

**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 6:01 p.m. on Monday, March 24, 2016, in the West Annex Commission Meeting Room, Torrance City Hall.

**2. ROLL CALL**

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

Absent: None

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

**3. FLAG SALUTE**

The pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Chiota.

**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 March 21, 2016.

**5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1**

David Leger, field representative of Congressman Ted Lieu, explained that Congressman Lieu's office could be a resource for the Commission on veteran services. Mr. Leger noted that Congressman Lieu had worked directly with Veterans Administration Secretary McDonald on the new master plan for the campus of the West Los Angeles Veteran's Center and reported that the plan included 1200 units of supportive housing on campus for homeless veterans. He added that the Congressman's office had been working with landlords to educate them on the use of HUD vouchers for veterans.

Mr. Leger described constituent services that the Congressman's district office could assist with, either for the Commission or the general public: federal government agencies' issues such as taxes, veterans' benefits and social security. He added that the Congressman had offices in Manhattan Beach and Los Angeles.

Chair Gow noted that Torrance was represented by two Congress members: Congressman Lieu and Congresswoman Waters.

William Feliz shared a resource form with the Commission that he utilized to give information to the homeless.

Kyle Orlemann, vice chair of Veterans Affairs Commission for the City of Hawthorne encouraged the Commission to work closely with the Hawthorne Commission to share resources and information. She noted that the Hawthorne Commission met on the second and fourth Wednesdays at 3:15 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

Kathy Sutton, CEO of SIERF (Sensory Integration Education Research Foundation) stated that her organization focused on special needs children and adults

with sensory processing disorders. She introduced Geni King, owner of the One for All Healing Art Center in Culver City, who noted that there was a great increase in both special needs children and in veterans with traumatic brain injuries.

Chairperson Gow noted that the April meeting would focus on intellectually challenged adults and children with special needs.

#### **6. APPROVE COMMISSION MINUTES: FEBRUARY 25, 2016**

There was a discussion on amending the minutes. Management Associate Hoang advised that meeting minutes were intended to reflect the actions of the meeting and if they did so accurately, there was no need for amendments.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Svolos moved to approve the minutes of February 25, 2016, as submitted; motion was seconded by Commissioner Scotto. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

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

Management Associate Megerdichian stated that staff had organized the meeting's speakers to focus on veterans and homeless populations but noted that there might be overlaps, as necessary, with other targeted populations.

**Chris Cagle of the South Bay Workforce Investment Board (SBWIB)** stated that the Board helped businesses find workers and people find jobs. He noted that the SBWIB was created and funded by the federal government.

- **POPULATION SERVED:**
  - Veterans and transitioning Air Force personnel and families.
  - Veterans and Homeless – Los Angeles County contract - *Transitional Subsidized Employee Program* allows those on government subsidy to be placed in job training positions in nonprofits/government/religious with the 100% salary paid or for profit companies with the cost of the salary shared.
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:**
  - One Stop Center to register
  - Employment Development Department (EDD) located in office and to connect to federal program and disabled veteran outreach specialist services.
  - Work with Chamber of Commerce-I Vet Programs-job interview training/job fair/ job interviews
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**
  - Help on resumes, career coaching, connections to veteran friendly employers, connect with other veterans' services; education opportunities.
  - Military Veterans to Civilian Pathways program to connect to employers, education and training opportunities.
  - Work with transitioning Los Angeles Air Force base personnel, spouses and youth (with summer job fairs and work experience/internships)
  - Hope to connect with the South Bay Council of Governments' program for homeless
- **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITY TO BETTER SERVE POPULATIONS:**

In response to a question from Commissioner Ragins, Mr. Cagle stated the people placed in jobs through the subsidized employee program did not lose their other benefits. Mr. Cagle presented a copy of the SBWIB Annual report and the California Veterans'

Resource Book to the Commission and noted that the book and report were also available on line.

Mr. Cagle stated that the SBWIB asked for outside assessment of those with special needs or received referrals from other agencies. He noted that the SBWIB services were all job related, not housing or medical assistance.

