

Ventura Social Services Task Force – Meeting Minutes from November 7, 2012

I. Introductions and Announcements

Present at Meeting: Neal Andrews, Claudia Armann, Sue Brinkmeyer, Kent Brinkmeyer, Peter Brown, Cathy Brudnicki, Cindy Cattle, Miguel Cardenas, John Crowley, Pat Esseff, Jill Forman, Sal Gonzalez, Tim Hawkins, Tim Hockett, John Jones, Shelli Locklear, Amy Luoma, Donna Mason-Lutrull, John Lutrull, Arlene Martinez, Kevin McCursy, Kate Mills, Al Myers, Kathy Powell, David Pyle, Amanda Pyper, Carmen Ramirez, Clyde Reynolds, Rheina Rogart, Karol Schulkin, Mark Stadler, Kristen Tippelt, Daniel Zapata.

II. Subcommittee and Other Reports

A. City of Ventura Update - Peter Brown

- 1) City of Ventura employees raised \$400 for the Ventura Homelessness Prevention Fund; Annett Ewing and Teresa Purrington presented a check in that amount to Cindy Cattle of the VHPF Subcommittee
- 2) Mission Plaza Tenant Association put up 23 Safe and Clean banners in parking lot saying “Yes to Charities” “No to Panhandling.” Mike Stadler and Peter gave their time; the merchants paid for the banners, lighting improvements, shopping cart retrieval and security enhancements. Because Santa Barbara found having receptacles in stores where shoppers could donate did not prove successful, the decision was made not to include them in this project. Though a study has not been done yet, merchants report that sales are increasing and customers are returning. Other shopping centers are calling for information.
- 3) The Winter Warming Shelter run by St. Vincent de Paul opens December 1 at the Armory in Oxnard. For the first time in its 11-year history, the shelter may need to be closed for as many as 8 nights to accommodate the training needs of the National Guard. Peter and others are investigating other options, including moving the trainings to the Ventura Armory, moving the shelter to the Ventura Armory on those 8 nights, opening other emergency shelters on those nights, etc. Sal Gonzalez noted that the City of Oxnard does have designated emergency shelter sites.
- 4) Because the shelter is in Oxnard this year, individuals from Ventura are eligible for bus passes to get to the shelter each day. Peter is working out a process to distribute the first bus pass; subsequent passes will be available at the Armory. The County Office of Homeless Services will get bus and TB test information out to the homeless. TB tests are available at

all county Urgent Care sites, VCMC, Las Islas, etc., and at the One Stops in Ventura and Oxnard.

- 5) Parcel owners are ahead of schedule in clearing out the river bottom, and the last three large encampments are being removed the week of November 12. There were 43 individuals listed in the Stanley area of the river bottom who were eligible for the hotel vouchers and program funded by the County. Individuals removed from other areas were offered assistance by Homeless to Home. Some of the homeless have migrated to the Selby property; a large concentration of encampments is now behind RiverHaven. Shots were fired in that area 3 weeks ago. The challenge is to assist people who want assistance.
 - Karol Schulkin reported that a team of Social Workers has been working with 21 of the individuals from the Stanley area who chose to accept assistance. More than half are still in motels. A unique plan has been developed for each. Several returned to family out of state and 1 is in respite care. Overall it is working very well. The challenge is finding very affordable housing options.
 - Neal Andrews emphasized that the process is straining the resources and indicated that it would be helpful to know what the success rate is
- 6) 100K Homes training was attended by Peter Brown, Sandra Morales, and Amy Luoma. 6-7 cities were present, and it was immediately clear that the cost of housing in Ventura is much higher than in any other city attending. To be successful, we must fund the gap between how much it costs to house someone here and that person's income; must fund the cost of case management, and must educate landowners regarding the benefits to them of making their property part of the program. Of 159 communities participating in 100K Homes, Santa Monica and Santa Barbara are the most like Ventura, and they are having the least success in achieving the goal of housing 2.5% of the chronically homeless each month. 100K Homes claims that if you house 2.5% of the target population each month, you will have housed all within 36 months. The most successful city of the 159 is New Brunswick New Jersey, where the Housing Authority is in charge of the Homeless Day Center. Jeff Lambert and Peter met with Denise Wise of the Ventura Housing Authority to discuss one of the first steps in the 100K Homes model: identifying all barriers and all opportunities to housing someone. Denise pointed out that some of the policies that might be barriers will be in control of the Housing Authority, but others will belong to other agencies, and for the process to be successful, all of those agencies must be willing to remove barriers. Peter

reported that a group of select individuals would be meeting November 8 to begin an exercise to identify the barriers and opportunities.

