



THE CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

MAYOR DOMENIC J. SARNO

HOME OF THE BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

MEDIA ADVISORY



CONTACT

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Homelessness: State Agencies Continuing to Create Pockets / Corridors of Poverty in Springfield

Who: Mayor Domenic J. Sarno, City and School Officials
What: Creation of Pockets/Corridors of Poverty in Springfield
When: Wednesday, January 14, 2015 @ 1:00PM
Where: Springfield City Hall 2nd Fl - Room 220

Springfield MA – Mayor Domenic J. Sarno states “even though I expressed my feelings of opposition verbally, and in writing to the past administration, (please see attached September 5, 2014 letter) on congregate shelters I have recently learned, through Code Enforcement action, of expanded presence of “co-sheltering” homeless families in Springfield. The practice came to light when Code Enforcement responded to a complaint and found four homeless families living together in a single apartment unit, one family to a locked bedroom.

Co-sheltering units are paid for by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), through its state-funded family shelter program. DHCD claims it has used co-shelter units on a limited basis for many years, but has significantly expanded the program in 2014.

In 2014, in response to concerns about housing homeless families in motels, DHCD informed existing family shelter providers that it was interested in expanding family shelter capacity throughout the state, and requested providers to identify how many new shelter units they could add. There was no new procurement for this process; DHCD’s existing contracts allow existing providers to expand services. Existing emergency shelter providers in Western Massachusetts are the Center for Human Development (CHD), HAP, Inc. (HAP) and New England Farm Workers Council (NEFWC). Each of these three expanded in Hampden County, but it appears that only CHD and HAP expanded in Springfield.

DHCD has indicated that it sought to expand shelter units in response to the existence of a high of about 550 homeless families in motels in Western Massachusetts; of these about 300 are originally from Western Massachusetts. It should be noted that the motel families are in addition to families in existing family shelter units—there were about 240 family shelter units in Western Massachusetts in January 2014.

The City has so far identified 86 co-shelter units in the City, housing over 175 families. The majority—at least 72 units and over 150 families, are located in the very small census tract of lower Forest Park, which has a population of about 3100. CHD operates 50 of these units; HAP operates 36. Additional co-shelter facilities are located in Metro Center and Indian Orchard. We have requested that DHCD provide the full number and locations of all new shelter units in Springfield. DHCD has promised the number, but refuses to provide locations, based on concerns regarding confidentiality and privacy.

DHCD and CHD indicate that the model is intended to serve 2 families in a single apartment unit, but Code Enforcement staff has observed three units which each have four families in them.

In January 2014, Springfield had 772 homeless persons in families at the time of the point-in-time count. With an average family size of 3, that is 257 families. Currently, it appears that Springfield has 1350 persons in homeless families, or 450 families.

Simply put, they are attempting to empty the hotels and motels and illegally convert residential dwelling units into lodging houses, motels and hotels without concern for local land use laws, the state sanitary code, or building or fire code provisions that are triggered whenever there is an expansion of at least a doubling and in some cases tripling or quadrupling of the number of dwelling units, and a change of use of this nature.

These pockets of poverty that have been created are not in the best interest for the occupants and the local communities.” The lack of thought and resources that have been put into addressing this question and very little effort to even communicate or coordinate with the local community detracts from the legitimacy of this program.

I have contacted Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Jay Ash and Governor Baker to apprise them of this crisis situation. I am appreciative of City Councilor Tim Rooke for his assistance and efforts too.

“Bottom line here is you cannot continue to concentrate poverty on top of poverty in our Springfield, We’ve done more than our fair share!”

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September 5, 2014

Greg Bialecki
Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development
One Ashburton Place, Room 2101
Boston, MA 02108

Aaron Gornstein
Department of Housing and Community Development
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 300
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Secretary Bialecki and Undersecretary Gornstein:

Recent press coverage indicates that the Commonwealth is moving to address the problem of homeless families in motels, and particularly the issue of large numbers of these families being placed in Holyoke and Chicopee motels. The dangers of these families living unsupervised in crowded hotel rooms has been widely publicized, and I applaud the effort to improve the response.