**Sergeant Charles Fisher and Officer Matthew Wessels of the Torrance Police Department Community Lead Officers** stated that the Lead Officers addressed quality of life issues within the City. He noted that there had been an increase in the number of homeless, which was estimated last year at 79 in the City, as well as an increase in the number of related service calls. Officer Wessels stated that there were four lead officers and a sergeant and described that the City had been divided into beats. He explained that in 2015 the detail had had meetings with a variety of local resources who dealt directly with the homeless population: County mental health evaluators, the Emergency Response team, People Assisting the Homeless (PATH), Los Angeles Homeless Services (LAHSA), West Coast Cares as well as other local Police Departments experiencing similar problems.

Officer Wessels described the methods used now by the lead officers and noted that the officers conducted multiple bi-weekly or monthly outreach sessions with the homeless community within known areas frequented by homeless. He added that the plain clothes officers visited the homeless and often escorted volunteer or service people to the areas as well.

- **POPULATION SERVED:** Homeless and transients
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:** Contact the department Lead officers. Department has contact sheet of resources available.
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**
  - Opportunities:**
    - Attend Chamber of Commerce and community meetings.
    - Collaborate with faith based, non- profit and governmental services.
    - Continue outreach efforts.
  - Challenges:**
    - Train uniformed personnel on options and resources available.
    - Work with City Prosecutor's office to keep current on legislation.
    - Need to reeducate citizens on homelessness and services available.
    - Negative effects on Businesses, Visitors, Mental Health facilities, Community services, Parks, Social Services, Health Care entities and Caltrans
- **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITY TO BETTER SERVE POPULATIONS:**
  - Sergeant Fisher noted that the City needed to continue to work and brainstorm with all the existing resources and services

In response to questions, Officer Wessels stated that the department did try to help homeless who had animals. He noted that he did not believe that other cities were busing homeless to Torrance.

Sergeant Fisher stated that the current change in the ways that the department was working with the homeless was having some positive results.

Officer Wessels noted that homeless counts were only a snapshot. Nancy Wilcox stated that she had worked with the Torrance Police on the homeless count and noted that this year's count was probably a more thorough count than previous counts.

William Feliz offered to feature the Lead Officers on the cable television station.

The Commission thanked the officers for their service to the homeless.

Officer Wessels confirmed that they did work with Department of Mental Health.

**Nick Rassmussen, South Bay Family Promise** stated that Family Promise was part of a national organization and noted that there were several Southern California chapters.

- **POPULATION SERVED:** Homeless families with minor aged children who had been homeless for a year or less
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:** Referrals from school districts, Harbor Interfaith, churches, the community, other agencies, the internet
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:** 3 staff members and 584 volunteers.
  - Not faith based but worked with the faith based communities to coordinate the hosting of families.
  - School districts are required to provide services and meals for students who are homeless. (McKinney-Vento Act)
  - Volunteers are trained. 90% of the volunteers are members of the host organizations.

**Challenges:**

- Many families who need help are unidentified-estimated 3000-5000 homeless school aged children in South Bay.
- Very lean budget offset by in-kind donations of time and material and private donations and grants
- Need to demolish the stigma of homelessness and educate families where they could get help without fear of losing children.
- Strict vetting process for families, including a background check.
- **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITY TO BETTER SERVE POPULATIONS:**
  - Will be an increased number of families needing assistance.
  - Provide reduced or free bus passes or other means of transportation.
  - Provide service for the undocumented.

In response to a question from Commissioner Ragins, Mr. Rassmussen stated that the Family Promise model, in order to deal with populations who might be suffering from mental illness, would require more trained staff, not just volunteers.

**Jerry Yamamoto, President of the Vietnam Veterans Association of the South Bay Chapter 53** stated his association was part of a national organization that was congressionally chartered.

- **POPULATION SERVED:** Viet Nam Veterans and other era veterans
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:** Salvation Army, Employment Development Committee with the Department of Labor, Long Beach Veteran's' Hospital, VFW, Housing Authority, US Veteran Transitional Housing., Volunteers of America, Vet Centers
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

**Opportunities**

- Local Recognition for Veterans in Torrance: banner program, Armed Forces Day Parade, Highway One Recognition
- High School Scholarship Contest
- Job Fair with City of Carson
- Collect Goods for resale to raise funds
- Certified veteran service officers and attorneys for claims

**Challenges:**

- Need to educate families on benefits available for Veterans
- Outreach to all veterans, not just Vietnam Veterans

- Resolve pension claims and appeals
- Work on bills for veterans in Congress
- Secondary PTSD
- **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITY TO BETTER SERVE POPULATIONS:**
  - Donate goods to the Vietnam Veterans of America collections to raise funds for veterans.

