



AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING
Commission on Homelessness
Monday, January 8, 2018, 3:00 p.m.

Oxnard City Council Chambers, 305 West Third Street, Oxnard CA 93030

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

2. PUBLIC COMMENT.

A person may address the Commission only on matters within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Commission. The presiding officer shall limit public comments to three (3) minutes per speaker. The Commission cannot enter a detailed discussion of or take action on any item presented during public comments that is not on the meeting agenda. Such items may only be referred to the Commission Secretary for administrative action or scheduled on a subsequent meeting agenda for discussion.

3. INFORMATION/CONSENT ITEMS

SUBJECT: Minutes of Regular Meeting of December 4, 2017 (001)

RECOMMENDATION: Approve minutes of meeting of December 4, 2017.

SUBJECT: Recognition for Officer Jacob Jundef

RECOMMENDATION: Commend Oxnard Police Officer Jacob Jundef for his service and dedication to the homeless community and the City of Oxnard.

4. REPORTS FROM CITY STAFF

SUBJECT: Winter Warming Shelter for 2017-18

SUBJECT: Program update from Homeless Assistance Program Coordinator

5. COMMISSION BUSINESS

SUBJECT: Sub-Committee Reports

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive reports and recommendations from the following ad hoc sub-committees, and provide direction as appropriate:

- A. Safe Sleep Program
- B. Oxnard Downtown Safety and Hygiene
- C. Increasing Landlord Participation in Housing Choice and VASH Voucher Programs

6. NEW BUSINESS

SUBJECT: Tiny Homes

RECOMMEDATION: That the Commission discuss the matter of Tiny Homes and determine whether to place the item on a future agenda for further action.

SUBJECT: Measure "O" (006)

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission discuss the Measure "O" initiative and provide direction as appropriate.

8. **ANNOUNCEMENTS OF UPCOMING EVENTS**

9. **ADJOURNMENT**

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and City of Oxnard policy, if you need special assistance to participate in a meeting, please call 385-8095 (TDD 487-2850). Notification 72 hours prior to the meeting will assist the City in making reasonable arrangements to ensure meeting accessibility.

**DRAFT City of Oxnard Commission on Homelessness
Minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 4, 2017**

On Monday, December 6, 2017, at 3:03 p.m. the Regular Meeting of the Commission on Homelessness convened in the Council Chambers at 305 West Third Street, Oxnard, CA 93030. The following Commissioners were in attendance: Chair Francine Castañon, Vice-Chair Lucy Martinez, Commissioners Yukio Okano, Grant Leichtfuss, Peggy Rivera, and Francisco Jaena. City of Oxnard staff members present were Mark Alvarado, Homeless Assistance Program Coordinator, and Karl Lawson, Housing Department, who acted as Recording Secretary. Special guests present included Tara Carruth, from the County of Ventura Chief Executive Office; Oxnard Mayor Pro Tem Carmen Ramirez; Oxnard Police Chief Scott Whitney; Assistant Chief Jason Benites; and Officer Jacob Jundef. Chair Castañon presided.

1. ROLL CALL AND CALL TO ORDER

Chair Castañon called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. Roll was called and a quorum was deemed present.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Jack Villa, Chair of the Inter-Neighborhood Council Organization (INCO), announced that the INCO was conducting a sock drive for the homeless, and would be collecting socks at the INCO meetings of December 6 and December 13, 2017. Mr. Villa also addressed the Commission on his concerns related to homeless persons sleeping in RVs and other vehicles in the Hobson Park Neighborhood, of which he is the neighborhood chair. He recommended that the Commission consider supporting the establishment of a dump station where RV owners can empty their waste tanks, rather than discharging the waste in public streets and sewers.

Mr. Abel Magaña, of the Downtown Oxnard Business Improvement District, spoke to the Commission to express his thanks to the sub-committees for their recent efforts to effectively address issues related to the impacts of homelessness in the downtown area. Mr. Magaña recommended that a system be implemented to allow police and others to refer homeless persons to available services in evening hours.

