

Ventura Social Services Task Force

Minutes 9/4/24

3:15pm via zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81514995979>

Present:

- Judy Alexander - VSSTF Chair, Faith Subcommittee
- Sue Brinkmeyer - Ventura Homeless Prevention
- Mike Johnson - Ventura City Council
- John Sanders Jones - VSSTF member, and VHP Board
- Claudia Lozano - Community Action of Ventura County, Manager of Community Services
- Edwin Marinez - Turning Point Foundation
- Kristian Nunez - CAUSE
- Sean O'Sullivan - Healthcare for the Homeless
- Kappy Paulson - Lift Up Your Voice to End Homelessness and Homes for All
- Leona Rollins - Housing Services Mgr City of Ventura
- Morgan Saveliff - Prog. Asst. Continuum of Care
- Melanie Shankle - City Center
- Javier Villa Solis - Human Services Agency of County
- Suzanne Troolnes - Independent Living Resource Center, Housing and Support Specialist
- Anna Varela - Community Engagement Specialist, Mercy House Living Centers

- I. The meeting was called to order and introductions were made at 3:17
- II. The agenda was approved with addition of items from HOPES Committee (John Jones/Kappy Paulson)
- III. The minutes were approved with the addition of two who were present: Javier Villa Solis from Homeless Services and Clyde Reynolds. (Kappy Paulson/Javier Villa Solis)
- IV. Financial update - account has \$2,009. We will be spending some on upcoming candidate forum. We originally were funded by a grant from the City, and we have been using it for several years.
- V. Presentation by Claudia Lozano of **Community Action Ventura County** with focus on services for the unhoused and homeless prevention
 - a. Mission: Helping our community establish pathways out of poverty through advocacy, partnerships, and services that promote dignity and self-sufficiency.
 - b. Programs: Food Hub/Community Market; Community Workshops; Medi-cal Enrollment Navigator; Home Weatherization; Home Energy Assistance "HEAP" for gas or electric bill; and Unsheltered services
 - c. Utility Payment HEAP: focusing on most vulnerable, children under 5, help 1 time per calendar year

- d. Home weatherization - income based, state program, no cost, helps renters or homeowners. May spend \$10-15,000 on a home
- e. Homeless Services - M & F, focus on hygiene support, mail service, referrals. Feminine products, diapers, showers, laundry, and sack lunch included. Tuesdays and Thursdays 8-12:30 all of the above, but no shower or laundry.
- f. Community Market & Food Hub - serves 300 households each week; has special bags for unsheltered clients with non-refrigerated food. Serves as a hub for other pantries as well for produce on Tuesdays. Also delivers food to homebound on Wednesdays for about 67 individuals
- g. Community Workshops - digital literacy, financial literacy, wellness workshops
- h. In partnership with Food Share, distribute diapers and baby formula weekly beginning mid-September
- i. Medi-Cal Enrollment Navigator to assist with renewals or first time enrollment in Medi-Cal and connect with services and benefits
- j. Community Action serves all of Ventura County, and has satellite offices with fewer services in Simi and Santa Paula. Main office in Oxnard provides all services.
- k. Happy to partner with other agencies that want to provide warm lunches or other workshops, etc.
- l. See the presentation slides as an attachment to these Minutes.
- m. Question: Do you have someone who coordinates mail - Clients complete a form. We keep the mail for two months, and then if not picked up, it is sent back.
- n. Question: Who can we call from One Stop mail to ask if you have contact with someone we cannot locate. Contact: Anthony Camper or Edith Vasquez, evazquez@ca-vc.org
- o. Question How often is Medi-Cal Navigator at Santa Paula office; they are there often unless out doing outreach. Can make an appointment with them. They will do home visits. Contact: Guicela C Sandoval, gsandoval@ca-vc.org, 805-436-4000, cell:805-7670458
- p. Question: Do you coordinate with Food Share? No, it is through 211 and Amazon. Se serve a 20 mile radius. Can add more soon if enough food is available.
- q. Question: What about specialty diets? No arrangements for special diets, but our boxes include a lot of fruits and vegetables. We get 20 pallets every other week.

