

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE
TORRANCE SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Social Services Commission convened in a regular session at 6:03 p.m. on Monday, May 26, 2016, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Chiota, Mattucci, Ragins, Scotto, and Chairperson Gow

Absent: Commissioners See (resigned), Svolos

Also Present: Management Associate Hoang, Deputy City Attorney Sarigumba, and Management Associate Megerdichian

MOTION: Commissioner Chiota moved to approve the excused absence of Commissioner Svolos; motion was seconded by Commissioner Ragins. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote. (Absent Commissioner Svolos)

3. FLAG SALUTE

The pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Scotto.

4. REPORT FROM STAFF ON POSTING OF AGENDA

Management Associate Megerdichian stated that the agenda for the Social Services Commission was posted on the Public Notice Board on May 23, 2016.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1

Georgia Perkins stated that there were many seniors who were homeless and living in their cars, as they could not afford a place to live.

In response to a question from Chairperson Gow and with concurrence from the Commission, Management Associate Hoang stated that staff would research to determine whether people living in their cars had been included in the homeless count.

Management Associate Hoang announced that Commissioner See had submitted her resignation from the Commission to the City Council and City Clerk as of May 26, 2016 and staff and the members of Commission had been notified of her resignation.

6. APPROVE COMMISSION MINUTES: APRIL 26, 2016

Commissioner Ragins stated that the minutes, specifically on page 4 and the top of page 5, did not clearly reflect his objections to some aspects of the rules that staff had presented on the Brown Act.

Management Associate Hoang requested that the Recording Secretary revise the minutes to better reflect Commissioner Ragins' statements and the perspective for his position.

Management Associate Hoang requested that the minutes of the Commission meeting of May 26, 2016, be removed from consideration at this meeting and be brought forward to the next meeting of the Commission, with the requested amendments.

7. ACCEPT AND FILE PRESENTATIONS AND PROVIDE DIRECTION TO STAFF ON ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUESTED BY THE COMMISSION

Management Associate Megerdichian stated that the presentations were from community organizations that had either been unable to attend the March or April Commission meetings or organizations specifically requested by the Commission.

Melinda Smith, Torrance Unified School District (TUSD), Special Education Program Specialist stated that she had worked for the school district for 14 years and explained that her background was in early childhood special education and she was a Board certified Behavior Analyst. She stated that she would present information on the referral process and qualifying for special education and noted that the purpose of special education, was to supplement the regular education program.

- **POPULATION SERVED:** ages 3 to 22
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:** Through TUSD, partner with the Los Angeles (LA) County Office of Education for assessments
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**
 - Opportunities:**
 - Free and Appropriate Public Education Act (FAPE)
 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA)
 - Response to Intervention (RTI) and Student Specific Training (SSI)
 - Must meet one of 13 Special Education Eligibilities-usually determined by school psychologist
 - Referrals can come from many sources: parents, community, teachers
 - Develop Individual Education Plan (IEP) with team: assessments, goals, services, placement then 1-year review and 3-year comprehensive re-evaluation
 - Section 504 plan - minor accommodations
 - Students, dedicated staff, Parent and community support
 - Challenges:**
 - Least Restricted Environment (LRE)
 - Full assessments must be done in all areas
 - 2869 TUSD students out of 23,730 are eligible for special education, of those 2645 attend programs in TUSD, 83 LA County programs, 141 in non-public schools or residential treatment centers
 - Need to provide services for students age 3-22 from underfunded state and Federal mandates
- **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITY TO BETTER SERVE POPULATIONS:**
 - Lobby the State and Federal Government to ensure funding
 - Support or develop afterschool programs and daycare for preschoolers of working parents
 - Provide partnerships with local businesses for job opportunities for youth ages 18-22 who are transitioning.
 - Provide affordable public transportation to the job sites
 - Develop focus groups for support at a smaller level

In response to a question from Commissioner Mattucci, Ms. Smith explained that the special education programs were not based on income levels. She added that services were offered based on the level of the need and each student had their own IEP. She explained that both the parents and the district had legal rights regarding the services

being offered to the students, but she noted that the district did not usually have problems with parents declining services for a student that was severely impacted.