Dr. Cynder Sinclair, Executive Director of Community Action of Ventura County, advised the Commission that the CAVC has refined its plan to provide expanded daytime services during the winter when the Winter Warming Shelter is in operation, offering to remain open seven days per week throughout daytime hours, so that the VVWS clients and other homeless persons have a safe place to go during the day, with connections to services.

3. INFORMATION/CONSENT ITEMS

SUBJECT: Approval of Minutes of Meeting of November 6, 2017

Commissioner Rivera moved approval of the minutes as presented in the agenda packet. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jaena, and the motion carried unanimously.

SUBJECT: Commission Meeting Schedule for 2018

Mr. Lawson directed the Commissioner's attention to the staff report at page 005 of the agenda packet, listing proposed dates for Commission meetings in 2018. Chair Castañon noted that the first Monday of the month fell on a holiday in both January and September.

Vice-Chair Martinez moved to change the Commission's meeting time from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., and Commissioner Rivera seconded the motion. Following discussion, Vice-Chair Martinez withdrew her motion and made a new motion to change the meeting time to 6:00 p.m., starting with the meeting of April 2018, on a provisional basis, to be evaluated after four meetings at the new time. Commissioner Rivera seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously. The Commission meeting dates for 2018 shall be January 8; February 5; March 5; April 2; May 7; June 4; July 2; September 10; October 1; November 5; and December 3, 2018.

4. REPORTS FROM CITY STAFF

SUBJECT: Winter Warming Shelter for 2017-18

Staff presented a power-point presentation to the Commission on the Winter Warming Shelter. The presentation (a copy of which is Attachment No. 1 to these minutes) is similar to the presentation that is presented to shelter volunteers at the training sessions. Staff responded to questions from the Commission about the WWS, and introduced Mr. Steve Karnazes, the shelter operator who has been retained by the three local governments to operate the WWS this winter. Mr. Karnazes responded to questions regarding bus passes; the closing and opening times; and publicity to the homeless about the opening.

SUBJECT: Homeless Assistance Program Coordinator Report

Mr. Alvarado reported details on the proposal to expand daytime services at Community Action's facility during the months of operation of the WWS. In addition, he provided copies of the posters that have been produced for distribution to merchants, advising the public of the hours and location of the shelter. A copy of that poster is Attachment No. 2 to these minutes. Mr. Alvarado also reported on the November 15, 2017 meeting of the Oxnard Service Providers group, and with Mr. Larry Hurst from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Los Angeles.

Oxnard Police Chief Scott Whitney thanked the Commission for its work and for the opportunity to address the Commission regarding the on-going efforts of the Police Department that impact homelessness. Chief Whitney emphasized that the Department is a partner in addressing homelessness, and that they are committed to working with all sectors of the community in a productive manner on issues of abatement and on addressing the consequences of homelessness.

5. COMMISSION BUSINESS

SUBJECT: Safe Sleep Program

Commissioner Okano reported on the work of the Safe Sleep Subcommittee, and summarized their recent activities and refinement of recommendations. A draft Resolution was presented to the full Commission for its action, and Commissioner Okano moved its adoption. Chair Castañon seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. The adopted Resolution No. 2017-02 is attached to these minutes as Attachment No. 3.

SUBJECT: Sub-Committee Reports

Chair Castañon invited reports from the various sub-committees.

A. Safe Sleep Sub-Committee: Report from Commissioner Okano provided in previous agenda item.

B. Downtown Safety and Hygiene Sub-Committee: Vice-Chair Martinez reported on the Sub-Committee's work, including the October 16, 2017 meeting at the Oxnard Public Library attended by representatives of the Police Department and two members of City Council. She also reported on the Sub-committee's examination of possible revisions to City ordinances that impact homelessness; advise the Commission that public restrooms were installed two weeks ago in the downtown Plaza Park; and further advised that the next meeting of the Sub-Committee would take place on Monday, December 11, at 6:00 p.m. at the Oxnard Public Library.

