

Ventura Social Service Task Force

MINUTES

September 3, 2014

Present: Pat Esseff, Bill Griffin, Jan, Ben Unseth, Holly Whitmore, Jeff Wojnarowski, Amanda Herrera, Larry Hurst, Harold Cartlidge, Susan M. Dees, Jerry Foreman, Mary Haffner, Elizabeth Egelko, Jill Forman, Judy Alexandre, Brian Brennan, Sue Brinkmeyer, Peter Brown, David Deutsch, Tim Hawkins, John Jones, Amy Luoma, Kate Mills, Kathy Powell, Clyde Reynolds, Karol Schulkin

Meeting was called to order at 3:20PM

I. Introductions and Welcome

II. Revisions to and Approval of Minutes

- Review of minutes identified no changes needs to be made. Harold moved to approve the minutes, John seconded. Approved

III. Changes or Additions of the Agenda

IV. Committees and Other Reports

A. Updates from City – Peter Brown

- He will begin working w City of Oxnard in October ½ time there ½ Ventura try to achieve consistency across the rivers.
- The Homeless Subcommittee has been cancelled for tomorrow, September 4th.
- Harbor Church update. The church has voluntarily closed their doors and are suing the City of Ventura. Many people will be called to testify, many other agencies have been impacted by the closure.
- New programs coming: (1) RISE (Rapid Integration Support & Engagement) Behavioral health case managers will be on the streets with proactive, assertive community outreach. (2) FUSE (Frequent Users System Engagement). Regional Hospital Association of California hired Audra Strickland, who will be looking into frequent users of hospitals - The purpose is to reduce impact on the city and hospitals. They will try and coordinate recuperative and respite care to lessen costs and overload on systems of care. The study will start with a workshop on Oct. 9th. They will invite people who deal with frequent users of services. The study will be financed by gift given by Mike Tageman. There are 15-20 frequent users of ambulances, substance abuse. The study is precipitated by Million Dollar Murray essay run by the hospitals. Hospitals motivated by fines for “patient dumping” and ACLU interest. Brian Wong from the hospital says a portion will be paid by hospital and also the community. FUSE City will have to permit a space - perhaps the old tower of hospital.

- David D. hopes there will be no punitive aspects to the study. Peter says the primary tenet is to assist the most needy. Larry St. Vincent de Paul—LA County health services has homes for medically involved clients, some from behavioral health.
- 10900 Telephone Rd. The 60 bed veteran hospital needs to break ground by 2020. Many people probably voted for prop. 41, the \$600M rental fund to help up to maybe 150 more beds.
- Homeless Subcommittee meeting gave approval for up to 15 cars for the Safe Sleep Program. It will allow agencies to put 5 more at one church or other site. Rob Orth will expand one car at a time so there is the right number of cars.
- The Winter warming shelter will be in Oxnard. Planning meetings are next week.
- Discussion with Kathy noting that many people left without resources are now in the parks using bathrooms for personal matters and staying in the parks when tourists are downtown. People are taking “bird baths” without showers being available at Harbor Church or at Project. Asked David D. for feedback; David noted that with “Hand up Not a Hand Out” policy the disenfranchised are feeling even more ostracized in the community. This makes people more desperate. Basic food and showers help lessen this feeling. The approach service providers are all using is helping many and Clyde and Rob should be congratulated, but the most vulnerable are more distant with the new directives.
- Clyde R. says we have been able to engage some and increase services to them, but basic needs services are still tied to engaging in services. Those who are not engaging haven’t hit bottom yet. We learned over many years that providing services doesn’t make permanent changes. We have taken this position because we have seen better outcomes. Agencies all have limited resources and each year there are more budget constraints.
- Peter says a Gateway is still in the conversation. Ventura City Council has not embraced responsibility; Oxnard has a place to take those who are on the streets; Ventura does not. The City did not close Harbor Church; it could have moved elsewhere. The City Council members receive more emails saying “make it go away” than they get emails asking them to build.
- Harold asked “What happened to housing first” and the best practice of providing individuals with a stable living situation before asking them to change behaviors. The response was that is dividing up responsibility, the county seems to feel that cities must build units and the county will provide services. Yet. the City has River Haven, Clyde’s new veteran housing, and the Housing Authority is expanding units. But there is still no emergency shelter and no Gateway.
- POLICE Comments - RISE Program will be great program, beginning most likely in late October. It will identify people who need help and will keep asking people again and again if they need help. The FUSE program will help too. The VPD officers regularly asking those who are homeless if they need help; they say “No” 9 times, and then the 10th time, they may say “Yes.”

- Clyde Reynolds commented that RISE does not provide long-term case management; instead it links to services. It will, however, fund a new case manager at Out Place. A lot of resources are coming, and we will see some improvement.
- The Point in Time Homeless Count will be 4th Tuesday in January: January 27. Volunteers will be needed in both Ventura and Oxnard, with more needed in Oxnard.

B. Faith Based Community Subcommittee – Judy Alexandre

- The Faith Subcommittee wants to facilitate houses of worship becoming more actively involved in efforts to end homelessness and poverty. To that end, they are planning something small for Homelessness Awareness Month (November) and a large gathering for the fall to identify resources, gaps, needs, volunteer needs and availability, and advocacy and education opportunities.
- Judy took the opportunity to plant a seed: could the VSSTF find a way to buy a franchise and let our people work there for pay. They would have something meaningful, earn money, and build skills and self esteem.

