

**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 6:05 p.m. on Monday, June 23, 2016, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

**2. ROLL CALL**

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

Absent: Commissioner Chiota

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

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

**3. FLAG SALUTE**

The pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Svolos.

**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 June 20, 2016.

**5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1**

Item continued. Item 8 considered out of order.

**6. APPROVE COMMISSION MINUTES: APRIL 28, 2016**

Item continued. Item 8 considered out of order.

**7. APPROVE COMMISSION MINUTES: May 26, 2016**

Item continued. Item 8 considered out of order.

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

Chairperson Gow stated that Item 8 would be considered out of order, as the speakers for the item needed to leave the meeting as soon as possible, due to other obligations.

Management Associate Hoang stated that presentations this evening were from organizations specifically requested by the Commission.

**Ashley Oh, Service Planning Area 8 Homeless Initiative Contact, County of Los Angeles Homeless Initiative**, stated that she would present information on: the current status of homeless in the Los Angeles County, potential triggers that lead to homelessness, the County's challenges and response to homelessness and opportunities for partnership for the City of Torrance.

- **POPULATION SERVED:** Homeless
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:**
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**
  - Opportunities:**
    - Homeless Initiative began with policy summits in 2015 on 9 key topics
    - Affordable Care made medical coverage available
    - 47 strategies divided into 6 areas: prevent homeless, subsidize housing, increase income, provide case management and services, create a coordinated system and increase affordable/homeless housing.
    - Approved one time funding of \$99.7 million
    - Collaboration one of the key principles of the initiative
    - County Board of Supervisors voted to request the Governor to declare a state of emergency and launched a statewide petition
  - Challenges:**
    - 46,874 Homeless in Los Angeles County, 10.5% increase from 2015
    - Unsheltered population increased by 20% in 2015 and by 123% from 2013
    - Torrance had 107 homeless per 2016 count: 37 on the street, 70 in dwelling units-35% increase from 2015
    - Potential Triggers: Loss of job, large bills, abuse
    - Homeless Housing Gap (in units): 15,341 permanent, 8,376 rapid rehousing, 2,279 emergency shelter and 2,555 homeless prevention
    - Need funding of \$450 million per year to fill the homeless gap
- **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITY TO BETTER SERVE POPULATIONS:**
  - Contribute City Funding toward rapid rehousing
  - Dedicate federal housing subsidies to permanent supportive housing
  - Ensure that law enforcement and first responders effectively engage homeless families/individuals
  - Use land use policy to maximize the availability of homeless/affordable housing
  - Sign the expression of City interest to partner with the County on rapid rehousing
  - Draft City resolution to partner with the County to combat homelessness
  - Review the County's *Preparing for Collaboration: A Guide for Cities*

In response to a question from Commissioner Mattucci, Ms. Oh explained that the National Alliance to End Homelessness was an independent national organization and the statistics that they had listed as factors contributing to homelessness reflected national information, not local Los Angeles County statistics, but she noted that the key indicators did not widely vary across the country. She added that “loss of job” did not only represent being unemployed, but also being underpaid. She explained that there were clinicians who interacted and assessed the homeless populations for mental illnesses, substance abuse issues or medical conditions. She stated that the mental and medical issues that the homeless populations faced contributed to their much shorter life expectancy and noted the importance of housing to enable treatments of the mental and medical conditions.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Ragins, Ms. Oh explained that the long term goal of the County was to use the full spectrum of homeless services to stem the tide and to lower the number of people becoming homeless. Commissioner Ragins stated that he anticipated that there would be more homeless due to the lack of affordable rental units. Ms. Oh noted that decreasing the number of homeless would require a long term commitment, she added that the County was trying to provide some short term solutions by working with landlords to open more units for the homeless.

In response to a question from Commissioner Ragins on the implications for Torrance in joining the County wide effort on homelessness, Ms. Oh stated that because the number of homeless were increasing, she felt that cities had to take action in order to serve their citizens. She noted that the City had a choice of which parts of the County plan they wished to participate in, or they could merely offer additional opportunities for solutions to the County. She added that Torrance joining the County wide effort would be a symbolic gesture at the leadership level of the City's willingness to address the crisis of homelessness. She explained that the County did not yet have many statistics from the cities that had already signed on with the County, but noted that the County hoped by next year to be able to show the success of the collaboration, which would then encourage other cities to join.

