

City of Oxnard
Commission on Homelessness
March 1, 2010
Business Meeting Minutes

Commissioners in Attendance:

Chairwoman Lauterbach
Commissioner Maria Collier
Commissioner Jennifer Gomez
Commissioner Carolyn Hedgepeth
Commissioner Andrea Houchin
Commissioner Al Jones
Commissioner Alice Madrid
Commissioner Kate Mills
Commissioner Peggy Rivera
Commissioner Marlen Torres

Absent:

Commissioner Uriah Glynn

City Staff in Attendance:

Bill Wilkins, Housing Director
Will Reed, Homeless Program Coordinator

Others in Attendance:

Mrs. Cathy Brudnicki – Ventura County Homeless and Housing Coalition
Mrs. Joan Sotiros – Society of St. Vincent de Paul
Ms. Eileen Tracy

Meeting was brought to order by Chairwoman Lauterbach at 3:35 PM

- 1) Approval of February 6, 2010 Minutes
 - a. Motioned by Commissioner Gomez, Second by Commissioner Rivera approved by all.
- 2) Public Comments
None
- 3) Staff Report
 - a. Introduction of newly appointed Commissioners present:
 - i. Commissioner Carolyn Hedgepeth: commented that she brings her expertise in the field of public relations to the Commission and wants to be an advocate for homeless persons by directing them to the appropriate resources.
 - ii. Commissioner Jennifer Gomez: Works for Pacific Clinics and runs the Transition Aged Youth Center. She serves on numerous boards

and committees throughout the County of Ventura and is excited about being on the Commission.

- iii. Andrea Houchin: is homeless and brings to the Commission the aspect of other homeless individuals.
- iv. Maria Collier: former member and one-time Chair of the Commission and is very pleased to be back with the group. She works at Interface, a Domestic Violence program.

- b. Winter Warming Shelter Update – Mrs. Joan Sotiros, Society of St. Vincent de Paul: The Shelter numbers are slightly down this year. At this point last year there were 475 unduplicated, registered clients; this year so far there are 445. There is no definite reason in the drop off in attendance, but the fact that there are many individuals in attendance that were also in attendance last year and in other previous years says that not enough is being done to adequately address the issue of homelessness. The program was originally scheduled to be in Oxnard this year, but scheduling conflicts with the National Guard Armory forced the program to be moved to Ventura. SSVdP also received funds to run the operation of the program until March 31, 2010. Some of the data shared about the program include: 10 families – 13 children with single fathers (38%), 44% or 194 individuals of the shelter are Ventura residents, while 39% or 167 are residents of the City of Oxnard; 335 men, 95 women,, 36% are homeless because they lost a job, 66% or 221 say they have no disability, while 5% or 19 claim to have an illness; 10% are employed, 90% unemployed 172 are receiving public aid, and 45% say they received some type of psychiatric assistance in the past 3 years. 252 of this year's clients were clients at the Shelter in 2009. 36% are homeless due to loss of employment, 12% simply cannot afford a place, and 10% were recently released from prison. 84% or 337 clients consider Ventura County to be their home, and 6% or 28 are U.S. Veterans. Finally, because of some additional funds received, the Shelter will be open until March 31st.
- c. Director's Report – Bill Wilkins: Welcome new Commissioners. Here is a brief overview of what the City's Housing Department offers.

- i. Mobile Home Rent Control – we control the rent for mobile home spaces in all 22-23 mobile home parks in the city. Karl Lawson heads this division. He also serves as the City's Hearing Officer.
- ii. Affordable Housing Program – we provide affordable loans/grants for folks living in mobile homes for repairs, down payment assistance for first time home buyers. The biggest down payment assistance program is for the River Park area. We received \$3 million from the State of California Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) under its Building Equity and Growth In Neighborhoods (BEGIN) program to provide first time home buyers with up to \$30,000 in down payment assistance. The

problem is that this is a sliding scale program and it is not working for the area. We will be making a formal request to the State HCD Office to reassign the funds to another project because it is not working for the current specified location.