C. Outreach Committee – John Jones

John plans to meet with the Steering Committee to discuss ideas for increasing volunteering by college age students and retired people.

D. Homelessness Prevention Subcommittee – Brian Brennan

- Olga at Project Understanding had the funds in September.
- UU Church donated \$1,200 this month
- Fund assisted 3 adults and 3 children, 2 at \$300 and 1 at \$500. Fund balance is approximately \$1,700 with UU donation
- Website is fixed. Want to have all ready for homelessness awareness month

E. Coordinated Assessment/Intake – Alicia Morales

- The central phone line for coordinated intake and assessment is still being piloted with a case manager available M-Sat 8-4 pm They are assessing outcomes. 29 calls in August. 15 were referred to H2H; 2 were permanently housed; 14 were referred to other services like HPF. 10 were not ready to accept services.

F. Housing and Services Committee of the CoC – Amy Luoma

- Joe Colleti gave an overview evidence based best practices. We are following best practices in Housing First and street outreach. We are on streets finding people who need housing and providing Assertive Community Treatment. We need more Bridge Housing. The vast majority of what we are doing is following national best practices.
- Joe Colleti feels Ventura County has available housing, but we have not tapped it appropriately. Amy thinks we need a lot more housing.

- Karol S. says WE HAVE NO VOUCHERS.
- Numbers report: Housed this month through H2H (Salvation Army, Project Understanding, Turning Point Foundation Lutheran Social Services, and St. Vincent de Paul) - 32 adults and 6 children . January-August 289 individuals.
- Karol reported County numbers for Ventura for the month: housed 3 singles and 2 chronically homeless

G. Continuum of Care - Rob Orth

- CoC is facing 5% cuts projected in HUD that will require moving \$91,000 from Tier 1 to Tier 2. They had a challenging but open and frank meeting about the Gateway facility. The money is not here and funds are shrinking. If we could build a facility, how would we meet ongoing costs.
- Affordable Care Act has money for supportive housing, but the county needs to learn more about it.

H. VSSTF Steering Committee – Sue Brinkmeyer

- VSSTF, Inc., the new 501(c) 3 created to raise funds for Ventura Homeless Prevention Fund and the new Landlord liaison program, has a board of 10, soon to be 11. Official notice of Board members should come out next month when board is complete and website is up.

I. One Stop – Kate Mills

- 58 new unduplicated clients. Their living situations were 12 housed, 13 doubled up, 11 in transitional housing, 4 in shelters, 1 institutional, and 17 on the streets. They provided 392 service contacts. Case management through Turning Point Foundation is going well; had 36 contacts; this is the doorway to H2H. .

J. Family to Family – Jan Schmutte.

- They are seeing their numbers approach 180-200 people, five times a week. They have been discussing the possibility of portable showers.

K. Project Understanding update - Ben Unseth

- Project had 2 families graduate from Shore. 2 new families are coming in. Ben would welcome any input about what those on the task force see as Project's place in the community as he gets oriented. City Center and Project are figuring out their relationship.

L. Networking

- Tim Hawkins - Apropos of Judy Alexandre's comments regarding need for jobs, Community Action also sees the need to provide a road to employment. They have begun in a small way a business building wooden sea kayaks. They began with one volunteer and built one Kayak. They now have one employee and hope to hire a second soon.

M. Laura's Law

- Clyde Reynolds - Meetings have been happening regarding the issues surrounding implementing Laura's Law, which provides for implementation of an involuntary outpatient program. There are many steps which would have to be accomplished first: must first have a voluntarily treatment facility in place and we do not. Must have established asseertive case managemenet program with 10-1 staff ratio 24/7, and we do not. So Behavior Health needs to find funding to rebuild a voluntary program before they can look at Laura's law. There is no new money for Laura's law and cannot supplant or take funds from existing voluntary program. Could take money from hospital-based programs, however.
- Larry Hurst, SVDP - the potential for legal challenges is strong - it basically forces people to accept treatment. L. A. County Board of Supervisors directed Borad of Mental Health to go and do it, but it's a lot of political grandstanding.
- Clyde - A person can still refuse treatment. In Nevada County, 22/29 accepted voluntarily. The group will meet again last Wednesday of the month.

N. One City/ One Meal has not been planned as a city event this year. Jim Duran of Faith in Action at Project might be considering it or may encourage churches to do their own outreach.

O. Mayor's Veterans Challenge thoughts.

- Rob Orth - .It would not change what service providers are doing. To succeed, we need VASH vouchers, and this doesn't get u more vouchers. We are moving forward together pretty well. The challenge would add a demand for more data without providing any additional resources.
- Karol - More money is currently being spent on Veterans. However, there is an astounding number of families with kids needing services, 48% are children. We need to concentrate on this.
- Clyde - Denver is a big city and can hire a coordinator for this.
- General remarks How can we bite off things when we can't fund them? How is community going to pay for it? Not ready to join in the fad. One person's homelessness s not more important than another's.

VI. Business –

- The group voted to support Kate Mills in writing a Letter to Editor thanking the City of Simi for Samaritian Center support!!!
- St Vincent de Paul Black and White Ball November 15 at the Elks Lodge. They will reserve a table for the VSSTF and sign ups will be taken at October meeting.