Ms. Oh stated that the County did not believe that there would be a surge of homeless to a City that was providing services, as the City could identify and select those they wished to serve. Ms. Oh stated that she could provide information and statistics to the Commission from the cities that were currently collaborating with the County.

Ms. Oh stated that she would also be able to facilitate connecting the Commission with various personnel in the County, if the Commission needed further information.

There were no comments from the public.

**Katherine Hoover, LCSW and Carolina Esquivias, LCSW, Torrance Unified School District (TUSD) Homeless and Foster Youth Education Program**, stated that education system defined someone who was homeless, per the McKinney-Vento Act, as "lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" and added that the definition could include someone who was sharing the housing of others due to economic hardship or unaccompanied youth who was not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian. She noted that children in domestic violence shelters were not included in the homeless count, because their information was confidential.

- **POPULATION SERVED:** Homeless and Foster Youth - up to age 22
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:** Family Welcome and Enrollment center staff and school staff were trained to and could identify, Nutrition Services, through school sites and community agencies
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**
  - Challenges:**
    - Have 120 homeless students
    - Cross check addresses with local motel addresses
    - Need more funding for food program (Healthy Bags)
    - Lack of full time social workers to develop and provide services and identify students
    - Lack of awareness of program in the community
    - Lack of understanding of the educational definition of homelessness
    - No financial assistance for after school programs
    - Lack of services for families
    - Finding the person who had educational rights for the student
  - Opportunities:**
    - Do not have to report unaccompanied youth to Department of Families Services
    - Unaccompanied youth may apply for food stamps
    - TUSD Referral form can be filled out by anyone- even if not homeless, may be able to provide other services
    - Brochures for Homeless and Foster Youth Program

- Provide school supplies, backpacks, clothes, free meals, TAP cards and community referrals for services
- At school level, provide fee waivers, tutoring, counseling
- Foster youth are already connected with Family Health Service and other agencies
- Graduation examination exemption for foster youth and homeless
- Healthy Bags program to supply food for the weekend
- Operation School Bell provides clothes, school supplies
- **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITY TO BETTER SERVE POPULATIONS:**
  - Distribute program materials
  - Refer students to the program
  - Increase collaboration and communication between city offices and TUSD
  - Provide tables at city resource fairs, community events
  - Collaborate with other agencies to determine how the City can help serve residents
  - Provide after school program financial assistance for students

Ms. Hoover clarified that there were 120 students, but not necessarily 120 families, as many of the students were siblings; she added that there were 80 students who were foster youth. She stated that there were some students who had been TUSD students, but had to move because of economic reasons, who still were able to attend TUSD as their school of origin. She added that it was also fairly easy to get into Torrance schools by permit.

Ms. Hoover stated that she did not know how much the homeless or foster youth affected the graduation rates from Torrance schools.

In response to a question from Commissioner Ragins, Ms. Hoover stated that they did not collect any Medi-Cal funds for their work, as they did not have the time or staff to complete the paperwork to bill the County.

There was a discussion of the potential changes in the TUSD special education program.

Ms. Hoover stated that there are some homeless students who were sheltered in Torrance, either through Family Promise or domestic violence shelters; others are sheltered in Long Beach, Los Angeles, San Pedro or Inglewood.

Ms. Hoover explained that they were able to work with the students up to age 22, if they were still in school and added that the foster youth were already connected to Department of Children and Family Services and were eligible for services after they graduated.

Management Associate Hoang stated that a speaker from the Torrance Unified School District's adult transition program would be available to speak at either the August or September meeting and noted that staff would follow up to invite the Adult Transition Program staff to a future meeting.

Nancy Wilcox of South Bay Coalition to End Homelessness stated that she wanted to give additional information to help answer some of Commissioner's questions from the preceding presentations. She noted that it was often difficult to find jobs for people who had been longtime homeless, because they were lacking life skills or might have criminal records and added that there were more job opportunities for those people who were more newly homeless.

Ms. Wilcox explained that both the County and the City of Los Angeles were both heavily funding the rapid re-housing concept with the hope that the program would stem

the tide of the increasing numbers of homeless. She added that the gap analysis that Ms. Oh had shown did take into consideration people that were anticipated to become homeless.

Ms. Wilcox noted that Ms. Hoover at TUSD had done a tremendous job in recognizing the homeless population, connecting with the community and providing services.

