



WESTSIDE CITIES

- BEVERLY HILLS
- CULVER CITY
- LOS ANGELES
- SANTA MONICA
- WEST HOLLYWOOD

Homeless Issues Committee Meeting Notes

April 19, 2007 12:30 p.m.

Santa Monica Main Library

Staff Meeting Room, 2nd Floor

601 Santa Monica Blvd., Santa Monica, CA

Meeting Notes

The Meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Carol Gross at 12:45 PM

I. Report on USCIH Annual Summit March 7-8, 2007 (City of Santa Monica)

Julie Rusk reported that Mayor Bloom, Council Member McKeown and Julie Rusk attended the USCIH Annual Summit March 7-8, 2007. Los Angeles City and County representatives were also in attendance. There were informative sessions on homeless issues around the country as well as a presentation on the UK Rough Sleep Initiative that deals with chronic homelessness due to chronic mental health problems and other factors.

II. Update on CARES ; West Los Angeles VA Proposal for Homeless Vets Therapeutic Housing (County of Los Angeles; City of Los Angeles and City of Santa Monica)

Kate Vernez advised that the CARES project is not concluded, and that Councilman Rosendahl's office is taking the next step by assessing surrounding community reaction and the best process to communicate the project to the community and will continue to work with LA County and congressional supporters. It was noted that although there is a great deal of congressional support to assist homeless veterans, crossing party lines can be a problem in supporting a specific proposal.

Co-Chair Bloom commented this is an example of the lack of ability to regionally coordinate at the federal level.

There was consensus to continue to work with Congressman Waxman, Supervisor Yaroslavsky and all other stakeholders on Homeless Veterans Therapeutic Housing.

Tony Reinis (New Directions, Inc.) commented on a related and off-agenda item: a project proposing to serve mostly veterans on the Sepulveda Veterans Administration campus. Toni Reinis asked for a support letter from the COG for this project which is experiencing opposition from local homeowners and the area's U.S. Representative – Brad Sherman. Co-Chair Gross noted such a letter would have to go through each member city's approval process. Co-Chair Gross asked that the Committee be kept informed of the progress of the project.

III. Status of Efforts to Provide Year Round Emergency Shelter for the Westside (City of Los Angeles)

Due to schedule conflicts of the presenters, this item was continued to the Committee meeting in June at the advance request of Flora Gil Krisiloff and others.

IV. Follow up to Discussion On 2/15 Meeting: Data Collection and Compilation For Consistent and Accurate Information Regarding Where Homeless Clients Are Coming From (City of Santa Monica)

Stacy Rowe discussed possible efforts to coordinate data collection and compilation by service providers and first responders in Westside cities to better ascertain the migration patterns of homeless individuals. She noted that data collection is a complex process, and this is especially true for first responders since this isn't the primary focus of their interaction with homeless individuals. Stacy asked for input from other jurisdictions' first responders concerning what data is being collected in order to pursue the possibility of standardizing data collection across jurisdictions. She suggested that in social service context, as many as 10 questions are needed to assess truly assess the geographic history of each homeless client, but first responders/service providers don't have the time or inclination to ask that many questions, so data collection needs to be streamlined.

In addition to migration patterns, the data collected from first responders could also be used for local cities (or the COG) to do a study of the time first responders spend responding to calls involving homeless individuals, and derive the cost of those services.

Councilman McKeown commented on the need for consensus on what the information will be used for in order to determine the best questions to ask. Co-Chair Gross noted the need for collection of consistent information.

Julie Rusk commented that how jurisdictions use limited resources is another overlay to the data collection issue.

Co-Chair Bloom asked whether, in the interest of uniformity, a sampling of the homeless could be identified and interviewed in order to obtain more detailed information; could the COG coordinate this effort for each member City?.

Co-Chair Gross suggested hospital emergency rooms could be asked to gather similar data on homeless individuals.

By consensus it was decided to invite first responders to the next meeting. Input from member cities first responders about what data they are currently collecting is to be agendaized for the Committee meeting in June.

Mrs. Vernez advised that she was making a note to request the Deputy Chiefs to participate with the Committee again.

V. Report on Results of County, City and LAHSA Delegation Trip to Washington D.C. in March (County of Los Angeles)

Rebecca Isaacs, LAHSA) reported on the results of the County, City and LAHSA delegations trip to Washington, D.C. in March. She noted that she, Flora Gil Krisiloff and Leslie Wise were among those on this trip. She advised that the delegation briefed Los Angeles County congressional representatives on homelessness in the County. She said it was a good timing for lobbying and that the new congressional committee members and their staff were interested in the information presented. The briefing resulted in an agreement on a set of legislative goals and talking points. Ms. Rowe offered to send out documents to the Committee members and interested parties.

