

Minutes 12/4/2019

Ventura Social Service Task Force 3:15; 303 N Ventura Ave; Family to Family room

Present: Gabino Aguirre, Judy Aleixandre, Jerry Breiner, Sue Brinkmeyer, Nancy Broadhead, Christina Cabral*, Kevin Clerici, Betsy Erickson, Sonja Flores, Veronica Garcia, Peter Gilli, Mary Haffner, Meredith Hart, Veronica James, Miguel Marquez, Kappy Paulson, Kara Raddick, Dan Raddick, Melissa Ramirez, Clyde Reynolds, Deidre Rose, Carol Schulkin, Jan Schmutte, Mark Stadler, Tim Wilbur, Dana Worsnop

Note: *Christa Cabral is a new outreach worker hired as part of a partnership between the County and the City of Ventura

- I. The meeting was called to order at 3:16 pm.
- II. The agenda was approved, with the addition of a report from Peter Gilli, Community Development Director, on the revision to the City's master plan. (MSC Kevin Clerici, Carol Schulkin)
- III. The minutes of 11/6/19 were approved (MSC Kevin Clerici, Clyde Reynolds)
- IV. The Treasurers Report indicated a balance of \$2,356.46, unchanged from last month.
- V. Peter Gilli, Community Development Director, now in 6th month of tenure in that position reported on the update now underway for the City's General Plan and made the following points:
 1. Lack of supply of house big part of challenge.
 2. A consulting firm is helping.
 3. The first 6-9 months of 2020 will be focused on community engagement and hearing from businesses, the public, and anyone who spends time in the city about what they want the future of the city to be like.
 4. The city will be planning for roughly 5,000 new housing units.
 5. The city must create a new housing element every 8 years. Last time 3,500 units additional were to be planned for.
 6. Percentages of the 5,000 need to be at each income level in accordance with community need.
 7. State law has changed so that we cannot say no to 5,000 units. We have to identify sites for those units. If a site is zoned for 100 units, the city can no longer deny those units.
 8. It is important for all to be involved in helping the city figure out where units will be located.
 9. Policies about homelessness and those at risk need to be updated as well. They are now 7 years old. There will be many opportunities to be involved. If you know of policies you would recommend, please bring them forward.
 10. The new general plan will not be adopted until 2023, but the housing element must be ready by 2021. This will include policies to help get people into housing and stay in housing.
 11. Question from the floor: What is the reasoning behind the push to continue to build. Answer from Peter Gilli: The state looks at the state as an economic entity and establishes what it believes is necessary for the economic and social well being of the state. They have

always prioritized housing. Without housing we would not have a growing economy or a place for our growing population. The state projects that we are 3 million units short statewide.

12. Question: Will the plan address issues like whether we have enough water? Answer: The state expects communities to do what is necessary to make enough water available. If we plan for growth and the growth is dependent on the state giving us more water, then we can go back to the state and say that we tried to comply with the law. Every city is struggling to meet all of the needs. Many cities have been good at finding reasons not to build. Ventura's need to build 5,000 is our share of SCAG pie; it is small compared to our percentage of population, partly because we are on the outskirts and don't have great transit. Other cities with the same population are required to add more units.
13. Question: How is it decided how many units need to be at each income level. Answer: The state has adjusted the formula for that. It is based on the percentage of population at each income level, plus number of units already at that level. Our share of low income housing will be less than for other areas of the county.
14. Question: What is considered a household? Answer: We need to plan for units. The rent for the unit needs to be in the range for the required income level. A market rate unit might have multiple families in it. An overcrowding factor measures and takes that into account, rather than the number of housing units we are required to build. If a community has a higher percentage of overcrowded units than the county average, they need to provide more units than otherwise.
15. Question: Are we allowed to break housing into sub-income levels like extremely low, very low, and low. Answer: Yes, we can break it down, and in another cycle the state may do it for us.
16. Question: Is there anything that will address the issue of exorbitant rent? Answer: Economists at Cal Lutheran have found that the county has not built enough units to meet demand, so there is a supply and demand issue. Compared to the Bay Area rent here is cheap, but wages there are higher. Our problem is worse, because our wages are not growing enough. High rents are hurting us more. Rent control could be put into the General Plan, depending on what the council wants to do. Building more units increases supply, so prices should come down.
17. Question: How much of the climate crisis is being considered in the plan and when is the time to bring that up — water, transportation, denser and smaller units, carbon reduction, climate refugees, sustainability? Answer: One of great things about being in California is that there are many state laws about housing, greenhouse gas reduction and so forth, so we have to look at sustainability and the issues you raise. Building codes have shifted to account for things like pitched roofs requiring additional wood. The new general plan has to address climate change and greenhouse gas reduction. The Council has approved getting a Climate Action Plan to come out of the General Plan. The concept of denser development, smaller units, and development near transit are all part of state requirements. For many reasons, the new plan will probably be a greener plan.
18. Question: Will you come back in a few months so that we can focus on homelessness as part of the plan? Answer: Yes, probably in 2020.
19. Question: SOAR has prevented us from building in certain ways. Is the state considering addressing SOAR so that housing can be built? Answer: The state could consider such legislation. Agriculture is a big part of what we do as a state, but they could address SOAR.