Sheryl Moore from New Challenge Ministries stated that her organization operated the largest food bank in the South Bay and noted that she would contact the presenters from TUSD. She noted that New Challenge Ministries had a contract with the Los Angeles School District to feed the homeless children. She cautioned the City to carefully consider partnering with the County.

Pastor John Hernandez of New Challenge Ministries stated that they also worked with veterans, organized events for children and coordinated with many agencies in the South Bay community.

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

#### **5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1 (continued)**

Lisa Sheehan, stated that she was at the meeting as a representative of the Torrance Brisas Del Mar Homeowners Association to voice their concerns about the homeless in the downtown area, especially in El Prado Park. She added that the Homeowner's Association appreciated the efforts of the Commission. She distributed information packets to staff.

Ted Jones of the Del Amo Rotary Club stated that he was a member of the Los Angeles Veterans Collaborative and expressed his concern that the Social Services Commission not duplicate the efforts of the Collaborative. He explained that the Collaborative had programs and agencies in the many areas, such as: Behavioral Health, Faith, Career Advancement and Families and Children. He noted that Pastor John Hernandez, of Hearts of Compassion would be a great resource for the Commission. He added that he would send information to the staff on the Los Angeles Veterans Collaborative.

#### **6. APPROVE COMMISSION MINUTES: APRIL 28, 2016 (continued)**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Ragins moved to approve the minutes of April 28, 2016, as submitted; motion was seconded by Commissioner Scott. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote. (Absent Commissioner Chiota)

#### **7. APPROVE COMMISSION MINUTES: MAY 26, 2016 (continued)**

Chairperson Gow stated that he had misspoken under Orals # 2 and requested a date correction to the Torrance High School class of 1956 for his mother.

Management Associate Megerdichian stated that it was not possible to correct something that had been misstated at a previous meeting.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Svolos moved to approve the minutes of May 26, 2016, as submitted; motion was seconded by Commissioner Ragins. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote. (Absent Commissioner Chiota)

**9. ACCEPT AND FILE LOS ANGELES HOMELESS SERVICES AUTHORITY 2016 HOMELESS COUNTY REPORT**

Management Associate Megerdichian presented a report that detailed information from the Los Angeles Services Authority (LAHSA) 2016 Homeless Counts and explained that the City-level data would not be available until later, and added that the attachments detailed the counts at the County level as well as the Service Planning Area 8 (SPA)8, where Torrance was located. She noted that the report contained information on homeless veterans, youth and families. She stated that the South Bay SPA 8 had an increase of 10.5% in homeless populations from 2015 to 2016, with the count of 5,351 increasing to 5,913.

Commissioner Ragins stated that there could be wide discrepancies in the report and noted that it could be difficult to interpret the counts. Management Associate Megerdichian concurred and noted that the count was only a snapshot in time and relied heavily on community volunteers. She added that because Torrance did not have shelters, it was difficult to get a complete picture of the number of homeless.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Ragins moved to accept and file Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority 2016 Homeless County Report; motion was seconded by Commissioner Svolos. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote. (Absent Commissioner Chiota)

**10. ACCEPT AND FILE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION GRANT PROGRAM FOR NON-PROFIT SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCIES**

Management Associate Megerdichian presented the report and explained that the City's social services grant program had been created 30 years ago and been revamped this year to ensure that: a healthy number of applications were received, the funds were distributed among service providers, the program was administered in an efficient and effective manner, the award and notification process was clarified and the program was transparent and easy to pursue. She stated that the Program was currently with the Parks and Recreation Commission and had a budget of \$20,000 annually. She added that the grants were given out for either Health Services or Human Services.

Management Associate Megerdichian noted, in answer to a previous question from the Commission, that the Torrance Athletes' Organization had never submitted a request to the Grant Committee.

In response to a question from Commissioner Ragins, Management Associate Megerdichian stated that she did not know the history of the amount of money allocated to the Program, but that she would return to the Commission with the information. She added that service providers needed to reapply each year and agencies could only receive the award for two years in a row and then needed to wait a year before reapplying.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Mattucci, Management Associate Megerdichian stated that the organizations did not need to be Torrance based, but she noted the organizations were ranked on a variety of criteria.

Chairperson Gow noted that the item had been requested to inform the Commission of social services that were provided by other Commissions or agencies within the City.

