



WESTSIDE CITIES

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

Homeless Issues Committee Meeting
June 21, 2007 12:30 PM
Santa Monica Main Library
Staff Meeting Room, 2nd Floor
601 Santa Monica Blvd., Santa Monica, CA

Meeting Notes

The meeting was called to order at 12:40 PM by Co-Chair and Vice Mayor Carol Gross.

Vice Mayor Gross welcomed all to the meeting, extended apologies from Mayor Richard Bloom who was unable to attend the Committee meeting, and started round the room introductions.

I. Continued Discussion RE Data Collection for Consistent and Accurate Information Regarding Where Homeless Clients Are Coming From: Input from First Responders

To start the dialogue, Kate Vernez from the City of Santa Monica provided background regarding the agenda item.

Lt. Al Venegas, Santa Monica Police Department, gave an overview of the Police Department's efforts along with the Human Services Department. They developed a number of questions to collect the necessary data. In his opinion the data did not identify any trends. He stated his belief that questions can be refined and a technique on how to ask the question would better serve the officers.

Captain Scott Bixby presented information from the City of Culver City. He stated that his department believes it should not be the role of officers to collect data. Rather, that the outreach team from St. Joseph's Center is better equipped to gather this information. Captain Bixby also stated that due to limited resources, his department could not respond to the issues City of Santa Monica does. He advised that street officers use field interview cards and ask standard questions.

Sergeant Rex McEvoy stated that the City of Beverly Hills is not asking any questions other than the standard questions asked of any individual they come in contact with. His department is a little hesitant in asking different questions due to being perceived as profiling. They use PATH as their outreach team. He believes that the questions should be responded to voluntarily and they should focus on "*Do you want to get off the street*" as opposed to "*where do you come from*".

Safiya Jones, City of Los Angeles District XI, Councilmember Bill Rosenthal's office, apologized for LAPD not attending. They were invited but were unable to attend because of an emergency response.

Captain Darryl Wells from the Culver City Fire Department agreed with the Culver City Police Department regarding potential questions regarding profiling and stated his department's position that the role of first responders primary is to provide aid to the victim as opposed to collecting data. He noted that CCFD averages 10 calls per month dealing with homeless individuals. More frequent calls come in when the Cold Weather Shelter is open, November through January.

Lt. Venegas pointed out that the data collected by Santa Monica officers was de-identified, names were not attached to the data nor even requested in the survey process.

Captain Wells also noted that most patients were transported to Brotman Hospital. Some of those patients voluntarily checked themselves into the psychiatric urgent care facility run by Exodus. Fire Dept and Police Dept are not permitted to take patients directly to Exodus. He further explained the Exodus urgent care facility that has freed up space for other emergencies.

Councilmember Kevin McKeown from the City of Santa Monica reminded the first responders that the reason for gathering the data was to help determine where best to put the resources. He also made the statement that phrasing questions in the right manner is necessary to get the accurate/useful information and asked if there were any coordinating efforts and/or guidelines restricting asking the questions.

Lt. Venegas spoke about Santa Monica's efforts to coordinate with LAPD. He stated that there has been some impact in Santa Monica from the Safer Streets Initiative in downtown Los Angeles, however being surrounded on three sides by the city of Los Angeles, we expect to see individuals coming from there. He stated his strong belief that that resources need to be provided to proven service providers; that assertive case management is necessary to do whatever it takes to solve the issues; and that service providers should have a better understanding of goals and objectives.

Vice Mayor Carol Gross, stated that she has spoken with both the Culver City Police and Fire Chief s and that neither is supportive of the proposed questions to be asked of the homeless.

Primo De Jesus, Santa Monica resident and former homeless individual in Santa Monica, went through homeless system and does not believe it is user friendly. Case management is 50% successful at best. They do not empower or educate service providers.

Captain Scott Bixby, Culver City Police Department, stated that a service call is not the ideal time to make contact with the individual. Santa Monica PD responds in a different method with different resources thus creating a different environment for a homeless individual to respond.

Kate Vernez, City of Santa Monica, asked if there were any success stories. How or what did/could Police and Fire do to make a homeless person look for services.

Julie Rusk, City of Santa Monica reminded the Committee that part of the reason for collecting data on where people come from is have better data to make the case that people become homeless from many different locations – and therefore, all communities need to help provide housing and service solutions to homelessness.

George Garrigues, Palms Neighborhood Council said he did not believe first responders should not be gathering information, and that COG should pay for a study.