A summary of the Sub-Committee's recommendations was distributed to the full Commission; it is Attachment No. 4 to these minutes.

Commissioner Jaena reported that the Sub-committee had looked into the possibility of re-allocating Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds that had been previously allocated by City Council for programs within the Parks division, but which would not be expended in this fiscal year, so that those funds could be re-directed towards providing additional restrooms in public areas. Commissioner Jaena requested information on the process by which funds could be re-allocated during the fiscal year. Staff committed to obtaining a response and reporting back to the Commission.

Assistant Police Chief Jason Benites addressed the Commission on the work that his department is currently doing to finalize a set of recommendations for revisions to the City Code of ordinances on matters which touch on homelessness. He complimented the Commission on its work. The Police are at the stage of coordinating with the City Attorney's office on proposed ordinance changes, and will advise the Commission and welcome its input and that of the public.

Commissioner Jaena inquired about the possibility of a tent city, noting that the City of San Diego had recently created tent cities as an option for homeless persons. Mr. Alvarado reported that he had initiated contact with staff at the City of San Diego, which in turn extended an invitation for him to tour their facilities next month, after which he will report back to the Commission.

C. Sub-Committee on Increasing Landlord Participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Programs: Commissioner Rivera reported on the results of her research, and presented the following recommendations:

- (1) That the Oxnard Housing Authority (OHA) create new incentives for landlords to Participate in the housing voucher programs;
- (2) That the OHA establish a damage recovery program, under which the OHA would cover (or reimburse landlords for) the costs of damage to properties incurred by tenants;
- (3) That the OHA convene an annual meeting of Section 8 voucher landlords to recognize, thank, educate and publicize those landlords; and
- (4) That the OHA allocate sufficient funding to cover the costs of the above initiatives.

Commissioner Rivera also stated that she had determined that it had been several years since there had been an annual meeting for participating landlords.

6. NEW BUSINESS

SUBJECT: Measure "O"

Mr. Lawson directed the Commission's attention to the staff report set forth at page 006 of the agenda packet, which included the language of Measure "O" which the Commission had requested at the November meeting, in order to agendaize and discuss whether Measure "O" funds could be used to address homelessness issues.

Chair Castañón noted that Measure "O" would sunset (terminate) on a fixed date, and inquired whether the Measure "O" funds that the City had utilized for other purposes could, when repaid, be re-allocated for the purposes related to homelessness, and if so, when. Mr. Lawson responded that he did not know the answer to that question, and deferred to the City Attorney and the Measure "O" Oversight Committee for a response to that inquiry. Commissioner Rivera asked whether a letter could be sent to the Oversight Committee from the Commission, asking whether Measure "O" monies could be utilized for homeless initiatives, and whether any "re-paid" monies to the Measure "O" account could be so utilized. Mr. Alvarado recommended that the Commission hold off on sending a letter until staff could do some additional research on these questions.

8. SUBJECT: ANNOUNCEMENTS OF UPCOMING EVENTS

The Commission was informed of the upcoming events:

Thursday, December 7: Winter Warming Shelter Volunteer Training, 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m., Mission Church, Ventura

Saturday, December 9: Winter Warming Shelter Volunteer Training, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., All Saints Episcopal Church, Oxnard

Monday, December 11: Meeting of Commission Sub-Committee on Downtown Safety and Hygiene, 6:00 p.m., Oxnard Public Library

Wednesday, December 13: Tentative meeting of City Council Homeless Committee, 5:00 p.m., location to be announced

Friday, December 15: First day of operations of Winter Warming Shelter, Ventura National Guard Armory, opens at 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, December 19: Oxnard City Council meeting; tentative agenda will include proposal to expand hours of service at Community Action of Ventura County, to coincide with the operation of the Winter Warming Shelter.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

(Minutes prepared by Karl Lawson)

THE 2017-18 WINTER WARMING SHELTER

Ventura National Guard Armory
December 2017-March 2018

- * A safe place to sleep
- * A hot meal and access to shower facilities
- * Connection to social service agencies and homeless services providers

Who pays for the WWS?