There was a discussion on services for Cold War veterans and other veterans other than Viet Nam veterans.

Commissioner Chiota recognized the veterans in the audience for their service.

**Meredith Berkson, People Assisting the Homeless (PATH)** stated that PATH was new to the City of Torrance.

- **POPULATION SERVED:** Homeless individuals, families and veterans
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:** Homeless Drop in Centers, Homeless shelters, homeless street outreach, hotlines
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

**Opportunities:**

- Developing Affordable housing – 1,300 units in development now
- New County Contract as of February 2016
- Providing outreach services on the street to help link people to services
- Hiring a benefits specialist and a MSW for clinical assessments
- Creating hotline for use by the community, police as well as homeless
- Screening and assessment of needs to tailor services for a person's needs
- Providing links to interim housing
- Connecting to landlords for rental subsidies
- Collaborating with City and existing service providers
- Generating City wide data on a monthly basis
- Using County Coordinated Entry Program
- Able to link veterans to permanent supportive housing
- PATH manages 1400 Veteran Administration supportive housing rentals subsidies and provides case management
- Administering supportive services for veteran families
- Section 8 vouchers
- Working with Department Health for services and housing.
- Providing move in expenses
- Rapid re-housing-rental assistance that tapers off to allow for self sufficiency

**Challenges:**

- Goal to house 10,000 people by 2020; to date have assisted 2,293 families, 863 veterans, 1,522 chronically homeless
- Goals for the year: serve 450 unduplicated individuals, connect 230 to interim housing, connect 70 with mental health services, 58 to substance abuse services, 58 to main stream benefits and get 58 people off the streets and into permanent housing.
- Increase in Los Angeles county homeless – 3,006 in the South Bay area
- Providing services so that people can successfully stay in homes, once placed

- **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITY TO BETTER SERVE POPULATIONS:**
  - Conduct community meetings to allow for service providers to meet and build resource networks.
  - Distribute hotline information and information on PATH to the community.

- Provide advocacy and additional funding.
- Identify hotspots with police department and LAHSA.

**Nancy Wilcox, South Bay Coalition to End Homelessness** stated that the organization was an education and advocacy leadership group and represented many organizations in both the private and public sectors, nonprofits as well as faith based groups, hospitals and clinics and County organizations. She noted that the organization used its expertise to bring resources and advocate for services for the area.

- **POPULATION SERVED:** homeless, domestic violence victims, transitional aged youth (age 18-22). People with mental health issues, veterans
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:**
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

**Opportunities:**

- Works closely with LAHSA for HUD funding
- Provides a forum for LAHSA, works with the City of Los Angeles
- South Bay Housing: Brought in a winter shelter and County Coordinated Entry Programs (collaboration of county agencies)
- Works with Redondo Beach Homeless Task Force and their Consolidated Plan
- Coordinates Homeless Counts-covered the entire South Bay-count is important as much funding is directly tied to the number of homeless
- Rapid re-housing for Families
- Domestic Violence services
- Faith based groups assistance for housing

**Challenges:**

- South Bay is under resourced: lack of emergency beds, permanent supportive beds
- Torrance has its own housing authority which makes it difficult to use County vouchers
- Three major hospitals in the City bring in a lot of people who require discharge plans
- Lack of affordable housing has the potential to create more homeless
- Establishing trust through outreach services
- Obtaining IDs for the homeless
- Need to allow client choice for services – must be motivated to make the change and continue the change
- There is no quick fix: need to educate the public, educate all on available services, engage all the stakeholders
- Housing First- first establish stability of housing, all others challenges come after- a mandated Federal approach

- **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITY TO BETTER SERVE POPULATIONS:**

- Study *Los Angeles County Strategies to Combat Homelessness* to see if anything is applicable for Torrance.
- Invite the City and the Commission to formally join with the Coalition for advocacy and to gain knowledge.
- Opt in to the homeless counts for 2017 for County recognition.
- City ordinances on criminalization of homelessness may need to be changed to allow funding from HUD.
- Consider having set aside vouchers for Section 8 to avoid wait lists.
- Look into Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding allocations.