However, I am very concerned that the proposed remedy will simply move the problems associated with the shelter hotels to the City of Springfield. The *Republican's* September 4 article identifies one of the state's strategies as an increase in the number of congregate facilities in Western Massachusetts. These are apartments in which multiple families live together, with each family having one bedroom, and sharing cooking facilities and bathrooms. I am aware that, within the last several months, HAP Housing has opened two of these facilities in Springfield. More alarmingly, I have learned that a city landlord was approached by a local agency looking to rent 30 to 40 units in a single complex in downtown Springfield to use for this purpose.

The congregate shelter solution is no better than hotels. Congregate shelters, particularly of the size that seems to be sought, have the same impacts on public safety and school systems as shelter motels.

The City of Springfield is already overburdened with urban social problems, and is challenged by lack of sufficient resources in meeting its goal of providing high-quality services to its residents. The challenges are most acute in the areas of policing and schools. Springfield has worked extraordinarily hard to revitalize the City and increase its tax revenue, which would support improved services to its citizens. As we work toward recovery, we cannot repeatedly have more challenges added to our burden. Congregate shelters will impede Springfield's ability to attract much-needed economic growth.

Simply put, the City has done its fair share. With this regard, I note that Springfield has the vast majority of shelters and other services in the region for homeless individuals, as well as excessive share of group homes, substance abuse facilities, and refugee placements.

Respectfully, I request that you do not add additional shelter capacity in Springfield.

Sincerely,

Domenic J. Sarno
Mayor

Jordan, Denise

From: McCafferty, Geraldine
Sent: Tuesday, January 13, 2015 7:41 PM
To: Kennedy, Kevin; Pikula, Edward; Jordan, Denise; DeSousa, Lisa
Subject: FW: Solutions to the Homelessness in Springfield
Attachments: Letter to City of Springfield Geradine MacCaffrey.doc

This is ridiculous--this is a cold contact, in my inbox today.

Geraldine McCafferty | Director of Housing
CITY OF SPRINGFIELD
1600 E. Columbus Avenue | Springfield, MA 01103
t: 413.787.6500 | f: 413.787.6515 | www.springfieldcityhall.com

From: Todd Simon [toddpetersimon@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, January 13, 2015 5:24 PM
To: McCafferty, Geraldine
Subject: Solutions to the Homelessness in Springfield

Hello Ms. McCafferty, I was referred to you by David Eng from the Community Services Department of Mass Housing in Boston.

I work with a group of investors that are in the process of purchasing several large single family homes and apartment buildings in the Springfield, MA area to help house the homeless in Western MA. We're hoping you can point us in the right direction. If not, please let me know whom to contact to help us move forward.

Please see the attached letter.

Thank you in advance for all your help!

Todd Simon
Derand LLC.
85 Falmouth Road
West Springfield, MA 01089
Cell 413-695-3454

please to all
Can you believe
this BS!
no way!!!
(DJS)

Derand LLC.

Mission Statement:

Date: January 13th, 2015

Our mission is to partner with agencies that assist homeless families and individuals in need of placement to achieve independence. We will provide emergency shelters, safe havens, transitional and permanent housing in order for them to become active, working and participating citizens in their community.

To:

Geraldine McCafferty
Director, Office of Housing-City of Springfield
36 Court Street
Springfield, MA 01103

My name is Todd Simon and I work with a group of investors in the process of purchasing several large single family homes and apartment buildings in the Springfield, MA area. Our plan is to continue to purchase more properties moving forward. I'm reaching out to you with the hope you're the right person to contact in the City of Springfield that works towards solving the homelessness problem. Our group is looking to form a long term relationship with the City of Springfield with progressive solutions in mind to tackle the continuing homelessness issues in Western Massachusetts.

Working together, we feel confident your clients will eventually need less support, assistance, and achieve independence. The goal is to have them work towards building their own success, thereby saving the system considerable future costs.

I look forward to meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss how best we can assist you in Springfield and the surrounding towns. Please let me know how soon we can schedule a meeting.

Sincerely,

Todd P. Simon
Derand LLC.