- * County of Ventura \$120,000
- * City of Oxnard \$100,000
- * City of Ventura \$100,000
- * Private donations ?????

Legislative Framework

Legal obligation of
government to provide
shelter for homeless
persons

Legal obligation....

Answer:

None

WWS – Key Partners

- * California Military Department
 - * Oxnard and Ventura, County of Ventura
 - * Ventura Police Department
 - * County Homeless Services, County Public Health
 - * Non-profits: Salvation Army; Society of St. Vincent de Paul; Turning Point; Kingdom Center; Community Action (among others)
- and...*

Volunteers like you!

WWS Administration

- * Local governments pool funds
- * City of Ventura leases Armory from CA Military Dept.
- * Non-profit Downtown Ventura Organization retained as fiscal agent (cash donations accepted by DVO!)
- * ATTI contracted with to serve as shelter operator
- * WWS Operating Team (ATTI, DVO, local governments and non-profits) plans, oversees, purchases supplies, meals, trash pick-up, etc., coordinates operations – and provides volunteer training

Why Train Volunteers?

- * Safety
- * Make sure we are all on the same page as far as operating procedures, philosophy, and policies
- * Learn helpful tips, based on experience from previous year's shelters in working with different types of homeless persons, different situations
- * Risk management

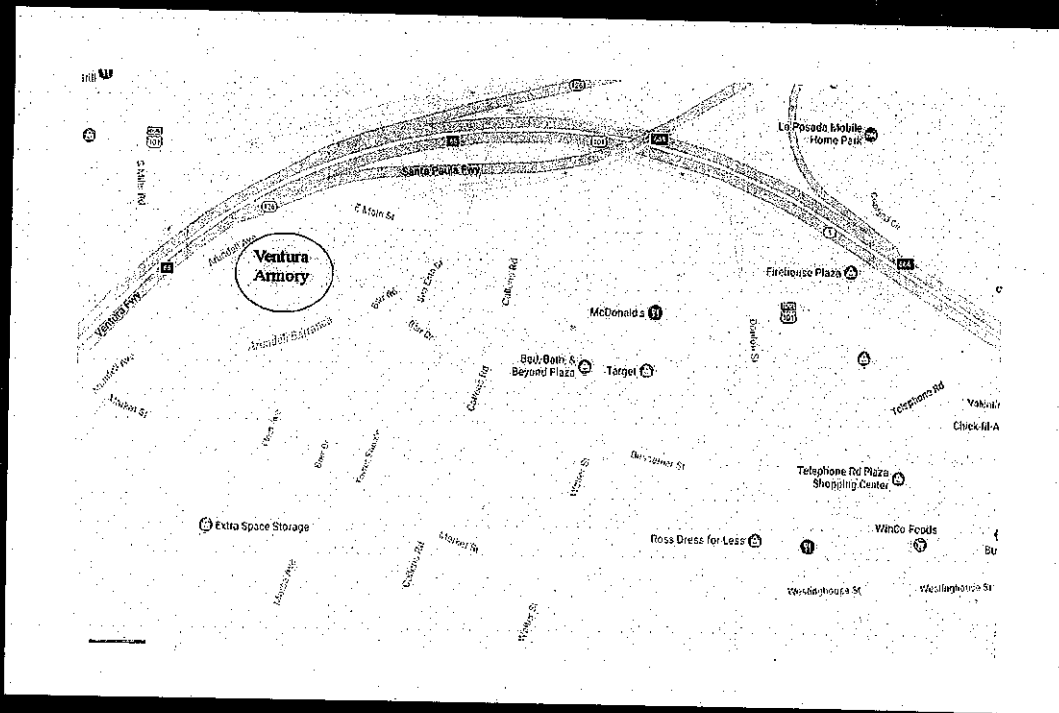
Thanks for volunteering!