VI. **Tenant and Homeless Services Work Plan**

- a. Judy reported that all council members said in private meetings with us that they would support the enforcement of current law and provision of education, but it did not get approved in the Council meeting. The contract with the Housing Rights Council would need to be expanded.
- b. Leona reported that the Housing and Homelessness Subcommittee took work plan to Council recommending the contract with Housing Rights Council. The most important take away was that tenant protection came out of Housing Element and Annual Goals, so we have to do it. Approved 5-2 to approach Housing Rights Council about adding right to counsel so they would help tenants with representation when going to court. A meeting is scheduled with them for next week. Goal is to allow HRC to collect data what's happening including any illegal rent increases and take item back to subcommittee and then back to Council in December or January.
- c. Judy added that Ventura Social Services Task Force stated loudly that items added to the Housing Element needed to be funded.
- d. Kristian Nunez thanked Councilman Johnson for his support. Said he, too, was disappointed in Councilman action, but was glad to see expansion of contract with Housing Rights Council. There will be community engagement workshops in the fall to see what public wants in the new work plan.
- e. Mike Johnson added that community workshops are important. Council directed staff to start a rental registry. There was resistance to move forward with tenant protections because we do not know how often illegal actions happen. Liz Campos and Mike Johnson are putting together a requirement to have paid lobbyists register to be at Council meetings. Council said they would support a rental registry if they heard that need from the public. It is important to have people there and to speak.
- f. Judy said that realtors were there in large numbers saying they want a seat at the table. Judy said that they have been at all meetings already.
- g. Leona added that rental registry component was a direction from Council when she first got hired. The goal is to collect data on number of units, rental levels and whether people are following current law. Community workshops should begin in October. People need to talk about rental registry if they think it is important. Leona says she is happy to work with all organizations so that all have a seat at the table. Personal stories are very important.
- h. Judy added that Homes for All takes the lead on this, and we all participate and act with one unified message.

- i. Mike Johnson said he originally counseled Kristian not to raise rent caps, as that would make the conversation go sideways, and, though rent caps were not under consideration, misinformation did make the conversation go awry. He is very happy Community Workshops will be happening.
- j. Kappy said that proposals should not affect Mom and Pop rentals.
- k. Judy added VSSTF is not advocating for rent caps but for enforcement and education. The contract with Housing Rights Center will run something like \$90,000. Santa Barbara has a contract of \$250,000, though their population is smaller. She asked people to send comments and questions to Leona, who supports these efforts.

VII. City Council Candidate Forum

- a. Sept 26, 2024 6:30pm -8:30, Unitarian Universalist Church on Ralston in fellowship room (park in the back lot and enter) Sponsored by VSSTF, Homes For All and Mercy House
- b. Focus is on homelessness and housing for City Council candidates this year. One candidate has declined because it is their anniversary week (Clint), one is trying to switch a conflict around so that she can be there (Naz), and the third person we have not heard from is Erik Eiser. All others have confirmed participation
- c. Questions are still under development
- d. Plan outline - Three yes/no questions(one each about tenants, homelessness, housing). Open ended questions: three candidates answer one question, and then three answer the next one, etc., questions related to districts. We are following format of previous forums.
- e. Bring friends. Come listen to what candidates think about these issues. Joe and Mike are both going off Council, so there will be major changes.
- f. Planning team is Kyler, Anna, Maria, and Judy

VIII. Housing updates

- a. Valentine Rd (Leona) - first individuals moving in soon; individuals will be moving from homelessness into Valentine Road. They are getting their documents ready. Will have on site supportive services.
- b. College - still in preliminary stages, undergoing environmental analysis. 57 units. Breaking ground soon
- c. Ventura Springs (Morgan Saveliff) accepting referrals. 120 units for veterans (going through One Team) and general affordable housing (going through a Community of Friends).