- iii. Section 8 program – we have 1659 vouchers and they are all in utilization. We have run out of funds some time ago for this program because we are more than 100 percent leased up. There are more than 2,300 families on the waiting list.
- iv. Public Housing – we have 760 units of housing which are always 100 percent leased. There is currently one vacant unit and a family has already been approved for its lease. There are more than 1,800 families on the waiting list for public housing. This is consistent with the national average as it represents an approximately 4-5 year wait as with the Section 8 Program.
- v. Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) – a pot of stimulus monies (\$2 million) received earmarked to deal with foreclosed homes in the area. We are trying to acquire properties at an affordable rate and we currently have six single family homes in escrow. We hope to be able refurbish these units by the end of April 2010 and complete the sales of these units between May and August of this year. We will be running this program through 2012 and our hope is to acquire at least a four-unit building at the end of the program. Our desire with the purchase of a building is to provide some type of transitional housing or rapid re-housing program. If we do not obligate all the funds by 2013 HUD will recapture whatever is not obligated. Therefore it is the intention of the City's Housing Department to locate a piece of real estate that will allow for some type of transitional housing use and to then partner with a non-profit service provider to operate a program.
- vi. We are also trying to diversify our portfolio – meaning we are looking to begin developing other types of housing. We are looking at seven potential projects. One is at Cuesta del Mar. We are hoping to break ground on this in late August/early September of this year. These will not be public housing or Section 8. We are also looking at a joint venture with a local developer to complete a 72-unit project. We will be partners in the project, utilizing our non-profit, Las Cortes. This is four years out. The desire is to have some form of assisted living in this project.
- vii. Housing Element: the Planning Department is very close to bringing the item before City Council. They are looking to have another meeting soon, maybe in April to further hash out the specifics. As soon as the date is released Will is going to make the information available.

- 4) The Soloist Project: It was previously mentioned at an earlier meeting by Ms. Jennifer Gomez that this project would be taking place. The Soloist Project will

be a showing of the movie, *The Soloist*, at four locations throughout the city; South Oxnard Library in Spanish, Downtown Oxnard Library, St. Paul Baptist Church and the 5th Street Boys and Girls Club. The date is Thursday, May 6, 2010. The focus of the event is the kick off of our Educational Campaign, the Many Faces of Homelessness. A Save the Date card will be going out early March and we will be in need of volunteers, refreshments and other items. Collaborating organizations for this project are National Alliance on Mental Illness (N.A.M.I.), Ventura County Behavioral Health, Pacific Clinics, Boys and Girls Club and the City of Oxnard. On the evening of the event doors will open at 5:30 PM and we plan on starting the program at each location at 6 PM. We will be inviting elected officials to attend and have words. More details will be provided at the April meeting. We would like at least one Commissioner at each location volunteering at the resource tables. We will also be utilizing the previously titled theme for our Educational Campaign.: The Many Faces of Homelessness.

5) New Business

- a. Commissioner Rivera provided an update on the attendance of the City Planning Department's Housing Element Update. No changes were made, and another meeting will be scheduled at a later date. Commissioner Rivera voiced the concerns of the Commission with regards to the need to obtain a Special Use Permit for Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing service providers. She simply stated that a mandate to require service providers to obtain a Special Use Permit would only allow community members to create unreasonable roadblocks to potential projects.
- b. The Mariachi Brunch Fundraiser with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is put on hold until further notice.
- c. Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re Housing (HPRP) update – Will Reed: Ventura County Homeless Services Agency (VCHSA) is the sub grantee for both the City of Oxnard and the County of Ventura. VCHSA is having minor issues with qualifying households. Some of the issues are families are too far in debt, but refuse to change/modify their lifestyles to benefit from the assistance of the program. Another issue is that the program guidelines are not consistent with other HUD programs. Other HUD programs will provide assistance to a household even if there is an undocumented person or persons in the home. With the HPRP if anyone in the household is undocumented the household automatically does not qualify. Finally, the income criteria also present a small barrier. The current qualification of income is that a household cannot be more than 50 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), which is roughly \$47,000.

6) Meeting Adjourned: 5:20 PM