

**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 6:02 p.m. on Monday, April 28, 2016, in the West Annex Commission Meeting Room, Torrance City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL

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

Absent: Commissioner Mattucci

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

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

3. FLAG SALUTE

The pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Ragins.

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 April 25, 2016.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1

Commissioner Chiota stated that on March 31, 2016, he had attended the Mayor's Regional Summit to Combat Homelessness, sponsored by the County of Los Angeles. He noted that also in attendance at the Summit were Chairman Gow, Mayor Furey and Staff Liaison Hoang.

Commissioner Chiota reported that there were several speakers at the event, who provided general welcoming comments to the Summit, as well as thanked participants for their attendance. He listed the speakers: The Honorable Hilda Solis, Supervisor of District One, Los Angeles County; The Honorable Mark Ridley-Thomas, Supervisor of District Two, Los Angeles County; The Honorable Don Knabe, Supervisor of District Four, Los Angeles County; Lourdes Castro Ramirez, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, United States Department of Housing and Urban Development; Jorge Morales, Mayor of the City of South Gate; Peter Lynn, Executive Director, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority and Phil Ansel, Director, Homeless Initiative, Los Angeles County.

Commissioner Chiota explained that the bulk of the Summit consisted of a review of the six areas that Los Angeles County had identified as being critical in reducing homelessness and the review of strategies that Los Angeles County had identified as potentially having the greatest impact. He enumerated the strategies:

1. Homeless prevention program for families
2. Provide subsidized housing to homeless disabled individuals

3. Partner with Cities to expand rapid re-housing
4. Housing choice vouchers for permanent supportive housing
5. Increase employment for homeless adults by supporting social enterprise
6. First responders training
7. Decriminalization policy
8. Enhance the emergency shelter system
9. Discharge data tracking system
10. Promote regional SB 2 compliance and implementation
11. Linkage fee nexus study
12. Development of second dwelling units pilot program
13. Incentive zoning and value capture strategies

Commissioner Chiota stated that at the Summit, the Torrance attendees learned that Ashlee Oh was their contact person from the County, for the Homeless Initiative. He noted that since the Social Services Commission was still learning about the populations in their subject matter jurisdiction and would be developing a work plan in the coming months for the Council's approval, the Commission might wish to ask staff to coordinate with the County to have a presentation on the strategies developed by the County.

Commissioner Chiota noted that there was a \$100 million infusion from the federal level and \$49 million from the County Board of Supervisors' Homeless Prevention Initiative (HPI) allocated to support the County's strategies to reduce homelessness. He added that the Commission would be developing a plan to determine which County's strategies to focus on, in regard to Torrance and the South Bay.

Chairman Gow stated that it was a very interesting and informative meeting and submitted his notes from the Summit to be included as part of the record.

6. APPROVE COMMISSION MINUTES: MARCH 24, 2016

MOTION: Commissioner Ragins moved to approve the minutes of March 24, 2016, as submitted; motion was seconded by Commissioner Svolos. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote. (Absent Commissioner Mattucci)

7. INFORMATION ONLY – TRAINING FOR SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Management Associate Hoang stated that the training would focus on two areas for the Commission: meeting decorum for best business practices for the Social Services Commission meetings and clarifications for the Brown Act. He explained that staff was well aware of the unique subject matter jurisdiction of the Commission, the broad scope of the material, the emotional impact of the information and the atypical high level of community involvement and participation. He noted that after last month's meeting, staff had a clearer vision of the way in which meetings needed to be structured to create the environment in which the Commission could fulfill their mission from the Council to create a work plan to present to the Council.

Management Associate Hoang listed some basic rules of meeting decorum:

- All communication during the meeting needed to be recognized by the Chair, whether the speaker was a Commissioner or a member of the public.
- All speakers needed to speak from the dais or at a microphone for recording and identification purposes.
- Only one person from the public or one Commissioner, at a time, should enter into a discussion, after recognition by the Chair.

Management Associate Hoang detailed the flow of an agenda item:

- Chair reads the subject of the agenda item.
- Chair requests a report from staff.
- Staff provides the report.
- Chair requests questions or comments on the item from the Commission.
- Chair requests questions or comments on the item from the public.
- Chair accepts a motion from the Commission and waits for a second.
- Discussion can follow after a motion, but once a second has been made, a roll call vote needs to occur.
- Staff announces the outcome of the vote.

In response to a question from Chairman Gow, Management Associate Hoang stated that posting of the agenda did not require a roll call vote as it was procedural in nature and an affirmation that the agenda had been posted in accordance to the Brown Act.

Deputy City Attorney Sarigumba clarified that when a motion was made, the Commissioner should state, "I move" and then state specifically what the motion was. She noted that it was important to be as clear as possible for the record, especially if the motion changed during the discussion.

