

Testimony to House General

Rick DeAngelis, Good Samaritan Haven

March 26, 2020

Good morning, I'm Rick DeAngelis the Executive Director of the Good Samaritan Haven . We operate 2 year round shelters and 2 winter emergency shelters for a total of 77 beds during the cold weather months. Before I update you on how we've been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and address our concerns and needs I want to provide you with some relevant professional background information about myself.

I have been the full time Executive Director for Good Sam for less than two weeks so it has been quite a ride. However, I have worked in affordable housing for over 30 years beginning with the Pine Street in Boston in 1982, Pine Street is Bostons largest provider of homeless services and shelters.

In 1987, I became CVCLT now Downstreet Housing's first Executive Director and held that post for 6 years. In 1993, I joined the staff of VHCB and had the privilege of working with Gus, Jen and the fantastic team there until taking the Good Sam position. For many of those years at VHCB, I was the point person on service supported housing and recently served on the Legislative Study Committee on Specialized Housing Vouchers. So I have some familiarity with this world.

Of course nothing could have prepared one for the last 3 weeks at Good Samaritan Haven. Although we are an underfunded service organization managing a difficult emergency shelter system, my staff has worked almost around the clock to prepare, organize and implement safety protocols at the shelters and then move all of our shelter guests to the Econolodge this past Sunday. My staff is committed and compassionate - I am so proud to work with them.

I also want to note that we are imbedded in and being supported by an Incident Command Structure involving many partners and headed by Sue Minter, Eileen Peltier and Joan Marie Misk. I have included a chart representing that structure.

So how's it going at the Econolodge – last night I walked up there and visited with our staff and asked them to rate how its going on a scale of 1-10 and the average

was 7.5. Not bad under the circumstances. I won't get into details about any issues there unless you want to ask me.

My immediate needs for keeping this all together and keeping everybody – guest, staff and community safe are being addressed by the ICS. I have two sets of longer term concerns.

The first has to do with covering Good Sam's back so that we can continue our mission on another day. I am spending money as I need to protect life and health . I know there will be a grant agreement with the state and possibly some FEMA money but I want to flag this issue and have some TA to make sure we are made whole.

Longer Term, like you I am very concerned about the economic trauma that is and will be experienced by lower income people. I am expecting that we will have more homeless and many more near homeless. I implore you to try to find some financial capacity to continue funding for our core funding programs like VHCB so that new housing and service responses can be developed. I know that Good Sam needs to rebuild the emergency shelter system in Central Vermont for individuals it is not a sustainable or particularly effective system. That was clear to me before COVID-19.

Thank you and I'm glad to field any questions.