Continuum of Care
General Membership Minutes

Grand Rapids/Wyoming/Kent County – MI 506

AUGUST 27, 2026 | 9:30 - 11:00 AM
In Person – Grand Rapids Public Library, Ryerson Auditorium

FACILITATOR:	Alyssa Anten
MEETING ATTENDEES:	**CoC Staff:** Alyssa Anten, Brianne Robach, Kate Meyer, Lana VanBuren, Maddie Martin Shakerah McRae, Tenisa Frye, Samantha Westhouse, Tanise Clipper, Frieda Campos, Jennifer Ortman, Dave Gantz, Erik Wolonberg (Covenant House), Brian Bruce, Noah Davis, Piper Wilbanks, Myracle Watkins, Stacey Datena, Zenaida Jimenez, Tammy Vincent, Angela Rincones, Catherine Sheroski, Shelby Sichta, Wendie Preiss, Casey Gordon, Emily Graves, Benjamin Rance, Cassandra Mehari, Keigan Brown-Edwards, Carolyn Allen, Stacie Stephens, John West, Kristie Winslow, Alyssa Bryan, Adrienne Goodstal, Nelson Soto, Molly Perez, Marissa Lee, Monique Carter, Sabrina Slenk, Chi Benedict, Raymond King, Brianna Vasquez, Fallon Lee
TIME CONVENED:	9:32 AM
TIME ADJOURNED:	10:47 AM

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JUNE 25, 2026

MOTION BY:	Monique Carter	SUPPORT FROM:	Samantha Westhouse
CONCLUSION:	All in favor, motion carries.		

WEBSITE AND REBRAND – Alyssa Anten

DISCUSSION: Over the past few months, Kent Homelessness Coalition (formerly the Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness) has been rolling out its new name and rebrand. The last piece of the rebrand, the new website, will be launched and celebrated at the next General Membership meeting in October. Membership is encouraged to attend.

- Alyssa noted that the new website is intentionally resource-driven and crafted for our members. Data dashboards, meeting materials, and CoC policies are all housed on the new website for easy access.

DIRECTOR SEARCH AND HIRING PROCESS – Tenisa Frye

DISCUSSION:

The CoC Director's last day was Friday, August 21. In the interim, the CoC is led by CoC Operations Director, Alyssa Anten, with support from Becki Postma and Heart of West Michigan United Way.

Heart of West Michigan United Way will be using an external firm to conduct the national search for the new CoC Director. The RFP for the hiring firm was finalized on August 26 and is now accepting proposals through the second week of September.

CoC and United Way leadership are also discussing which community stakeholders should be involved in the interview process. Tenisa shared that public comment is being accepted on the recruitment process. While not all feedback may be incorporated, leadership desires community involvement in the search.

OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS) – Benjamin Rance

DISCUSSION:

Benjamin Rance, Emergency Management Administrator for the City of Grand Rapids Office of Emergency Management (OEM), provided an overview of his team's work and invited group discussion on opportunities for collaboration with homeless and housing service providers. He shared that the office's work includes emergency planning, staff training and exercises, community preparedness, resilience initiatives, stakeholder engagement, and public emergency communications.

- Potential partnerships include emergency communications and emergency preparedness support for Rapid Rehousing (RRH) and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) programs.
- The Grand Rapids OEM has previously worked with Mel Trotter Ministries, Degagé Ministries, homeless outreach teams, the GRPD outreach team, and the City of Grand Rapids.

Benjamin provided an opportunity for membership to ask questions about OEM

- When asked how OEM partners with local schools, Benjamin explained that, because OEM is housed within the Fire Department, OEM staff supports school safety trainings. They also work with Kent ISD to train local superintendents and school administrators on emergency preparedness.
- Another asked if OEM partners with agencies to evaluate evacuation plans. He noted that OEM can review evacuation plans for housing providers and other agencies and offer feedback if requested but does not provide formal certification or compliance approval.
- When asked about resources for individuals with disabilities, Benjamin emphasized that OEM's emergency planning efforts are designed to serve the entire community, including people with disabilities. He noted that OEM relies on state resources and works closely with city leadership to advocate for accessibility and inclusion in emergency planning.
- In response to a question about emergency alert languages, Benjamin shared that alerts are currently available in English and Spanish. He is working with the National Weather Service to explore additional language options and noted that some alerts may automatically translate based on users' phone language settings.