Management Associate Hoang explained that Oral Communications #1 was usually reserved for the public and was limited to no more than 3 minutes per speaker on subjects not on the agenda. He noted that in future Commission meeting agendas, there would be an agenda item entitled *Announcements from Commission*, which would be the time for Commissioners to make announcements regarding any other subject matter meetings that they had attended since the previous Commission meeting.

Management Associate Hoang added that Oral Communications #2 was usually reserved for Commission, but members of the public could speak, if they had not already done so under Oral Communications #1. He stated that under Oral Communications #2, the members of the Commission could seek concurrence from the Commission to request staff to bring in a particular speaker or provide staff with directions for future meeting topics.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Chiota, Management Associate Hoang stated that per the Brown Act, there could be no discussion on agenda items in Oral Communications #2, but only a request from the Commission to staff to add the items to a future meeting agenda.

Management Associate Hoang detailed the recommendations for the Commission from the City Attorney's office:

- Never attend an event where any of the four populations were discussed, unless the event was purely ceremonial in nature. Do not engage in discussion, one on one, on anything that had to do with the subject matter of the Commission, for example, talking with the public after a Commission meeting.
- Request of staff, with the concurrence of the Commission, to bring a speaker or organization to a future Commission meeting, so that the both public and the members of the Commission could hear the same information at the same time.
- If you must attend an event, it was recommended, that at the next Commission meeting, you disclosed in detail: the information that was

provided at the event, the names of any individuals that you listened to or spoke with at the event and what was discussed.

Commissioner Svolos stated that because of her job, she would need to attend conferences that involved populations in the Commission's subject-matter jurisdiction and added that she would disclose the information regarding any conference or meeting that she had attended, at the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting.

Commissioner Ragins voiced his concern that it was an unrealistic premise to try to keep the Commission as uninformed as possible about the subject matter and to have the Commissioners only share what they knew collectively. He noted that, in his opinion, the loss of each Commissioner's lifetime of individual knowledge and the loss of information from the community, far outweighed the benefit of every Commissioner knowing the same information.

Deputy City Attorney Sarigumba explained that during the Commission certification training, it had been noted that the difference between being an individual who advocates for a certain position and a Commissioner, was that the Commissioner was part of a team. She noted that she understood that because of the Commission's wide subject matter jurisdiction, there could be many matters that each Commissioner would encounter in their day to day activities. She explained that the deciding factor on whether to disclose the information, was whether or not that information would inform or affect their decisions on the Commission.

She explained that even though the Commissioners may have been chosen because of their background in a specific population, it was important that the decisions made by the Commission were made on an equal playing field, with all of the members having access to the same information. She agreed that while it would be challenging to disclose all of the information that the Commissioners might encounter, it was vital that public as well as the members of the Commission knew what information the decisions of the Commission were based on. She verified that staff would do their best to bring various presentations from organizations before the Commission and encouraged the Commissioners to request other information or presenters from staff.

Deputy City Attorney Sarigumba emphasized that the disclosures and the avoidance of one on one meetings were vital to avoid violations of the Brown Act. She noted that the City took a very conservative approach to the Brown Act and added that there was no shortcut to compliance with the law.

Commissioner Chiota questioned how the Commission could hope to become the voice for the populations and the voice to the City Council, if they were not permitted to attend meeting and conferences. He noted that there was not enough meeting time to hear from all the experts in the various populations.

Deputy City Attorney Sarigumba stated that it was not illegal for a single Commissioner to attend a conference or a Summit, but that the position of Commissioner came with a certain level of transparency and if the information gained was not shared with either the other Commission members or the members of the public, that could be a violation of the Brown Act. She explained that the best practice would be to bring the organization to present before the entire Commission and the public at the same time, but if that type of presentation was not available, then less than a quorum of the Commission could attend a meeting and report back to the entire Commission and public, in very great detail, on the topics, speakers, attendees and any discussions conducted. She added that attending a meeting should be reserved for those times when the organization would not be able to come to a Commission meeting.

Commissioner Chiota stated that he was still bothered that the Commissioners could not attend community meetings to individually gather valuable information.

Management Associate Hoang stated that it was important the Commission worked as a team to determine their joint work plan. Deputy City Attorney Sarigumba added that the role of the Commissioners was not to become or be the subject matter experts for any of the populations, but rather to hear from the subject matter experts during meetings. She noted that transparency was very important.

~~Responding to a question from~~ Commissioner Ragins stated that it would be difficult to know which information could or would inform his decisions on the Commission and therefore have to be disclosed to the Commission, from all that he had gathered from his daily activities.

Deputy City Attorney Sarigumba stated that during the development of the work plan, if a prior interaction or piece of information could influence the decision making, it would be important to disclose that fact. She noted that the Commissioners could also share information at the meetings on articles that they had read or other information that they felt was important.