Responding to questions from Commissioner Ragins, Ms. Smith explained that the school district's responsibility was to develop educationally related goals and provide educationally related services, but she noted that there were students who also received medically based therapies. She stated that the district, with the parents' consent, could collaborate with the other agencies that were providing services for the students. She added that the district could not mandate that parents have their children use Harbor Regional Center (HRC) services, but she noted that many of the district's students were already clients of the HRC from an early age and transitioned to a district program when they began school. She stated that there was a district contact person that coordinated with foster youth and the homeless and noted that there was no distinction made between parent, foster parent, guardian or conservatorship by the district, as long as the individual had the authority for the student's educational rights.

In response to a question from Commissioner Ragins on what the impact had been on the students who had had special education students placed in their classrooms, Ms. Smith stated that she had not personally heard complaints, but noted that if there were complaints they would be directed to the School Site Administrators. She explained that there were supports in place, such as behavior intervention plans to minimize problems. She stated that she did not know what percentage of the budget was used for special education or whether in fact, the funds were taken from the general education budget.

There were no comments from the public.

Kerry Ryerson, Public Information Specialist, Harbor Regional Center (HRC) stated that she had distributed copies of the latest newsletter from the Center.

- **POPULATION SERVED:** People with intellectual and developmental disabilities, all ages. Needs range from mild to severe. Clients can be in the system for life.
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:**
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**
 - Challenges:**
 - 12,000 clients in assessment area (Harbor, Long Beach, South Bay, Southeast LA County area)
 - 300 staff - 170 are service coordinators who provide case management for clients, there is a need for bilingual coordinators
 - Staff includes: speech pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, early childhood specialists, early intervention specialists
 - Provide services for pregnant mothers at risk of having a child with a disability - physicians on staff (genetic specialist)
 - Clients have: cerebral palsy, autism, mental retardation, intellectual disabilities, other syndromes
 - Services are provided for free to clients, HRC receives State and some Federal funding
 - HRC provides case management portion and contracts providers to provide the services to the client
 - Group homes closing due to lack of funds
 - 37% to 39% of budget was for group homes for all ages – in the process of removing clients from the development centers
 - Many clients were on Medicare or Medi-Medi, did not have work insurance
 - Obama care had benefitted some of the clients

Opportunities:

- With early intervention, some children can reach normal milestones by age 3.
- 21 regional centers, HRC started in 1973
- Legislature recently approved funding bill
- Home Ownership for Personal Empowerment Program (HOPE) purchases and renovates properties with money provided by city or other funding sources to provide living spaces for clients.
- Career to College program
- Parent training classes
- Classes for parents and babies with provided services by early childhood specialists
- Specialists that can go to school site or work at the home
- **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITY TO BETTER SERVE POPULATIONS:**
 - Provide partnerships with local businesses/organizations for more jobs
 - Need to know availability of Section 8 housing in Torrance

In response to a question from Commissioner Chiota, Ms. Ryerson explained that HRC provided the funding for St. Andrew's Residential Programs (S.T.A.R.) group homes for clients. She noted that the group homes also did some of their own fundraising.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Mattucci, Ms. Ryerson stated that HRC was a private non-profit and noted that although there were mandated services to provide, each regional center might focus on providing for needs that were specific for their area. She added there were no income requirements for the mandated services, but noted that services were based on the diagnosis.

In response to a question from Commissioner Chiota, Ms. Ryerson stated that she believed that the HOPE Program did use some of the Los Angeles County funds that had been allocated to obtain housing for the homeless, but noted that they had not been successful in purchasing property in Torrance.