- Welcome new programs and resources into the City-especially property developers. Coalition can arrange site visits to housing that has been developed for homeless.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Chiota, Ms. Wilcox explained that there was no cost to the City to opt in to the County's homeless count, but a City representative would need to be present until the count had concluded for the evening and the County MOU would need to be signed. She noted that the Coalition would still continue to carry out the count.

In response to a question from Commissioner Ragins, Ms. Wilcox stated that County vouchers were difficult to use in Torrance because there was no agreement between the County housing authority and the City.

Ms. Wilcox distributed folders to the Commission with additional resources, contact information for agencies, data on the homeless and program details.

Commissioner Chiota recommended that other Commissioners attend a Coalition meeting. Deputy City Attorney Sarigumba noted that a quorum of the Commissioners could attend events, but she cautioned Commissioners to be mindful and avoid the appearance of a potential Brown Act violation.

Management Associate Megerdichian stated that staff would invite a representative of the Community Development Department to a future meeting to speak on items such as Community Block Grants, housing questions and Section 8 vouchers.

**City Librarian Hillary Theyer, Torrance Public Library** distributed packets of library information.

- **POPULATION SERVED:**
  - Everyone - actively including all the populations of Torrance as well as surrounding areas and others who want to make use of the library
  - Any California resident could obtain a library card
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:**
  - Six libraries
  - Library card is free.
  - Those who do not have a permanent address can be issued a card
  - Walk in service available to most programs
  - Live phone help available to all during business hours
  - Webpage access
  - Mobile access
  - Free online in person homework tutor 7 days per week from 1:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.
  - Free wireless and internet use (with only time limits and printing charges)
  - Personalized visits for groups by appointment
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

**Opportunities:**

  - Can offer specialized specific resources for different groups: autistic, veterans
  - Can offer various adaptive formats
  - Can do outreach to sites
  - Have Words on Wheels to deliver library materials to home, centers, hospitals
  - Have specialized kits that can be delivered and used by groups
  - All libraries ADA compliant

- Can confer with other libraries on best practices

**Challenges:**

- Not enough space, busy all the time
- Everyone has the legal right to use the library – staff needs to be trained to address 3 areas of conflict: needs, behavior and personal appearance
- Not enough budget or time for keeping entire staff current on training
- Outreach to educate the public on goal and mission of the library
- Keeping resources current
- Collaborating and training with other agencies
- Keeping current with legal issues for the library

• **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITY TO BETTER SERVE POPULATIONS:**

In response to a question from Chairperson Gow, Management Associate Hoang recommended that the Commission wait until they have presented their plan to the Council before listing resources on the City's website.

Management Associate Hoang stated that staff would follow up on the Commission's questions on Section 8 housing vouchers with the Community Development staff and the capability of the City's website.

In response to a question from Commissioner Chiota, City Librarian Theyer stated that all of the libraries had public lobby information areas for handouts, but that the handouts were prioritized by space. She added that anyone could call her or deliver handouts to her at the Main library.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Svolos moved to accept and file presentations; motion was seconded by Commissioner Scotto. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

**8. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #2**

Ms. Orlemann stated that there were several upcoming legislative bills concerning veterans that she would be happy to return and speak about to the Commission.

Commissioner Chiota stated that he had attended a meeting of Los Angeles Veterans' Collaborative and had given the organization's information to staff and recommended that the Commissioners read the packet.

Commissioner Mattuci requested an excused absence for the April 28, 2016 meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 10.01 p.m., Commissioner Svolos moved to adjourn the meeting to the regular meeting on Thursday, April 28, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the West Annex Commission Meeting Room, Torrance City Hall. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Scotto and a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

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Approved as submitted  
April 28, 2016  
s/ Rebecca Poirier, City Clerk