Homeless Winter Warming Shelter

Homeless Winter Warming Shelter

December 15 thru March 15
6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.



Ventura National

Guard Armory
1270 Arundell Avenue

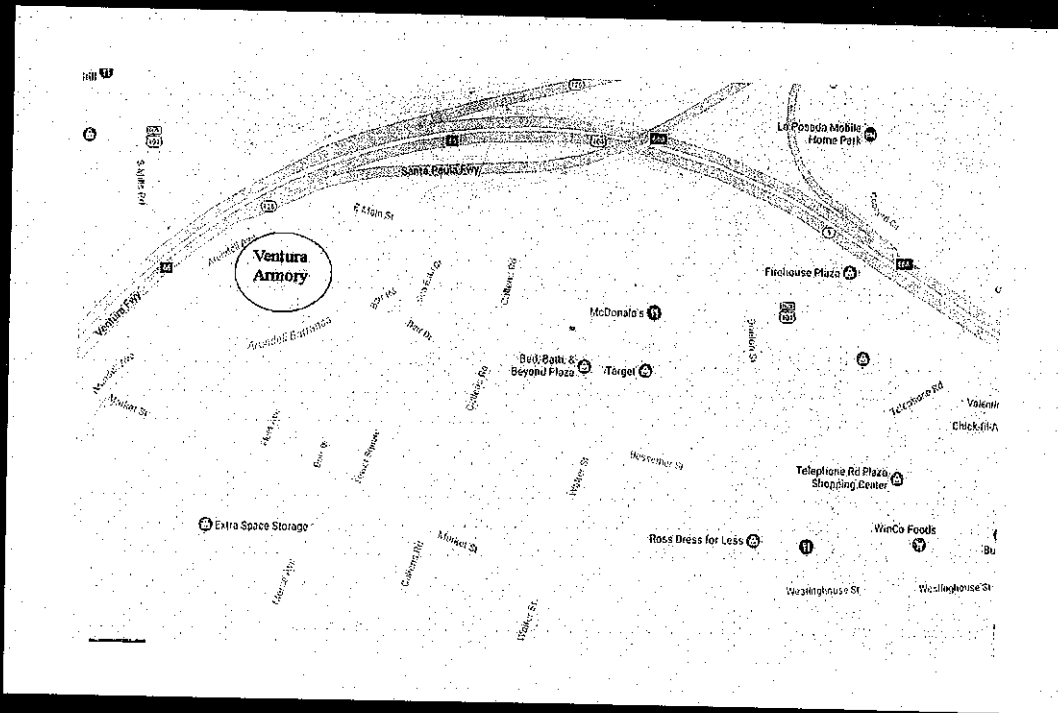
Attachment No. 2

2017-2018

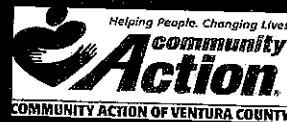
Albergue de Invierno Para Personas Sin Hogar

Del Oeste del Condado de Ventura

Abierto del 15 de Diciembre hasta el 15 de Marzo
de 6:00 p.m. a 6:00 a.m.



Ventura National



Guard Armory
1270 Arundell Avenue

Attachment No. 2

RESOLUTION NO. 2017-02

A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS OF THE CITY OF
OXNARD ADOPTING FINAL RECOMMENDATION FOR A SAFE SLEEP PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the City Council has established the Commission on Homelessness and charged the Commission with advising the City Council on all matters pertaining to homelessness in the City; and

WHEREAS, the powers and duties of the Commission, as set forth in the City Code, include recommending programs, strategies and funding for preventing and reducing the incidence of homelessness in the City; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has established a Safe Sleep Sub-committee to analyze and produce recommendations on the possibility of instituting a program to permit homeless persons to sleep in their vehicles; and