There was no comment from the public.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Svolos moved to accept and file the report on the Parks and Recreation Commission Grant Program for Non-Profit Social Services Agencies;

motion was seconded by Commissioner Mattucci. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote. (Absent Commissioner Chiota)

## **11. CONDUCT PUBLIC WORKSHOP TO DEVELOP THE SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION'S LONG RANGE WORK PLAN FOR CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL**

Management Associate Hoang stated that he had included the verbatim responses from all the Commissioners and noted that because the range of goals and objectives were broad, the Commission might find it useful to adopt a group technique to identify common goals and objectives, concur on those that should be included in the plan and then vote and rank the objectives. He recommended that first, each of the Commissioners read their responses, explain and clarify their intentions, and engage in a dialog with the rest of the Commission. He added that secondly, the Commission could identify the commonalities in their individual responses and thirdly, try to identify and refine the process to develop the work plan.

**Commissioner Mattucci** presented his response and summarized his concerns:

- Establish toll free number (fully automated) for veterans and homeless to receive access to local services
- Discounted transit fares for veterans (not just Torrance residents)
- Outreach to veterans and homeless to inform them of available services
- Need legislation to allow law enforcement to act to limit: pan handling, especially using children, encampments and public intoxication
- For the first year did not see that the Commission could do much for intellectually challenged adults and special needs children other than distribute information on available resources.

**Commissioner Svolos** presented her response and noted that:

- She concurred with Commissioner Mattucci on the need for both an online resource guide for currently existing referral and services information, as well as a printed source for those without internet access.
- An analysis of the gaps that existed in services was needed to determine areas in which the City could assist

**Commissioner Ragins** presented his response and summarized his thoughts:

- He stated the need to create guiding principles, overall viewpoint or direction and listed his suggested guiding principles:
  - People should not be rejected or discarded, but supported to live as productively as possible
  - There were not sufficient funds to provide all needed support from any governmental source
  - This was a City work plan, and the City could not provide direct services but could provide a better community
  - Focus on creating binding social capital within the City, rather than bridging social capital of larger groups or areas
- He suggested that the populations could be broken down into five sub populations:
  - Not in need of services, but at risk
  - In need, but unidentified and unengaged in services
  - In need, identified and engaged in services, but poorly self-coordinating
  - In need, but self-directed and self-responsible
  - No longer in need of services, may be giving back to others

- He suggested the following goal areas for all populations:
  - Welcoming and inclusion
  - Compassion and understanding
  - Meaningful roles and opportunities
  - Advocacy and administrative support
  - Charity and volunteerism

Commissioner Ragins explained that he had included a sample matrix of populations and goal areas to help begin to structure and identify objectives and develop a work plan.

**Commissioner Scotto** stated that the Commission would need to work on the assumption that at least for this year, there would be no funding from the City. She added that she thought that the Commission could assist all four populations, because the populations intersect in need in many ways. She noted that the Commission could:

- Act as a liaison to the organizations that serve the four populations, compile list of resources and programs
- Develop a plan of education to increase public awareness of the issues and needs for the four populations
- Research current City services to see how they could benefit the four populations
- Develop creative ways to help the populations: community outreach, food or toiletries collections, community recognition

Commissioner Scotto stated that she thought that the Commission should start out with the basics, at ground level and start building from there. She noted that the populations of mentally challenged adults and special needs youth already had programs in place at many levels and for that reason she added that she would like to have the Commission focus first on the Veterans and Homeless populations.

Management Associate Hoang stated that Commissioner Chiota would be able to present his response at the next meeting.

**Chairperson Gow** stated that he believed that the main goal of the Commission was to be a source of information for the City and have a strong, multifaceted presence in many venues of community communications and social media. He requested that staff provide a detailed analysis of the community presentations that had come before the Commission in order to categorize which were potential resources but might require support from the City. He added that he would like to be able to publicize the July 28 Public Workshop Commission meeting to ensure that the public was aware and could attend to offer their input.

Chairperson Gow stated that he would like the Commission to recommend to the Council the adoption of the “housing first” model. He noted that the overlap of the populations was with the homeless and the veterans. He added that he was in favor of developing a method of weighing the goals and options in the development of the plan.

Commissioner Svolos noted that she had noticed gaps in the information on available resources during the some of the presentations before the Commission, and noted that the Commission should look to provide the missing information to the public, the police and other agencies.