Management Associate Hoang summarized that the ultimate goal was transparency and to make the collaborative decision making process as public as possible. He noted that staff recommended that once the Commission had completed the education portion, the format for the development of the work plan should be conducted as a workshop to allow for interactive discussions.

8. 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 developmentally challenged adults and special needs youth populations but noted that there might be overlaps, as necessary, with other targeted populations. She noted that the Torrance Unified School District would provide a speaker for the Commission's May meeting.

Alisa Stein, Best Buddies California-South Bay Jobs Program stated that her program was also under the umbrella of Project Search-South Bay, a collaborative nationwide program. She explained that Kaiser Permanente was their host business and provided a classroom on site for a nine-month training program for young adults from 18-24 years who were referred to the program from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) for their transitional year.

- **POPULATION SERVED:** Young Adults from 18-24 years of age
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:** Through LAUSD and Harbor Regional Center
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**
 - Opportunities:**
 - From 8-10 students per year
 - Students learn transferable job skills in the hospital
 - Students are hired by local industries or Kaiser after training program
 - After being hired, employees are making above minimum wage to \$15- \$16 per hour
 - In four years of the program have found jobs for 18 young adults with disabilities
 - This year had 100% employment
 - Funding from Harbor Regional Center

- Do weekly follow up/job coaching with students at their place of employment
- Have two Special Education teachers from LAUSD who come to Kaiser to teach the students

Challenges:

- Finding businesses to hire the students
- Doing on-site training for employer awareness for businesses that hire students
- Do interviews with potential students to see if they would qualify for the program

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

In response to a question from Chairman Gow, Alisa Stein stated that she believed that Torrance Unified School District could be part of the program if they were also a partner of Harbor Regional Center. She explained that the best Buddies program received payments from Harbor Regional Center for the number of students, hours of coaching and job placements. She added that Kaiser would like to expand the program and was willing to offer a larger space.

Ms. Stein explained that most of the students had been receiving services through Harbor Regional Center for a number of years, before coming into the job program and added that most of the students came from the Carson, Wilmington and San Pedro areas.

Management Associate Megerdichian noted that she had learned about Alisa Stein and the Best Buddies Program through a representative of Kaiser management who was part the Torrance Chamber of Commerce Governmental Affairs Policy Group. She added that she had invited Ms. Stein to speak to the Commission, even though the program was not currently in Torrance, so that the Commission could gain a knowledge of the types of programs that could be possible for Torrance.

Linda Cessna, Deputy Community Development Director, Community Development Department/Housing stated that she would be speaking on the Section 8 Housing Program, Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) and providing some background on the former Redevelopment Program which had been able to provide low and moderate income housing for the community. She explained that under the former Redevelopment Program, the City had built low and moderate income housing with: 78 units for seniors at Coleman Court, 35 units for seniors at Ocean Terrace, 13 units for disabled persons in a partnership with the Cerebral Palsy Foundation, the recently completed 44 work force units for families on Cabrillo Avenue, 26 units for the El Prado apartments and 33 covenanted for- sale housing units at El Brisas del Sol.

- **POPULATION SERVED:** Low and moderate income - (2/3 seniors or handicapped or disabled, the rest were families)
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:** Section 8 Housing vouchers, CDBG
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

Challenges:

- Don't have the funding to help more people with Section 8 vouchers. 690 vouchers available with 589 leased (using 103% of available funding)
- Could be potential changes to the Section 8 Program
- Currently 15,000+ people on the wait list (opened six years ago). There were various priorities: veterans, application date, seniors, residents of Torrance, income requirements, disabled
- Purge of the wait list was currently underway

- Many of those given vouchers cannot or do not use the voucher (60 days period allowed) Could port the voucher to another City or Torrance could port another City's voucher
- Availability of and ability to qualify for boutique Programs for Section 8
- CDBG was an entitlement program through the Federal Government - Torrance was now under the umbrella of Los Angeles Community Development Commission (LACDC) and paid 10% of Torrance's entitlement for LACDC administrative services
- CDBG entitlement was currently \$600,000, Torrance did not have census tracts that met the low income requirements for CDBG, so City needed to use funds for public safety/service items, such as sidewalk repair and upgrading, or handicap improvements

Opportunities:

- Work with LACDC in consortium for the use of the Housing Opportunity (HOME) funds

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

In response to a questions from Commissioner Chiota, Deputy Community Development Director Cessna provided a brief explanation of the Section 8 housing voucher Program and the CDBG program and added that she would ask Senior Business Manager Minter if there were any funds that could assist with the bocce ball court construction.

Deputy Community Development Director Cessna stated that of the 15,000 people on the Section 8 housing list, only about a third of the people were from Torrance. She noted that only 20-30 units became available in a year and units were assigned using the system of priorities.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Ragins, Deputy Community Development Director Cessna stated that there were very few low or moderate income units available in the City and no other programs to assist with housing availability since the redevelopment funds were gone. She noted that the City had been able to find housing for some homeless, but added that the City was not part of the People Assisting the Homeless (PATH) coordinated entry system.

