**Executive Summary: Human Services and Public Safety Policy Committee Review**

**Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG)**

**February 6, 2015**

**Interviewees:** The following ten officials were interviewed in late 2014 and early 2015 about how to improve the functioning of MWCOG’s Human Services and Public Safety Policy Committee (HSPSPC): Ms. Penelope A. “Penny” Gross, Supervisor, Fairfax County, VA; Ms. Catherine Hudgins, Supervisor, Fairfax Country, VA; Mr. George Leventhal, County Council Chair, Montgomery County, MD; Ms. Brianne Nadeau, new member of Washington, DC City Council; Mr. Martin Nohe, County District Supervisor, Prince William County, VA; Mr. Paul Quander, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, Washington, DC; Mr. Terry J. Seamans, Member, City Council, Takoma Park, MD; Mr. Barry L. Stanton, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Public Safety, Prince George’s County, MD; Mr. Walter Tejada, Member, Arlington County Board, Arlington, VA; and Ms. Courtney Tierney, Director, Prince William (VA) Area Agency on Aging.

**Major Findings:**

1. Generally the reports received by the HSPSPC have received high marks for quality.

1. *A majority of those interviewed expressed concern that the Committee does not spend enough time discussing the issues raised by these reports, trying to identify useful strategies, and then following up to see if the recommended actions are being implemented and producing desired results.*

1. Few of the items presented to the Committee were “actionable” – i.e., were preceded by staff work that teed up for committee consideration possible options and/or proposed recommendations for board action.
2. The relatively small number of participants at Committee meetings – usually no more than 6-8 members -- appears to limit what the HSPSPC can accomplish. The large number of reports (and presenters) on various subjects that routinely come to the Committee also limit what the Committee can accomplish. Members from outlying areas would likely participate if allowed to join by video conference call.
3. The interviewees identified the following subject matters as high priority for the HSPSPC in 2015: Homelessness, Mental Health, and Affordable Housing. See Appendix 1.

**Recommendations:**

1. To encourage greater participation on the HSPSPC it would be helpful to: (i) Develop the presentations in ways that are more actionable – i.e., that include or are accompanied by options and/or proposed recommendations for the Committee to consider whether to endorse, modify or reject before forwarding to the Board of MWCOG; and (ii) Manage meetings and limit presentations to ensure that more time is allocated for discussion and deliberation by HSPSPC members on what to do about the reports received;
2. In developing options and possible recommended actions for the HSPSPC staff may wish to consider addressing the following question: Are there actions MWCOG could take that would: (i) be relevant to a regional perspective; (ii) make a difference; AND (iii) not be highly controversial?



**Appendix 1 – Recommended 2015 Priorities for MWCOG’s HSPSPC**

The following table reflects the issues or concerns recommended by the interviewees and the number of interviewees as warranting priority attention by the Committee in 2015 and the number of interviewees who listed that issue or concern as a high priority for the coming year:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Priority Issue or Concern** | **# of Interviewees Out of 10 Listing This Issue or Concern as a High Priority for 2015** | **Comments** |
| Affordable Housing/  Neighborhood  Gentrification | 5 | Particularly for low-income people, to enable economic development while keeping diverse populations and low income people in community. |
| Homelessness/Ending Chronic Homelessness on a Regional Basis | 5 | Including problem of tent cities on private lands and related property management and safety issues; |
| Mental Health | 5 | Including domestic violence across the region and prevention of mass shooting episodes; this is the subject that links human services and public safety |
| Public Health | 3 |  |
| Immigrant Integration/Assimilation | 3 | Need to provide better information, facilitate assimilation and better services, prevent fraud, assist unaccompanied immigrant minors, improve employment opportunities, etc. |
| Crime/Gangs | 3 | See also comment re mental health connection to domestic violence prevention |
| Foster Care & Adoption | 3 |  |
| Aging | 2 | Elder abuse, financial exploitation, adequacy of community based facilities and services; economic burden and stress on caregiver families of Alzheimer’s and dementia patients (Note: This may be considered part of the Mental Health concern by others). |
| Improving Police-Community Relations, Community Understanding of Public Safety Function | 2 | May need a day of town hall meetings across the region |
| Region Forward | 2 | It ties into everything we do. It needs a separate focus, but also needs to be connected to all of these Human Services and Public Safety reports. |
| Unemployment,  Under employment,  Workforce development | 2 | Focus would be on aiding economically vulnerable portion of populations and addressing achievement gaps |
| At risk youth | 1 |  |
| Community Based Services | 1 | Need to cross programmatic silos to look at inadequacy of community-based services and facilities for youth in need of treatment, aging (dementia/Alzheimer’s), people with disabilities, etc. in lieu of more costly residential treatment facilities. |
| Comprehensive Early Education/Parent Preparation | 1 | Because these services are essential if we are to effectively address all the other issues that are the responsibility of the HSPSPC |
| Healthy Lifestyles/  Combatting Obesity | 1 | Including consideration of socio-economic determinants of chronic disease, changing built environment to facilitate exercise, better nutrition (walkable communities, bike paths, etc.) |
| Homeland Security | 1 |  |