Commissioner Mattucci stated that he might be able to provide jobs for some HRC clients. Management Associate Megerdichian stated that she would compile HRC's wish list items, gather the contact information for the HRC staff and share the information with the Commission.

There were no comments from the public.

Kathy Sutton, Sensory Integration Education and Research Foundation, presented a video that explained the types of sensory processing disorders and sensory integration therapies. She noted that there were not enough professionals to treat the growing number of children with these types of disorders and there were difficulties in obtaining insurance to pay for the treatment.

- **POPULATION SERVED:** Children with sensory processing disorders (SPD)
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:** through Sensory Integration Education and Research Foundation
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

Challenges:

 - Not enough professionals for treat the growing number affected
 - Difficult to detect the problem- sometimes adults have not been diagnosed
 - Treatment was expensive
 - Hold "back to school" events to distribute school supplies to students and to allow parents to talk to therapists

- Offer workshops for parents and educators
- Set up occupational therapy for some students
- Funded by grants - difficult to find grants that specifically address the problem
- Create a treatment center
- Educate the public about the range of treatments

Opportunities:

- Workshops with Police and other organizations to educate them on identifying an individual with SPD
- Works with the HRC
- **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITY TO BETTER SERVE POPULATIONS:**
 - Need funding and donations for Christmas party for children and families
 - Need funding to be able to offer workshops in Torrance to educate the public on SPD

In response to a question from Commissioner Ragins, Ms. Sutton stated that even adults that had not been previously diagnosed with SPD, could be helped by receiving treatment.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Chiota, Ms. Sutton stated that she did not know the number of people in Torrance who were affected by SPDs, but she added that nationwide, the number had grown from 1 in 283 children to 1 in 40 children.

There were no comments from the public.

Lisa Powell, Department of Mental Health, stated that she was the supervisor of a Mobile Triage Team (MTT) that outreached to homeless adults in Service Area 8, which covered Long Beach, the Harbor area, San Pedro and the South Bay. She noted that the program had been operational for a year and had been funded for a three-year period under Senate Bill 82. She explained that the team consisted of: social workers, case managers and volunteers who went out into the community to outreach to the homeless individuals, with the goal of linking them to mental health services.

- **POPULATION SERVED:** Homeless adults
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:** Anyone can make a referral to the MTT
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

Challenges:

- Outreach in the community with homeless
- Provide housing, IDs and vital documents, general relief, link with a Department of Mental Health or a contracted Mental health provider
- Three phases of service: outreach to encampments and homeless, bring into case management services, complete questionnaire to enter person into database for coordinated entry system
- Once individual is matched with HUD, therapists work with individuals to help them make the transition
- Timing is a problem; when client is ready, access to resources are not always available
- The outreach is a long process.
- Availability of resources. Need: transportation, money, programs, shelters
- Pets are not allowed in the shelters.

Opportunities:

- 12 people were matched through the coordinated entry survey and were in the process of interviews with HUD

- Many of the volunteers had experience in the mental health system or had been homeless and were able to connect with the homeless individuals
- **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITY TO BETTER SERVE POPULATIONS:**
 - Need donations of granola bars, water bottles, toiletries
 - Need relationships with property management companies to help clients with subsidies find housing

In response to a question from Commissioner Chiota, Ms. Powell stated that there was only one team for Service Area 8. She added that she had access to the same services as Nancy Willcox of PATH.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Mattucci, Ms. Powell explained that her mobile team of case managers began by talking to the individual and getting to know them and noted that the clinical mental assessment was done at a later time when the client was ready to accept some services. She noted that the questionnaire was also completed at that time, to understand what housing and mental health options were open to the client. She added that if an individual had met certain criteria and was judged to be dangerous, she was LPS designated and so was able to initiate a hold or call the Department of Mental Health Psychiatric Mobile Response Team for an evaluation.

