**Rural Housing Coalition**

**Meeting Minutes from January 19, 2016**

Attendance: Peggy Hakala and Ashley Kanuscak-Bolton Refuge, Peggy Kneifl-Western Dairyland Head Start, Lori Peterson-Salvation Army, Mary Anderson Trempealeau Co DHS, Jaclyn Bechel, Rural Development, Pastor Eric Bakken: Evangelical Lutheran Church, Jeanne Semb and Suzanne Marsolek-Western Dairyland Homeless Shelter Program.

Jeanne Semb Called the meeting to order. Introductions were made.

Agency Updates: Lori Peterson from Salvation Army spoke about the Kettle Campaign they did through the holidays. Mary Anderson is the Salvation Contact for Trempealeau County. She has been busy with requests.

Peggy Kneifl from Head Start reports they have a percentage of their children defined as homeless through the McKinny Vinto act. They provide services to them.

Jaclyn from Rural Development has a housing program for low income people with no down payment to purchase a home. They do a credit check. They also have a Home Repair and Grant Program for customers over 62 years. People under 62 years are eligible for a 1% loan for home repairs.

Peggy Hakala from Bolton Refuge reports their Black River office has closed and they are in Merrillan now but still serving Jackson County. They plan to do more marketing. Ashley Kanuscak is the new DV Advocate and working part-time now but they hope she will be full time in a few months. They have a Transitional Living unit open but the rules for placement have narrowed.

Pastor Eric Bakken told the group about a warming center they have been discussing in Jackson County. They did a comprehensive evaluation and found homelessness and poverty were the biggest need in Jackson County. They are looking into Community grants to help with this process.

Suzanne Marsolek from Western Dairyland Homeless Shelter Program has shelters in Jackson, Buffalo and Trempealeau Counties. There are openings. They also have rental assistance for anyone that meets the homeless definition and income level

Point In Time Survey: The PIT will be held on Wednesday January 27, 2016 from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. Suzanne Marsolek will be coordinating volunteers in Trempealeau County and Bolton Refuge will be coordinating in Jackson and Buffalo Counties. We discussed the current volunteers for each county and what needs to be covered. We will put out an email for all COC members, WD staff and other community members that would like to volunteer to do the count. Jeanne Semb is the lead and will be collecting all surveys and inputting the information. After the meeting we met to determine what areas in each county need to be covered and what volunteers are available to cover what areas.

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State COC Updates: Jeanne provided an update on new rules and regulations regarding the Point in Time and the definition of homelessness and chronically homeless. The state committee is in the process of revising the bi-laws and implementing a coordinated entry assessment system for all counties. This will make it easier for customers to access the RRH program. This will have more of an impact in urban areas since the lower counties have limited homeless resources.

The next Rural Housing Coalition meeting is scheduled for April 19, 2016 at 1 p.m. at Western Dairyland in Independence, WI.

Prepared by: Suzanne Marsolek