- When asked whether emergency preparedness kits are available for families and individuals, Benjamin shared that OEM maintains a limited supply of approximately 200 kits, which are typically distributed at community events. Due to funding constraints, the number of available kits is limited, but OEM provides guidance on what items should be included in a kit for those who would like to assemble their own or create one for someone in need.

ACTION ITEMS: **General Membership:** For further ideas on how the Office of Emergency Management may collaborate with the community, please contact Ben by phone at 616-490-9824 or by email at brance@grand-rapids-mi.us.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT: KENT COUNTY YOUTH ACTION BOARD – Noah Davis & Myracle Watkins

DISCUSSION: The Kent County Youth Action Board (YAB) shared an update on the board's recent activities and accomplishments. Over the past several months, the YAB has focused on strengthening its leadership skills, internal infrastructure, and community presence through participating in local initiatives and CoC meetings. Key highlights included:

- Strengthening internal systems by finalizing bylaws, member expectations, and developing core values.
- Increasing community engagement through attendance at the Youth Homelessness Systems Improvement (YHSI) Conference in Detroit and outreach at the Pride Festival.
- Advancing work aligned with the YAB's EOS "Rocks," that are focused on Access, Prevention & Diversion, Education & Employment, and maintaining a Youth-Centered Approach.
- Planning an upcoming informational session for the Foster Care Alumni Membership Initiative, a project pioneered by YAB member Myracle Watkins.
- Celebrating the selection of a YAB member to serve as a panelist at the 2026 Michigan Summit on Ending Homelessness in Lansing.

Tammy asked how the YAB is funded. Monique explained that the board was previously funded through the three-year YHDP grant cycle but is now funded through CoC HUD dollars designated for youth initiatives.

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FY2026 HUD CoC NOFO UPDATES – Alyssa Anten

DISCUSSION: Alyssa provided an update on the FY2026 Continuum of Care (CoC) HUD Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Following litigation over the FY2025 NOFO, Congress required HUD to issue the FY2026 NOFO by June 1, 2026, and award all funding by December 1, 2026. The Kent County CoC's consolidated application was scheduled to be submitted by August 26, 2026.

Alyssa explained that while the FY2026 NOFO improved from the previous year, the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) still believed that portions of this year's NOFO were unlawful and filed a lawsuit against HUD. On August 7, 2026, a federal judge ruled the FY2026 NOFO unlawful and ordered it suspended.

- Although the CoC was aware that additional litigation was possible, Alyssa noted that it was important to continue the local competition process while the

NOFO remained active to avoid risking critical community funding if the NOFO was ultimately upheld.
- She acknowledged the frustration felt throughout the community given the significant time and effort invested in local project applications.

Prior to the suspension, the Funding Review Committee had finalized the Project Priority Listing. However, CoC leadership will not release the priority listing at this time to avoid conflicts of interest or unfair advantages should HUD issue a revised NOFO. The priority listing is not permanently withheld and will be shared with project applicants once there is greater clarity regarding the future of the NOFO.

Alyssa noted that next steps remain uncertain pending further developments in the lawsuit. She outlined two possible paths forward:

- **Noncompetitive renewals:** NAEH is advocating for HUD to renew existing projects, given the limited time available before the federal funding deadline. This approach would help preserve current funding, but would not provide opportunities for funding increases, account for rising costs, or allow new projects to receive funding. Community members interested in supporting this option were encouraged to contact their legislators.
- **A revised NOFO:** HUD could issue a new, lawful NOFO. However, the competition timeline would be compressed since HUD still must award FY2026 funding by the federal funding deadline on December 1.

When asked why the NOFO was ruled unlawful, Alyssa explained that HUD had reserved $1.3 billion for new Transitional Housing (TH) and Supportive Services Only (SSO) projects. This created concerns that communities could lose funding if they did not prioritize those project types, potentially requiring funds to be shifted away from Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). Alyssa noted that reducing PSH resources could result in individuals losing housing and returning to homelessness. She also shared that the lawsuit challenged requirements in the NOFO related to anti-Housing First policies.

Tammy questioned whether the current Project Priority Listing would still be usable if HUD issues a revised NOFO. Alyssa said she believes the current list would likely remain valid because the issues being challenged are not expected to affect the local ranking and reallocation policies that guided the community's process.

COMMUNITY PARTNER ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

DISCUSSION: The Veterans Action Board shared an update on its recent activities and accomplishments. Board members are currently recruiting new meeting participants, particularly veterans with lived experience of homelessness, to serve on the board.

ADJOURNMENT – *Next meeting: October 22, 2026*