- d. People's Self-Help Housing - Leona - these are farm worker units in Santa Paula for households at 30-40% AMI. Have 1 - 4 bedroom units available; community center, and playground, etc. Leona will send more information
 - e. Salvation Army has indicated they are open for discussion on their open lot, so hopefully someone is reaching out to them.
 - f. Judy mentioned that there is unused property near the Lighthouse on Henderson Road, and new law allows church land to be used for housing.
 - g. Veterans housing - Leona will share flyer
- IX. Inclusionary update (Leona Rollins) - recently took proposal to Housing and Homelessness subcommittee and Coastal Commission - currently offer 4 options to developers to meet their inclusionary housing requirement: in lieu, off site, land dedication, or preservation. In lieu fees change based on cost of construction, etc., and new proposal will be going to Council on Sept. 10. No in lieu fees have been collected because most developments now under construction did not have in lieu fee as an option. No current projects have chosen in lieu fees, but we want to have that option available. The in lieu fees can be used to build the affordable units later. Mike and Leona both spoke about reasons they do not prefer developers to use in lieu fees and to choose on site development instead — units often cost much more by the time fees are used and units are developed.
- IX. Items for the Council HOPES or Homelessness and Housing Subcommittee (new name) meetings...Judy indicated our list keeps being "lost" so the group discussed and approved sending forward the following items once again:
- a. Developing a site where RVs can be parked permanently with case management, hook ups for people who live in their RV. Kappy suggested it be similar to RiverHaven. Group showed thumbs up to add that to the list.
 - b. Dump Station - places that used to be open required fee of \$10-\$30 or were open very limited hours; Fillmore has a free dump station; Kappy thought it was at water treatment plant. This might be a model for Ventura. Some supervisors are open to having a vehicle drive around to where the RVs are and dump tanks there. City of Seattle has such a program. St. Vincent de Paul manages it in Seattle. Having a dump station is critical to deal with public health and environmental need like outbreak that cost lives in San Diego.
 - c. Bathrooms - Portland Loos. Money has been set aside. Location is now unknown. Kappy added it would be open 24 hours. Mike Johnson reported that he has been told the \$700,000 is no longer available. However, money has been set aside for a pool that now will not be happening, and the pool would cost \$25 million, so there should be enough money for a Portland Loo. It is now in CIP as a future project. Mike added that just like in lieu fees, the costs of building the Loo has risen since the funds were

approved. Leona added that money was allocated back in 2022 (\$500,000 then) and she has not heard any update. She said we need to work with Parks and Recreation to get a definitive location.

- d. Storage - this is a continuing need
 - e. Laundry Love - this is also a continuing and the program is being developed by Faith Subcommittee
 - f. Foul Weather shelter - needs to have more than 20 units. Since this is a La Nina year, there should be fewer days of rain, so perhaps more people could be served each day.
 - g. Council has given more power to Homelessness and Housing Subcommittee, but it would only take two votes to keep items from getting to Council, so it could become a roadblock.
- X. **Agency updates.** Any news, changes, program information etc. from ALL of the agencies.
- a. COC - applications now open
 - b. Turning Point - 4 extra beds added to shelter as part of Behavioral Health Bridge Program - 90 days plus longer stays; beds are still in development. 14 regular beds are for 90 days, with extension based on transitional placement. 2 residents are now transitioning into housing.
 - c. County - for those moving into units just coming on line, the County can offer help with security deposit and ongoing case management
 - d. City of Ventura Homeless Prevention Program - 40 households assisted \$150,000 dispersed
 - e. Ventura Homeless Prevention (or VSSTF, Inc.) - 56 households assisted, \$71,000 dispersed
 - f. The ARCH - 4 beds open. 6 housed. 10 awaiting move in dates. Wait list is 555.
- XI. We need someone who will take minutes next month. Please contact Judy with suggestions or to volunteer.
- XII. Meeting was adjourned at 4:34. Next meeting is Oct 2, 2024 3:15 via zoom

Respectfully submitted, Sue Brinkmeyer