Carol Gross wrapped up the conversation thanking all for their attendance and participation. She also noted that if LAPD wishes to comment on these issues at the future meeting, Committee would welcome their input.

II. General Announcements and Program Updates

A. Board Meeting of 5/31

Vice Mayor Gross provided a synopsis of actions/discussions at the WSCCOG Governing Board Meeting on 5/30/07.

B. Year-round Emergency Shelter for the Westside

Jennifer Ma-Phan from the City of Los Angeles stated that a potential site had been selected: The acquisition process had not been started. She stated that the City of LA is currently focusing on funding, function, partnering with the County and gathering local support. She noted a recent meeting with the Westside Shelter and Hunger Coalition.

C. CARES; West Los Angeles VA Proposal for Homeless Vets Therapeutic Housing Status of Efforts to Provide Year Round Emergency Shelter for Families to be located in Culver City

Kate Vernez stated that one more CARES meeting needs to be held which may be scheduled by early fall. Congressman Waxman and Board of Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky are in contact with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to remind them the Secretary has the authority to create the homeless vets therapeutic housing at the West Los Angeles VA. Congressman Waxman and Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky's staff will continue to take the lead on moving this project forward and will develop a timeline for next steps.

D. Homeless Services and Housing Development Subcommittee of the League

Kate Vernez reported that the League is reaching out to Vice Mayor Gross and other area elected officials. The effort is to amend SB2(Cedillo). Vice Mayor Gross stated that she has spoken to League representatives and is waiting for follow-up information.

E. Prop 63 LA County Allocation and Westside Allocation

The item was continued for an update at a future meeting.

F. 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

The item was continued for an update at a future meeting.

G. Psychiatric Urgent Care Facility at Brotman Hospital, Culver City

Armando Abrego, City of Culver City shared information provided by Sandy Mills from the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. Sandy provided at a recent meeting of the Westside Shelter and Hunger Coalition: Kim Bailey is the new program Administrator and is scheduled to give a presentation to the Culver City homelessness Ad Hoc Committee on June 26, 2007.

H. Community Court

Julie Rusk, City of Santa Monica provided a handout dated June 12, 2007 and titled *Santa Monica Homeless Community Court Status Report* and reviewed program success and statistics to date included in the Report.

III. Public Comment RE Items Not On the Agenda

Yvonne Raphael thanked Julie Rusk of Santa Monica for the efforts of the Homeless Community Court. She suggested two things needing improvement: 1) streamline the process; and 2) meet with homeless people more regularly.

Jim Farrell addressed the Committee. He stated he wants to be more involved as a family member of his may become homeless. He noted that many homeless have learning disability issues and he believes the homeless can improve by some type of exercise class and a class on memory techniques. He also believes the Vets Association should reach out to the homeless vets to create a buddy system so they can connect with each other.

Primo DeJesus stated that people should add value to homeless individuals. He also noted he believes that Church organizations need to be more involved.

Rocco Anderson identified himself as a homeless individual. He said he doesn't understand the question "where do you come from". The question should be "where do you want to be". He also said that integrating into current programs and homeless systems is difficult because of all the rules that are being mandated.

A flier was distributed announcing the "Celebrating Success 12th Annual Awards Breakfast" being hosted by the Westside Shelter and Hunger Coalition on Fr., October 12, 2007 at 7:30 AM at the Fairmont Miramar Hotel in Santa Monica. All interested Committee members and others are encouraged to attend.

IV. Adjourn

Vice Mayor Gross thanked all for their attendance and adjourned the meeting at 1:45 pm.

Meeting Attendance:

Carol Gross Committee Co Chair, Culver City Council Member, and COG Alternate
Kevin McKeown Council Member, City of Santa Monica, and COG Alternate

Beverly Hills: Julie Kahn; Rex McEvoy BHPD
Culver City: Armando Abrego; Scott Bixby CCPD; Daryl Wells CCFD
Los Angeles: Jennifer Ma-Pham CD11; Safiya Jones CD11
Santa Monica: Ed Edelman, Kate Vernez, Stacy Rowe, Julie Rusk, Al Venegas SMPD
West Hollywood: Daphne Dennis

Other Attendees: Samantha O'Neil, SM Chamber; Rocco Anderson; George Garrigues, Palms
Neighborhood Council; Primo DeJesus, Advocate; Yvonne Raphael; Jim Farrell,
OC NAMI/LDA

Notes Prepared By: Armando Abrego, Senior and Social Services Manager, City of Culver City