VI. Report on LA and Santa Monica Chambers of Commerce Meetings in March (City of Santa Monica and City of Los Angeles)

Samantha O'Neil (Santa Monica Chamber) reported on the Los Angeles and Santa Monica Chambers of Commerce meetings in March. Both cities were represented and much coordination took place.

Co-Chair Bloom advised that he agreed to attend on the condition that homelessness was added to the agenda. This subject was discussed in a focused way only by elected officials. He added that we need to work on refocusing public attention on homelessness.

Mrs. Vernez added that perhaps public interest can be built on concern for the needs of homeless veterans.

It was noted that a similar meeting will be held in Sacramento.

VII. Report on March 1 Meeting of New Homeless Services and Housing Development Subcommittee of the League (Santa Monica)

Kate Vernez reported on the March 1 meeting of the new Homeless Services and Housing Development Subcommittee of the League. The City of Santa Monica and the League came together to discuss the goal of alternatives to SB2 (Cedillo), to change the tone of the debate from mandates to incentives.

Council Member McKeown asked whether the COG member cities would take such a position? Co-Chair Bloom advised that the League has not made recommendations to cities on this matter. The League is reaching out to find the best approach.

It was noted that Santa Monica has three objectives:

1. A 2-1 credit to rehab homeless shelters as the current Regional Housing Needs Assessment gives credit only for new construction;
2. A 0-25% financing tool via redevelopment; and
3. A Pilot project: direct housing vouchers to landlords to house the homeless.

These policies are expected to be addressed at the April 24, 2007 Santa Monica City Council meeting. Santa Monica staff is recommending a work-with-the-author position on alternatives to SB2.

The League's selection process for the new Subcommittee was the subject of additional discussion. This Subcommittee to advise policy makers was constituted by invitation of Bill Higgins (League). Co-Chair Gross and Council Member McKeown asked questions about the selection process: if the Subcommittee is purporting to represent the cities of the League, opportunities to serve should follow the usual League practice of an open application process.

Co-Chair Bloom commented that the Subcommittee is brainstorming to come up with suggestions.

There was consensus to advise the WSCCOG Governing Board of the COG Homeless Issues Committee interest in advising the League of the COG's interest in policy discussions concerning the new Homeless Services and Housing Development

Subcommittee of the League, especially concerning needed clarity on membership selection processes.

VIII. Regional Coordination and Advocacy: Discussion of strategies, action steps on program coordination and advocacy efforts; report on Prop 63 LA County Allocation and Westside Allocation; Initiation of Discussions with Administrators at the West LA VA Regarding Enhancement of Programs and Services for Homeless Veterans Region Wide and on the West LA VA Campus.

Subjects under this agenda heading were addressed as part of the discussion of other agenda items.

IX. Identification of Additional Strategies: Homeless Community Court, State/Federal legislative/advocacy efforts including Senator Cedillo's Package of Homeless Measures.

Julie Rusk reported on the Homeless Community Court which has had three sessions, beginning with 8 and increasing to 23 homeless individuals before the judge at the third session. She noted that the court is off to a good start and momentum is building.

X. Next Steps: Future Agenda and Action Items Identification

No additional agenda or action items were identified, however, Co-Chair Gross commented that the Committee needs to hear from all WSCCOG member cities and encouraged attendance and participation in all future meetings.

XI. Public Comment RE Items Not On the Agenda

Co-Chair Bloom recognized Rocco Anderson, self-described homeless individual in Santa Monica since January 2007. Mr. Anderson opined "there were some blind spots in assessing causes." Some homeless have rejected societal values; veterans have been changed by their experiences; some don't want some of the housing if it means they have to compromise their values. He also added that housing the homeless won't be solved from current infrastructure which is too expensive for the members needing housing.

XII. Adjournment

Co-Chair Bloom adjourned the meeting at 2:05 P. The next meeting is scheduled for June 21, 2007.

Meeting Attendance:

Richard Bloom Co-Chair, Mayor City of Santa Monica
Carol Gross Co Chair, Council Member, City of Santa Monica
Joan Kassan Assistant to the Executive Director
Beverly Hills: Maria Rychlicki
Culver City: Shelly Wolfberg, Armando Abrego
Santa Monica: Council Member Kevin McKeown, Kate Vernez, Stacy Rowe, Julie Rusk
West Hollywood: Daphne Dennis

Other Attendees: Rebecca Isaacs, LAHSA; Samantha O'Neil, SM Chamber; Toni Reinis, New Directions; Rocco Anderson, Humanity