- Sal Gonzalez noted that all cities must submit a Housing Elements report that includes a listing of barriers to affordable housing and a plan to deal with them.
 - Neal Andrews noted that the council will be moving forward to provide direction on the 100K Homes process.
 - Donna Lutrull noted that Denver is working with 250 churches, and they are exceeding goals
 - Peter Brown noted that Denver generated funding to address homeless through corporations, and Ventura can look to do that as well
 - Clyde Reynolds advised that we need to get all agencies, including churches, into a coalition and into the conversation; we must bring all who must be part of the solution into the same room.
 - Peter Brown noted that perfect is the enemy of good -- if we not begin talking about it, we will never get there.
 - Neal Andrews noted that we need to make up our minds to do it, and then do it. We must focus on how much the community wins by housing the chronically homeless.
 - Sal Gonzalez noted a parallel between housing policies and triage in emergency rooms where it is not first come, first served.
 - Kristen Tippelt noted that in the 100K Homes project in Santa Barbara, they make biweekly phone calls to try to make the best housing match for each individual. They house one and then move to the next person on the list.
 - Kathy Powell noted that we need to get the word out that housing the homeless and getting them case management brings the cost to the community down
 - Tim Hockett noted that the problems are surmountable if there is political will.
 - Carmen Ramirez noted that we must bring the community together. It is important that the faith-based community come to city council and say, "You must do the right thing" to affect NIMBYism.
- 7) The point-in-time homeless count is January 29. We must decide whether to do the 100K Homes Vulnerability Index as part of the count or separately. One argument against combining them is that it is best to keep conditions of the count the same in order to be able to compare data.

B. Report from the Steering Committee -- John Jones

- 1) The Steering Committee is again moving to make the VSSTF a 501(c)3 organization in order to increase our access to dollars through grants and the possibilities to impact homelessness through programs that require that status.
 - Cindy Cante noted that it would help the VHPF, which could then apply for grants and get on corporate giving lists, etc.
 - Neal Andrews said he believes it is vital that we become a 501(c)3. If we try to create a relationship with landlords, the key is being able to guarantee them against financial loss. As a 501(c)3, we can raise funding to do this, and we can leverage that money by creating an insurance pool in which we hold the security deposit as a guarantee.
 - 2) CEDC's Los Angeles Avenue Affordable Housing Project is before the City Council on November 19; attendance and letters of support for the item would be helpful.
 - Karol Schulkin noted that our speaking to the council given them cover to do what they may want to do anyway. It's important to note that Cabrillo's projects are well-run and well-designed, and half of the units in this project are for farm workers.
- C. Homeless Prevention Subcommittee – Cindy Cante
- 1) Catholic Charities had the fund in October. 6 households with a total of 20 people were served.
 - 2) Project Understanding will have the fund for November.
 - 3) UUCV is holding a fundraiser for the VHPF on November 17 and VIMA's Interfaith Thanksgiving Service on November 20 at 7 p.m. will take up a collection for the VHPF as well.
 - 4) November is traditionally Homelessness Awareness Month. Hoping to raise \$10,000 this month, we are giving wrist band to each person who donates \$25 in November.
- D. The Gateway Subcommittee - Clyde Reynolds
- 1) The Gateway Subcommittee continues to work on a single Screening Assessment Form; we are in the process of taking the form down to just those essential pieces of information that would allow any group to begin providing services. We are getting lots of help from the County. Any organization that is providing case management services is encouraged to attend the next meeting of the subcommittee on November 8 at the Salvation Army

II. Business

- A. One Stop – Kate Mills

- 1) One Stop Oxnard and Ventura served a total of 5,745 visitors (2,500 of them unduplicated) between January 1 and October 17, 2012.
- 2) One Stop received a grant of \$1,149.47 from the Unitarian Church of Ventura to help defray the cost of IDs for clients
- 3) As wet weather approaches, the need for dry socks rises. If you run a drive to collect them, call me and I will pick them up.

III. Networking

- 1) The Black and White Dinner Dance raised \$12,000 for the Winter Warming Shelter.
- 2) One City, One Meal is at the Fairgrounds on Thanksgiving Day. Gates open at 10 a.m. Doors open at 11:30 and all eat together at noon. Volunteers can sign up at the website: OneCityMeal.org
- 3) On November 17, 2012 the Unitarian Church is hosting a fundraiser for VHPF with the movie "Voices of the Homeless" at 7:00 pm.
- 4) There is a City Council Meeting on November 19, 2012 at which low-income housing proposed by Cabrillo Economic Development will be discussed. Those who support the provision of additional low-income housing should plan to attend.
- 5) The Unitarian Universalist Church will be holding a Homeless Person's Memorial Service on Sunday December 16, 2012 in Plaza Park at 3:00 pm rain or shine.
- 6) Community Action Board has an opening for District 1, Ojai and Ventura, for someone who might represent homeless or low-income families. There is an application form to complete; it is not an onerous process.
- 7) December 3 at 2:30 p.m., at the Ventura County Office of Education, the Update of the 10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness will be presented. It's at 5100 Adolfo in Camarillo. The plan will be posted on the Ventura County Housing and Homelessness Coalition for a two-week comment period beginning on December 3.

IV. Next (1st Wednesday) Meeting

Our next regular (1st Wednesday) meeting is from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm Wednesday December 5, 2012 at Family to Family, 303 N. Ventura Ave. #E, Ventura, CA 93001.