They would prefer that the building be transit oriented infill. Putting housing in an area that has transit or could have transit, you do not put pressure to increase cars.

20. Question: One of our targets at VSSTF is getting an overlay so that housing can be built on areas now zoned for other purposes. Your input on that? Answer: There are more retail sites than any city needs. Push further for zoning changes. The City will be doing that through the Housing Element. Commercial, mixed use, conversions will be part of General Plan. Every group needs to be involved and at the table so that we are able to create a plan that has the best chance of balancing out.

VI. Meredith gave an update from the City of Ventura, Safe and Clean Housing and Homelessness committee

1. Meredith announced she is expecting a baby in May.
2. Meredith has spent recent months educating community councils and clubs like Soroptomists on what to expect with the upcoming opening of the shelter.
3. The Safe and Clean website has been updated. All service providers should check it to be sure information is correct.
4. The shelter continues to move forward. They are now putting on the finishing touches. A mural is being worked on. Tours have taken place. Council voted to name it the ARCH, All Roads Connect to Housing (name suggested by Veronica James). The Anacapa Arch will be in the logo, along with sky and waves, orange and blue city branding colors. As we get closer to unveiling, they will produce things like hats.
5. The commons area in the shelter will be named Neal's Place in honor of former Mayor Neal Andrews.
6. In the park on Johnson across from Motel 6 there will be a fair for homeless people to connect people experiencing homelessness to services.
7. Weather has not reached the threshold for a foul weather shelter to open, but no location has been identified for when that happens. Please help us find a place. Meredith has reached out to many places including Knights of Columbus, Elks, Fairgrounds, parking lots, and churches. She has multiple army surplus tents for 30, and would need 4 staff per tent. Part of the problem is that everything has to be ready to mobilize with just 2 hours' warning. The Armory can't meet this mobilization requirement. We can't allow the foul weather shelter to go poorly and impact the year-round shelter. It must be done well, but Meredith has just \$40,000 for the whole season, and costs could run as high as \$5,000 per night. Meredith has been told not to do anything on the West side because there has been a high impact already on that part of the city with services. Political impacts must be considered as well. The City is contributing \$1.3 million for the year-round shelter this year.
8. Question: How big an area do you need. 60x60 per tent plus heaters and lighting. Tents will not work on grass or dirt because of rain.
9. Question: Would it be more cost effective to find a building rather than a tent? Are there empty buildings? Answer: We have tried that. Toys R Us has potential leases. If you know of anybody or any place, please let us know. I can check into Staples. Fry's and Sears are not yet available. It's a nighttime shelter only, out at 6 am.
10. Question: Any possibility of partnering with Oxnard? Answer: The Oxnard Armory is currently full. Parking lot there is at capacity already. There are 110 people there now, 20 from Ventura.
11. Question: Faith community can probably prepare food in advance and freeze it. That will help with mobilization issues. Rotating shelters happen elsewhere all winter, not just

foul weather. Could that be tried again? Answer: The City supports the concept of a rotating shelter among faith groups. It works in Conejo Valley. Faith Community could gather to discuss.

12. Question: Salvation Army and Red Cross have relationships with fairgrounds. Can those be of help? Answer: Fairgrounds had bad experiences with homeless during Thomas Fire and is not interested.

VII. Gabino Aguirre and others gave an update on upcoming Census. The following points were made:

1. Redistricting is based on the Census. It happens every 10 years. We have a partnership between state, census, and county through the Community Foundation. The state is divided into 10 districts. We are in Region 5, which includes Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz and Ventura Counties.
2. The Feds have provided some funding. State has provided \$100 million to make sure we count all hard to count individuals. Region 5 got \$400,000. County got \$280,000. We need \$6 million because we have so many who are deemed hard to count. One fourth of individuals in Ventura County are deemed hard to count — homeless, those living in multi-family housing, children in hard-to-count households, seniors, those who are homebound, college students, those who are institutionalized in skilled nursing homes, jails or prisons, farm workers, indigenous folks, immigrants and non-citizens.
3. Our Census campaign locally is supervised through the Complete Count committee with multiple organizations and sub committees participating. They are in the process of contacting all faith groups and doing a video to share in all faith communities.
4. It is important that all participate in the census. Each person is worth \$2,000 in resources per year for next 10 years = \$20,000. An undercount is very costly in terms of resources. People not counted are not represented in congress because the districting is based on census.
5. Hard to count populations do not come to you — census has to go to them through a trusted messenger strategy. We need to martial all of us who are trusted messengers in order to move forward when census happens.
6. Census bureau has a website with resources that than can be printed. Census website in Sacramento also has resources available on website. VenturaCountyCounts.org is website. State communications team will provide radio and newspaper announcements.
7. Individuals not hired by the census cannot assist someone fill out census. Individuals can only answer questions, or maybe help people who are blind or non-English speaking. Census Bureau in Sacramento has telephone translators in 120 languages.
8. All forms are online and must be completed online. Census goes live mid-March. If you have not responded by April 1, you get reminder, and again next week. If don't respond by 3rd week in April, people will knock on door.
9. Question: Can we help someone who is illiterate? How does someone answer if they don't have an address and don't know social security number. Answer: Census folks will be present with iPads and fill out form with folks who are illiterate. We need many more people to go out and do the count. Each must do a background check and take an oath. A handout