Ms. Powell explained that the MTT used both Department of Mental Health Section 8 housing vouchers as well as standard Section 8 vouchers, which were coordinated and matched by Harbor Interfaith through their coordinated entry system. She added that their clients were placed in a program called Shelter Plus Care that required them to maintain mental health services while receiving the subsidy.

In response to a question from Commissioner Ragins, Ms. Powell stated the homeless count of 78 in Torrance seemed low, but she noted that she did not see encampments in Torrance as she did in other cities. She added that there were many people living in their cars and campers. Ms. Powell requested that citizens call her team if they did see homeless people in Torrance, so that the team could evaluate and help those individuals.

Management Associate Megerdichian stated that staff would compile a wish list for staff to bring back to the next meeting.

The Commission concurred with requests to staff to report back to the Commission with: the most recent homeless count, information from TUSD on programs on homeless families, foster families and youth who were transitioning to adulthood.

Management Associate Hoang recommended that Chairperson Gow list his concern for accessibility to City services and information by the deaf as one of his goals for the long range work plan for the Commission.

MOTION: Commissioner Ragins moved to accept and file presentations and the recommendations to staff on additional information requested by the Commission; motion was seconded by Commissioner Chiota. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote. (Absent Commissioner Svolos)

8. REVIEW SNAPSHOT OF LOCAL AGENCIES WITH SOCIAL SERVICES RELATED DEPARTMENTS AND BOARDS

Management Associate Megerdichian presented a report that detailed information on Social Services departments in the cities of West Hollywood, Long Beach, Santa Monica and Hawthorne and highlighted the areas in: structure of the commission or board, budget, populations served, services offered and program management. She noted that the budgets of the cities' Social Services agencies ranged from \$4.5 million to \$120 million

and included associated departments with trained and dedicated staff. She summarized some of the current social services related provisions in the City of Torrance, such as Community Development Department's Assisted Housing Program, Community Services Department's Home Improvement Plan (HIP) and the City's Special Multi-Agency Response Team (SMART).

In response to a question from Commissioner Chiota, Management Associate Megerdichian described the process which the Community Services Department and the Parks and Recreation Commission used to oversee and administer the Non-Profit Social Services Agency Grant Program, which awarded \$20,000 annually to nonprofits either in Torrance or those that served residents in Torrance and stated that she would report back to the Commission with a list of previous recipients.

Management Associate Megerdichian explained that cities such as West Hollywood had been created with social services in mind and as such, provided or contracted with providers to deliver social services to the City and were funded to administer the contracts. She further explained that the West Hollywood Social Services Commission, together with their staff liaisons, helped to manage the contracts, heard from the contractors and the public to understand what changes needed to be made, and then forwarded on the recommendations to the City Council.

There was a discussion that 99% of sources of funding for the Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services came from Federal, State, County and private funds and involved a staff of 340 employees.

Management Associate Megerdichian stated that Torrance currently was not structured like any of the four cities in the report.

Chairperson Gow stated that he had attended a Santa Monica Social Services Commission meeting and presented a copy of the meeting agenda with attachments and the budget to staff. He noted that at the meeting there had been discussion of the latest homeless count.

There was a concurrence for staff to present snapshots of additional local agencies with Social Services related departments and boards.

Commissioner Chiota requested that page numbers be added to all pages in the agenda packet.

9. BEGIN DEVELOPING SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION LONG RANGE WORK PLAN FOR COUNCIL APPROVAL

Management Associate Hoang presented the recommendation from staff to the Commission to begin individually identifying target populations to serve, and goals and objectives for each population. He noted that the Torrance Municipal Code (TMC) section 13.20.070 (Powers and Duties of the Commission) identified that the Commission "would address issues of our veterans, homeless population, intellectually challenged adults and special needs children". He explained that TMC section 13.20.070 (c) listed the specific duties of the Commission. He added that now that the Commission had had presentations from various non-profits, community agencies and City departments serving or representing the targeted populations, staff recommended that the Commission begin the process of assembling their work plan by holding public workshops.

