

1. Minutes of the Ventura Social Services Task Force
2. May 3, 2023
- 3.
4. Present: Judy Alexandre, Sue Brinkmeyer, Gerald Briner Brandi Brown, Kyler Carlson, Juliana Cervantes, Kevin Clerici, Jim Duran, Sonja Flores, Jenn Harkey, Shelley Harrison, John Harrison, Jeffrey Hayden, John Sanders Jones, Pam Kelley, Jacob Lesner-Buxton, Edwin Marinez, Kristian Nunez, Clyde Renolds, Leona Rollins, Melanie Shankle, Aaron Smith, Javier Villa Solis, Elizabeth Stone, Susan White Wood
5. The meeting was called to order at 3:17 pm
6. The minutes were approved as presented (John Jones/Pam Kelley). The La Quinta project attachment will be sent out separately.
7. The agenda was approved as presented (John Jones/Jenn Harkey)
8. There are currently \$2,009 in our bank account.
9. Dr. Jeffrey Hayden reported on CARE Court.
 - a) Judy indicated that Care Court will come to Ventura probably in 2024
 - b) The slides that were shared at this meeting are on the website: ■ <https://www.chhs.ca.gov/care-act/>. Info below is just a summary of these slides; many details are not captured here.
 - c) The CARE Act was written into law late last year
 - d) The purpose is to deliver services to the most severely ill and vulnerable individuals, while preserving self-determination to the greatest extent possible and community living.
 - e) It is different from Laura's Law in that it can be initiated by a petition to the Court from a variety of people; no prior arrest is required; all are held accountable by a CARE plan; person being petitioned can have a supporter with them if they choose
 - f) Person must be 18 years of age and be experiencing challenges with severe mental illness and not be currently stabilized with ongoing treatment; condition is deteriorating, CARE plan must be the least restrictive alternative
 - g) Petition is filed with the Court, and reviewed by court. If it does not meet criteria, it is dismissed. Petition must include an affidavit of a licensed behavioral health professional or evidence that the respondent was detained for a minimum of two intensive treatments under 5250
 - h) This is not forced treatment. It includes engagement and encourages engagement.
 - i) A court may refer an individual to outpatient treatment (in our County that is under Laura's Law)
 - j) Ventura County just opened up its brand new mental health facility in the Todd Center Jail.
 - k) The Court will review the report within 5 days. If the Court determines that outreach/engagement is successful, the Court will dismiss the matter. If not, the Court will set a hearing.
 - l) Either an agreement is reached, or an evaluation hearing is set within 21 days.

- m) The Court may order a CARE plan or dismiss the petition.
- n) After reviewing the CARE plan, the Court will order CARE plan to support the individual's needs, and will then follow up.
- o) At the 11th month, the Court re-evaluates and either graduates the individual or reappoints to the program.
- p) Court can fine a County if it is not complying with CARE.
- q) A fund will exist to support the program.
- r) If the participant is not participating in CARE proceedings, the Court may terminate the CARE participation and use existing authority to ensure an individual's safety, e.g., conservatorship.
- s) CARE emphasizes housing, which is a good thing.
- t) A number of disability groups filed against the CARE Act and the Superior Court rejected their challenge.
- u) Another important piece of legislation, SB 43, currently is the legislature, will define "stability"
- v) Ventura has been hanging back, but may now be stepping up. Judy will continue to update VSSTF as she learns more.
- w) Jenn Harkey asked about the pilot counties: Jeff responded that he is part of a statewide network of advocates and he has not heard that any county is very far along. Housing is the big issue. How are we going to house people? Jeff believes it would be best if the county got out ahead of issues by looking at things like how many people are going to qualify for CARE Court.
- x) Jim Duran asked what is being done with regard to housing in other counties. Jeff said he has reached out to people, but has not had an answer yet. It will involve many agencies including the Housing Authority and District Attorney, but people have not yet even put together a planning team. That should be happening soon now that Court challenges have been rejected.
- y) Jim Duran asked if places that would monitor meds will be part of the plan. Jeff indicated that he suspects there will be wrap around services and supports like those under our Laura's Law. The intent is not to have any institutionalized setting like a hospital, so there needs to be housing.
- z) The Chat contained the following notes from Elizabeth Stone:
 - i. The State's estimate is that 7,000 individuals will be impacted.
 - ii. Ventura County Home safe. Love you! already received funds for the justice side of this
 - iii. A person will write a CARE Plan with a provider, and potential support from a Supporter that will be individualized. The State is pushing FSp's (a variation of ACT teams).
- aa) Miguel Marquez and Jenn Harkey will reach out to Behavioral Health to ask for a report on the planning for this as it progresses. Jeff indicated there will probably be something like the RISE Team.
- bb) A question was asked by John about an individual who lives under a bridge regarding who should be called as a starting point - Judy said contact Javier Villa Solis of street outreach, or the RISE Team, or Megan Holbrook. Or Leone Rollins at lrollins@cityofventura.ca.gov. Jim Duran indicated that she participated in the Foul Weather Shelter program, so she is already on people's radar.