provides information on dealing with homeless people and the Encampment becomes their address. Census workers will go to encampments in 4-wheel drive vehicles. They can also use agency address.

10. Question: Agencies can set up kiosks where people who do not have a computer can do census. People hired by the census can help people fill things out. Funding is available for kiosks. 30 agencies have applied for funding for kiosk - \$1,000 to \$50,000. More funding applications will be available at the end of December.
11. Question: If we have a kiosk, do we have to have an enumerator (someone hired by Census)? Answer: No. They can do it themselves while talking to someone on the phone in Sacramento. No information can be saved on the local tablet. It must be connected to the online site and saved there. Paper forms can be used as well. People who don't participate before 3rd week in April will get paper form, which has 9 questions — ethnicity, address issues, no SSN. Information about the kiosks and on getting information out have handouts. Apply to have a kiosk online at website. Judy will send it out.
12. Question: What do we say to someone who is undocumented. Answer: Say, "We are neighbors and we all count." Somos vecinos y todos cantamos." We are neighbors in many ways — residential neighbors, social neighbors in community, social media neighbors, cultural neighbors, etc.
13. Question: Do you have confidence at the federal level that data will not be shared with INS? Answer: Promote Knowing your rights: You have a right not to have anyone invade your home without a search warrant, to ask for identification, Comment: It is important for people to be counted where they live because of political representation.
14. Question: Are you going to give bus passes or other rewards to homeless people to complete census. Answer: They will not even allow us to put out candy on our tables.
15. Recruiters are now hiring 1,000 census takers to go out and talk to people who did not fill out census by 3rd week in April. Homeless people can take these jobs at \$20 per hour. Senior citizens may appreciate the work, as will young people. They will do a workshop for anyone interested. Selection will begin next month. Must be fingerprinted and have background check done. Training will start in mid-March. They will deploy across county after April 1. We will send out information on these jobs with the minutes.

VIII. Mary Haffner gave a brief summary of issues related to the need for Mental Health Advocacy and made the following points:

1. A stakeholder's letter was sent to you and will be sent again before our next meeting, which will be in February (no meeting in January.). Mary will come back then.
2. Mary serves on the Behavioral Health Advisory Board, which listens to what people who are attempting to get mental health assistance are experiencing. Mary's goal is to find what can be done to create more beds for people facing serious mental illness in our county. Mary is now focusing on front-end services, emergency services. People are not able to go directly into a hospital treatment program. They must go to an emergency room, and the crisis system is inadequate.

3. NAMI is going to endorse Mary's letter/petition before Board of Supervisors and there is still time for Ventura Social Services Task Force to act before that meeting.
4. Mary has proposed actions Ventura Social Services Task Force might endorse; they will be distributed with the minutes.

IX. A few announcements were made as follows:

1. The Memorial Service for our Homeless Neighbors will be December 14 at 3pm in Plaza Park
2. Requests for proposals for state/federal funding is now on the COC website
3. The homeless count is January 9. Sign up on COC website.

X. The remainder of the agenda and reports will be taken up at the February meeting.

XI. The meeting was adjourned at 4:59 pm **Next meeting will be Feb. 5, 2020.** We will be dark in Jan. unless there is something urgent.

Respectfully submitted by Sue Brinkmeyer

Other upcoming meeting of interest:

- COC Alliance 1/16/20 10-12 am Jennifer Harkey (Jennifer.harkey@ventura.org) location TBA
- Homeless Prevention Fund 1/16/20, 4pm, Unitarian Universalist Church, Sue Brinkmeyer (suebrinkmeyer@earthlink.net)
- City of Ventura Safe and Clean, Housing and Homeless committee, 4pm City Hall, TBA
- Homes For All, contact John Sanders Jones (johnsandersjones@gmail.com) or Sonja Flores (sflores@hacityofventura.org)
- Faith Subcommittee TBA , probably 3pm, 1/22/20 location TBA