Management Associate Hoang requested, that in order for the first public workshop to provide structure for a meaningful discussion, that each Commissioner individually define which populations or subpopulations of each population they would like to address and goals and objectives for these populations and submit their responses to staff by

June 10, 2016. He noted that there might also be commonalities or intersections of the populations that the Commission may wish to examine. He explained that staff would then compile the individual responses and generate a report to be used at the June 23, 2016 Social Services Commission meeting as a starting point to begin the public workshop.

In response to a question from Commissioner Ragins, Management Associate Hoang stated that he thought it might be useful to look at the overlap in the needs of the four populations, as a means of helping to develop a work plan.

Management Associate Hoang stated that the Commissioners' responses should begin by addressing the four specific populations, as defined by the TMC, and then identify and prioritize the goals and objectives for each population. He noted that there was no specific format that was required and staff would do their best to organize the responses into a comparative format.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Chiota, Chairperson Gow noted that the Commission must first follow the instructions of the Council in determining the direction they wished to go and the populations they wished to serve, before determining how their plan would be implemented.

Deputy City Attorney Sarigumba stated that if members of the Commission felt that the Commission ought to be divided into sub Commissions to better serve particular populations, then those suggestions should be included in the responses that the Commissioners were sending to staff by email to both Management Associate Hoang and Management Associate Megerdichian by June 10, 2016. She added that the City Council was the only body that could make those type of changes.

Management Associate Hoang noted that by the July and August meeting the Commission would have had a chance to see each Commissioner's goals and objectives for each population and have a clearer idea of how the Commission might need to be structured.

There was a discussion of ad hoc committees and standing committees. Management Associate Hoang noted that the City Attorney recommended that all committee meetings, whether ad hoc or standing, be held as public meetings to conform with the Brown Act.

MOTION: Commissioner Mattucci moved to accept the recommendation of staff to begin developing the Social Services Commission Long Range Work Plan for Council approval; motion was seconded by Commissioner Scotto. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote. (Absent Commissioner Svolos)

10. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #2

Commissioner Chiota distributed copies of the California Veterans' Resource Book which he had received at Operation Yellow Ribbon as a member of the USO.

Commissioner Chiota requested an excused absence for the next meeting.

Commissioner Mattucci stated that he had met with Ted Jones, a local veteran and noted that staff was going to contact Mr. Jones for further information on his organization.

In response to a question from Commissioner Mattucci, Management Associate Hoang stated that staff would look into allowable methods which Commissioners or others could use to individually invite members of the public to the meetings.

Deputy City Attorney Sarigumba explained that the City limited many City departments from having Facebook pages, twitter accounts or other social media sites because they were public forums and there was the possibility of issues with the Brown

Act or free speech rights. She noted that it might be possible for the Commission to have some type of site, but it would have to be closely monitored and approved by the City Manager.

Commissioner Gow stated that he felt that it was important for the Commission to be a source of the information for the City and have a way to communicate with the public.

Deputy City Attorney Sarigumba stated that there might be better methods to communicate information than through social media, such as the City website, and added that staff would look into the issue. She noted that there could also be problems and cost considerations if staff members were required to maintain and update a site.

Chairperson Gow requested that the SPA 8 representative, Ashley Oh, be asked to come to a Commission meeting to speak on the homeless.

Chairperson Gow announced that there would be a candidates' forum on May 31 at the Katy Geissert Civic Center Library and a City Clerk election night on June 7 in the City Council Chambers. He added that the Torrance Democratic Club had a voter guide on their Facebook page.

Chairperson Gow stated that his mother, Torrance High, class of 1957, had been at the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:29 p.m., Commissioner Mattucci moved to adjourn the meeting to the regular meeting on Thursday, June 23, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ragins and a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval. (Absent Commissioner Svolos)

###

Approved as submitted June 23, 2016 s/ Rebecca Poirier, City Clerk
