.helpforlawrenceks.org, to make information about homelessness in Lawrence and services available to people experiencing homelessness in Lawrence more accessible, complimenting and linking to the excellent sites already active, such as the Lawrence chapter of InterFaith Initiative and the Lawrence Community Shelter. Over time, as well as providing summaries of Community Commission on Homelessness activities and information on the CCC, the web site would provide in-depth articles on pertinent topics and a "Frequently Asked Questions" section.

Facilitated Visioning Exercises with Community Groups: The CCC will meet with such community groups as the Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods, Downtown Lawrence, Inc., the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce, and various church groups.