There was a discussion a method of having a Social Services website. Management Associate Hoang stated that he would check with Citi Cable to determine a cost for a website or webpages that would be maintained by City staff.

Management Associate Hoang suggested that the Commission could begin the work plan process by developing a structure to rank the various recommendations/strategies from the Commissioners, as well as members of the public, either by assigning values to each of the activities or by using a matrix with populations, goals and activities as suggested by Commissioner Ragins. He added that the ranking would be done during the public workshop.

Commissioner Ragins stated that the Commission could use a method of sorting all the goals/strategies by writing all the proposed ideas on cards and sorting them for commonalities to see what emerged as the goals. He added that another method would be to agree on the strategy areas first and then assign the activities to an area.

In response to a question from Chairperson Gow, Commissioner Ragins stated that the voting/ranking of the proposed recommendations/strategies would come after all the strategies had been sorted and the goal areas had emerged and been established.

Commissioner Scotto stated that she liked the idea of sorting the cards, but she added that she would like to proceed slowly to ensure that the Commission developed a solid, sustainable plan, to fulfill their obligation as Commissioners of a newly founded Commission.

Chairperson Gow stated that he also was in favor of sorting the cards as part of the July public workshop and requested that staff publicize the meeting and ask the public to attend and offer their input. He added that one of the Commissioners should speak during the orals of the Council meetings to make the public aware of the workshop and the request for their input.

Commissioner Svolos stated that she concurred with the idea of sorting the cards and inviting public comments and noted that there were both short term and long term goals.

There was a discussion of the process of determining the goals.

Responding to a question from Chairman Gow, Management Associate Hoang explained that the general work plan that was to be presented to the Council in a joint meeting would be the broad brushstrokes of what the Commission saw as their responsibilities and general ideas for the next year. He noted that he had a concern that in asking the public for their input and telling them that the Commission would do something with their input, it might set the public up for disappointment. He stated that the Commission needed to keep their focus on the four populations, while the public might have concerns or advocacies that extended beyond the populations or the City.

Management Associate Hoang suggested that before the next meeting, the Commissioners could each write their recommendations with brief descriptions on note cards, and bring them to the meeting to review, categorize and combine the recommendations into a much smaller number of areas/categories. He explained that once the areas/categories to focus on had been determined, staff could agendaize those areas for the following meeting in order to allow public input on the selected areas. He noted that at the next meeting after that, the Commission could prioritize and specify the areas and request staff research on certain areas.

There was a discussion on the method to use to determine the general strategies. The Commission concurred that they would come to the next meeting with their recommendations and a brief description on note cards. Management Associate Hoang explained that he would email a template for the Commission to use to format their cards and added that the Commissioners could email their completed cards back to staff to be printed for use at the next meeting. He noted that the meeting would be held as a public

workshop and that the agenda would describe the format and structure of the meeting and how the meeting would be conducted.

Nancy Wilcox of South Bay Coalition to End Homelessness recommended that the Commission slow down and perhaps narrow their focus and partner with existing agencies, as the issues surrounding homelessness were very complicated. She stated that she did like the process that was going to be followed to develop the key areas.

Management Associate Hoang stated that the public would be able to give their input at the next meeting when the Commissioners had completed their sorting of the categories.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Mattucci moved for staff to agendize an item to hold a public workshop, at which time Commission members will submit their recommendations for the six-month work plan as the group determines “strategy categories”; motion was seconded by Commissioner Ragins. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote. (Absent Commissioner Chiota)

## **12. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #2**

Commissioner Mattucci thanked staff, the presenters and the public.

Chairperson Gow thanked staff for all their help. He reminded staff that there needed to be an item added to the agenda for Commissioner comments.

Management Associate Hoang stated that staff would update the agenda to include an item for Commissioner Announcements.

Chairperson Gow requested there be an agenda item added for a Legislative Report/Update.

Management Associate Hoang stated that those items could be discussed under Orals #1.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:52 p.m., Commissioner Svolos moved to adjourn the meeting to the regular meeting on Thursday, July 28, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the West Annex Commission Meeting Room. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ragins and a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval. (Absent Commissioner Chiota)

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| Approved as submitted<br>July 28, 2016<br>s/ Rebecca Poirier, City Clerk |
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