Judith Diamond, of the Pediatric Therapy Network stated that the organization was celebrating its 20th year in Torrance and had as its mission, to help children, families and communities reach full capabilities through innovative therapy, education and research programs.

- **POPULATION SERVED:** Children with special needs - 2500 children currently served a year
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:** Early Head Start Program and School District
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

Challenges:

- Provide 130,000 hours of therapeutic intervention each year
- Provide a unique Early Head Start program especially for residents in Torrance
- Revenue Sources: Early Head Start Program and School District Program, Grants and Contributions, Special Events

Opportunities:

- Work with nearly 1000 student observers
- Collaborate with University of Southern California (USC) in advanced graduate course

- Partner with 40 colleges and universities to have internships for Fieldwork I and II graduate students in Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Speech-Language Pathology
- Have 155 employees
- 2 sites and 35,000 square feet of space

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

Ms. Diamond stated that there was always a shortfall in the budget, especially now that insurance reimbursement rates were frozen, and so there was always a need for fundraising. She noted that the Pediatric Therapy Network was a non-profit.

Commissioner Svolos stated that she had visited the Pediatric Therapy Network facility.

Ms. Diamond stated that she had spoken to legislative representatives to try to resolve the problem with the frozen reimbursement rates from the Regional center.

Sergeant Carol Wilk, Torrance Police Department, Torrance Mental Evaluation Team (TMET) stated that the TMET detail was relatively new to the Department.

- **POPULATION SERVED:** Mentally challenged individuals in crisis
- **METHODS TO ACCESS:** Through Police Department
- **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

Challenges:

- Torrance was the eighth largest municipality in Los Angeles County with a daytime population of over 200,000
- Care for mentally ill population had transferred from State to local governments, but the funding has lagged behind the demand.
- Police Department had the right for 72-hour holds - Department had received more training on evaluation methods and assessment
- Have to confiscate firearms from individual
- Number of calls for service have increased, only one officer and 1 clinician, type of calls took more time

Opportunities:

- Partnership with Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health - Field based, co-response team with officer and clinician
- Mission was for the Police Department and the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health to provide effective, collaborative and compassionate mental health and law enforcement response to those in need of mental health services.
- The Department maintained a membership in National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) for training meetings and information
- Attend monthly meetings of Los Angeles County Mental Evaluation Teams (LACMET) for information and networking opportunities
- Provide training to new responders and field training officers in the Department
- Provide information and resources to the families of subjects, including the County's Access information
- Could assist with consults for Community Lead Officers during homeless outreach projects
- Provide in depth threat assessments on case by case basis
- Prevent mentally challenged individual from becoming homeless

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

Sergeant Wilk detailed the preliminary results from TMET:

- An increase in community awareness of mental illness
- A positive and more effective law enforcement relationship with mentally ill subjects and their families
- To date, no reportable Uses of Force for TMET contacts
- To date, no injuries to the mentally ill subjects, clinician or officers in TMET contacts.
- Patrol Officers are cleared more quickly to resume regular patrol duties. TMET now a state certified Mental Healthcare Provider which was key to funding for the team.

In response to a question from Commissioner Chiota, Sergeant Wilk stated that the team was co-located in an office in the Police Department.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Ragins, Sergeant Wilk explained that in situations involving veterans, the Department worked fairly successfully with the Veterans' Administration.

Sergeant Wilk noted that calls for service were expected to continue to rise this year but she added that the Officers were becoming better trained to handle calls more effectively.

Commissioner Svolos requested and received concurrence from the Commission for staff to ask Harbor Regional Center to present before the Commission.

There was a discussion of bringing in speakers on the subject of autism.

Chairperson Gow discussed whether the Commission wished to address accessibility for individuals, such as the deaf, at the Commission level as well as the City level.

Management Associate Megerdichian stated that future meetings might include presenters who had already been requested, but who had not been available to speak at prior meetings.

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

Sergeant Wilk stated that she had a follow up to her presentation and noted that TMET had also received training on developmental disabilities and dual diagnoses and was familiar with Harbor Regional Center.

9. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #2

Commissioner Svolos announced that April was Autism Awareness Month.

Commissioner Svolos requested an excused absence for the May 26, 2016 meeting.

In response to question from Commissioner Chiota, Sergeant Wilk stated that the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) contact person was Emergency Services Coordinator Sutherlin.

Chairperson thanked the presenters and staff.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:38 p.m., Commissioner Svolos moved to adjourn the meeting to the regular meeting on Thursday, May 26, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chiota and a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval. (Absent Commissioner Mattucci)

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Approved as submitted
June 26, 2016
s/ Rebecca Poirier, City Clerk