10. Jenn Harkey reported on the Point In Time Count. The slides she shared are available on the COC website at this link: <https://s33020.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-State-of-Homelessness-in-VC.pdf>. What is below is a summary; additional details are contained in the slides.
- a) The one-day count once a year snapshot count is a requirement for the federal funds and state grant dollars we receive. The data helps determine funding. Some comes to Continuum of Care; some through Emergency Solutions grants; some to Community Block Grants.
 - b) They count people in shelters, paid motel programs, transitional housing and person living in places not meant for human habitation: unsheltered, vehicle, encampment.
 - c) Volunteers also take observational data such as age and gender
 - d) There was a 9.1% increase over last year.
 - e) In 2023, 42.2% of those counted were surveyed; 57.8% were simply observed. The total count was 1,620.
 - f) Ventura had an increase of unsheltered from 382 to 452. The majority of increases across the county were in the unsheltered. This also speaks to the increase of first-time homeless.
 - g) Ventura has the only safe haven for substance users and those with mental health issues. There were 81 in shelter, 111 in transitional, 452 unsheltered
 - h) The population is aging.
 - i) 68% were white. 5% were mixed race, which is a new category this time.
 - j) The number of chronically homeless tells us we need more supportive housing. That category showed an increase of 25.1%
 - k) There is a large list of people who have been prioritized for placement, and are waiting for housing.
 - l) A large number of housing units will be becoming available, but we still need more.
 - m) Our veteran population also increased.
 - n) Approximately 12,000 persons are enrolled in the County's Healthcare for the Homeless Program. Approximately 30% met the HUD definition of homeless. 7,076 students in Ventura school district were identified as homeless under a different definition of homeless, and includes those sleeping doubled up or on people's couches.
 - o) 51% increase in calls for rental assistance from prior year due to rising rent costs and higher utility rates. There is a need for more homeless prevention dollars in the next grant round.
 - p) We had 408 households go into housing; 97% remained housed for more than 90 days. 3% returned to homelessness. We had a 5% increase in first-time homeless
 - q) There are 259 supportive housing units in development. More supportive housing proposals are coming through, including under Project HomeKey. The County is working on converting some county-owned buildings for housing and recuperative care - really creative approaches. 40 additional Transitional Housing units and 30 Emergency Shelter beds are in development as well.
 - r) VenturaCOC.org has a list of new units coming on board

