



For Immediate Release

Contact: William J. Aiello
(716) 376-5615

Homelessness Task Force Update

November 22, 2024—Olean—Mayor Aiello is pleased to announce that the Homelessness Task Force has met twice and is working together to get to a better understanding of why the problem exists and how extensive it is in our community. Members of the task force come from various networks throughout the County that assist the vulnerable and those in need of housing. The members of the taskforce have a working knowledge of the crisis and/or why the crisis exists in our community. The following are represented: Casa-Trinity, Cattaraugus County Department of Community Services, Cattaraugus County Department of Social Services, City of Olean Code Enforcement, City of Olean Common Council, City of Olean Fire Department, City of Olean Police Department, Connecting Communities in Action, Genesis House, Greater Olean Area Churches, Olean City School District, Olean General Hospital, St. Bonaventure University, SUNY JCC--Cattaraugus Campus and a representative from Governor Hochul's office.

Group members recognize that homelessness is on the rise throughout the nation. They discussed some of the possible root causes of local homelessness, which include economic conditions, housing shortages, substance use and mental health disorders as well as people fleeing family violence. It was discovered that there are two sets of data, the Point in Time (PIT) Count and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) that can be used to analyze the depth of homelessness in Cattaraugus County.

Every January the County participates in the PIT Count as required by HUD. It is an annual count on a single night of people experiencing homelessness who are sheltered in emergency shelters, transitional housing, Safe Havens or are unsheltered. In 2024 the Cattaraugus County PIT homeless count totaled 69 up 6% or four people from the prior year. Sheltered persons accounted for 63 or 91% of the PIT total; six people were unsheltered. The 2024 PIT Count has additional data that is available [here](#).

In addition, Jodi Fuller, the Chief Operating Officer of Transitional Services, of Connecting Communities in Action, provided the Task Force with information from the HMIS which contains data on homeless individuals who have received services through the local Continuum of Care. If unsheltered people experiencing homelessness do not seek services, they are not represented in the data.

In 2023 the data indicated that 378 people went through the shelter system. Of this 326 (86%) were from New York State, 26 (7%) from Pennsylvania, 20 (5%) from other states and 6 (2%) were unknown.

Of the 326 individuals, 260 (80%) were from Cattaraugus County, 20 (6%) from Allegany County, 14 (4%) from Erie County, 10 (3%) from Chautauqua County and 22 (7%) came from other counties including Livingston, Broome, Monroe, Genesee, Nassau, King and Niagara.

Of the 260 residents of Cattaraugus County, 142 (55%) were from Olean, 48 (19%) from Salamanca, 12 (4%) from Allegany, and 58 (22%) from other zip codes in the county including Delevan, Steamburg, Gowanda, Portville, Great Valley, Machias, Hinsdale, Perrysburg, Killbuck, South Dayton, Limestone, Ellicottville, Little Valley, Franklinville, Randolph and Weston Mills.

Ms. Fuller also pulled the data for the first three quarters of 2024 which trended about the same. She said that people from out of state, generally are coming for a reason, get in a jam and have to enter the shelter system until they can get back to their permanent housing out of state. This was confirmed with examples by representatives of Genesis House and Cattaraugus County Department of Social Services. The group also said that those who are homeless and coming from other areas frequently have roots in our county, possibly they grew up here, moved away and have returned.

Task Force members are in the planning stage of an early December PIT Count in the City of Olean. Olean Police Chief Ron Richardson has provided a map of currently known encampments to aid volunteers with the count. Doing a count in December, before winter sets in, will get information on available services, especially Code Blue, to the vulnerable unsheltered homeless.

“This has been an interesting learning experience and I credit all the members of the task force for helping the City get a better understanding of what leads to homelessness, and how extensive is in our community,” said Mayor Aiello. “I look forward to continuing our discussions as we seek humanitarian solutions to homelessness in our region.”

###