- s) The COC Board recommendations include zero homeless veterans in 2024; focus on unsheltered youth; reduce the number of chronically homeless; increase partnering with people with live experience; reduce the number of first-time homeless by expanding homeless prevention program; and leverage resources to prioritize or increase supportive services for housing retention.
 - t) Ventura recently applied for HAPP funding, which will help with homeless prevention
 - u) Contact Jennifer.Harkey@ventura.org, www.venturacoc.org. All details are on the COC website. 2023 Homeless Count is available there. You can go to details by city, including any survey detail.
 - v) Jim Duran said that the goal to transition someone into housing from emergency shelter is 90 days, but it is currently taking more than 180. Jenn said that they work with a housing navigator, but finding a place to use a voucher and lack of available housing are the problems.
11. Leona Rollins gave an update on the Strategic Plan on Homelessness.
- a) Ventura has partnered with County, City of Oxnard, and City of Thousand Oaks to work with a consultant to determine what the gaps are and develop strategic plan. They are looking to see that programs are efficient in moving people into housing. Plans are about 30% complete. They are working on interviewing Leadership, and hope to be done with plan by end of May. They will return to VSSTF with updates in June.
 - b) Clyde asked if people working in the field were having sufficient opportunity for engagement. Leona said they are currently meeting with council members, and city manager's office, but they will be engaging with this group and other stakeholders. There is a survey currently available online that all can take.
 - c) Leona said that more empathy and compassion is needed for those going through difficult times in their lives.
 - d) They will be sending out a first draft of strategic plan by the middle of June, and feedback will be requested. The goal is a strategic plan specifically for our community.
 - e) We will discuss the draft at VSSTF in June.
 - f) Judy asked if gaps identified by VSSTF are being included. Leona indicated that they also have identified some gaps, and they do have a copy of the VSSTF list.
12. Leona Rollins and Jenn Harkey gave updates on grant proposals.
- a) We applied for a grant dealing with campsites
 - b) They were allocated \$640,000 for rental assistance. They have received two proposals for agencies to manage. They want to be sure dollars are getting into landlords hands as soon as possible and that there is case management.
 - c) Jenn indicated that new Emergency Solutions grant funding proposals will be due soon. It's limited to emergency housing, street outreach, etc.
 - d) Jenn said that they are re-applying for a youth grant. We need to have an active youth board ages 16-24, with at least 3 members who have experienced homelessness or housing instability over past three years. Staff is putting together in-person youth focus groups as well as an online version. A flyer will be coming out soon. We need youth participation in order to apply for YHDP

funding, which could really change the way we operate youth programs in the county. Application is due by end of June.

- e) HAPP round 5 is coming by September. Funding is between 4.8 and 5 million. Our point in time data will help. Funding will be focused on permanent housing projects, and may include an element of CARE Court.
 - f) All are encouraged to be on the Alliance list for quarterly meetings and updates. Email Jenn if you'd like to be included.
13. The City of Ventura, Homes for All, and VSSTF are considering a city-wide gathering on homelessness.
 14. Pam Kelley indicated that plans for work on Gap Needs for people who are homeless were sent out to all by Judy. She asked that folks email her at pamjk3@msn.com. The next Zoom meeting on the Faith Subcommittee will be June 19. Let Pam know if you'd like the Zoom link. Leona will give an update on gaps next month. Elizabeth Stone indicated that folks may live in Ventura, but their ID may be from a different part of the County, and this impacts folks in the Safe Sleep program. Judy indicated that groups are working on meeting that goal. We'll get feedback from Leona next month on this gap and the others.
 15. Kyler Carlson gave an update on plans to convert La Quinta Hotel to 134 units of affordable housing with 41 for folks currently homeless; others for folks at risk of homelessness. Housing Authority has its application materials ready to submit. There is a survey and consultation prior to submission, but Housing Authority is in line and prepared to submit. Funding available is \$68 million; we would request \$35 million, and are feeling optimistic.
 16. Kyler said General Plan Update committee continues to meet monthly.
 17. Leona Rollins reported that revised Housing Element was returned with comments and public comment period is now open and City will re-submit revised Housing Element after close of comment period and approval by Council.
 18. Sonja Flores indicated Homes for All will put together a letter of support for the revised Housing Element.
 19. Jim Duran indicated that the HOPES committee was focused on updates from City partners.
 20. Reports from agencies or groups:
 - a) Interface Children and Family Services now has a new director. They are working to get the youth voice out there.
 - b) Elizabeth Stone said that there will be with some 50 rooms for recuperative care at the Motel 6.
 - c) Tender Life Maternity home has 3 beds available. Applicants need to be at least 90 days clean from substance use.
 - d) Step Up Ventura is growing and is now serving 60 children and has signed an MOU with Simi School District to provide services to their preschoolers.
 - e) The Family Emergencies Program has a family with 5 children who have been living in an RV. They have two landlords who have been very supportive. One has even offered to be a spokesman to other landlords about County services. Judy suggested that that information would be really helpful for the Ventura Homeless Prevention and the Landlord Engagement Program and Elizabeth Stone added it would be good to have it on the COC website.

- f) Judy asked that anyone who would be willing to be in training to be chair of VSSTF should contact her
- g) City Center indicated that they will be having two rooms opening up soon. Jim Duran added that they are looking to get a motor home to use for transition while they are waiting for a space to open up, but are looking for a place to keep it. Judy suggested keeping it behind City Hall.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Brinkmeyer