WHEREAS, the Commission adopted Resolution No. 2017-01 on August 28, 2017, setting forth parameters for developing a recommendation for a Safe Sleep program; and

WHEREAS, subsequent to the adoption of that Resolution, the Safe Sleep Sub-Committee has consulted with non-profits, other cities, and representatives from various City Departments, including the City Attorney and the Housing Department; and

WHEREAS, the Safe Sleep Sub-committee made a presentation on October 16, 2017, to the City Council sub-committee known as the Homeless Committee, which consists of two members of the Oxnard City Council; and

WHEREAS, the Council members requested that the Safe Sleep Sub-committee provide more detail on a proposed Safe Sleep program, and return with a formal recommendation from the full Commission on Homelessness;

WHEREAS, the Safe Sleep Sub-Committee reported to the full Commission on Homelessness at the Commission meetings of November 6, 2017 and December 4, 2017, to present its detailed recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the full Commission on Homelessness has reviewed the recommendations of the Safe Sleep Sub-committee and provided its input.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the full Commission on Homelessness endorses the attached recommendation of the Sub-Committee, and directs and authorizes the Sub-Committee and Commission Chair to present the recommendation to the City Council Homeless Committee and the full City Council for its consideration.

PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 4th day of December, 2017, by the following vote:

AYES: **Commissioners Castanon, Jaena, Leichtfuss, Martinez, Okano, and Rivera**

NOES: **None**

ABSENT: **None**

Attachment No. 3

ATTACHMENT TO RESOLUTION NO. 2017-02

Recommendation of the Safe Sleep Sub-Committee of the Commission on Homelessness regarding the establishment of a Safe Sleep program by the City of Oxnard. The recommendation consists of the following:

1. That the Safe Sleep Program (SSP) be established initially on a pilot basis, to be reviewed for effectiveness and performance at an interval to be determined by City Council.
2. That a non-profit organization be selected and contracted with to administer the implementation of the SSP, including the review, selection, and supervision of sites (such as churches, non-profit organizations, farm labor camps, among others).
3. That the City develop a process (acceptable to City planning staff, the City Attorney's office, and other City departments) by which a SSP site can be designated, including application by property owner, type of review of application, and process by which review is conducted.
4. That access to restroom facilities be a condition for any SSP (either existing facilities or rented/purchased portable facilities).
5. That the City develop the appropriate type of agreement to be executed between the property owner and the City and/or non-profit, which shall set forth any required insurance provisions; include a limit on the number of vehicles permitted at the SSP site at any one time; and establish the hours of operation of a given SSP site, which shall be no less than 8 hours and no more than 12 hours per night.
6. The SSP site include security during safe sleep hours, to ensure that only approved clients are utilizing the site.
7. That the non-profit organization administer the registration, intake and referral process for homeless individuals with vehicles who wish to be referred to one of the SSP sites; and that said process shall identify all individuals authorized in the applicant's vehicle, and all registration and insurance requirements for the vehicle.
8. That the eligibility criteria for participation shall target persons who have been homeless for less than one year, who have the potential to transition into bridge or permanent housing with proper support, and who agree to participate in case management services with a homeless services agency or provider.
9. That SSP participants must adhere to the rules, restrictions and responsibilities associated with the SSP, and shall sign an agreement setting forth said rules. Those rules shall include, at a minimum, a prohibition on alcohol and recreational drug use, cooking outside of the vehicle, loud music or amplified sound; violence to others or property. Rules shall also require participants to properly dispose of trash and pet waste, to refrain from using any SSP site facilities without advance permission, and to properly supervise children, and to respect the property and privacy of others.

(end)

ABSTENTIONS: None



Francine Castanon, Chair

ATTEST:



Karl Lawson, Executive Secretary



TO: Honorable Chair and Commissioners
Commission on Homelessness

FROM: Karl Lawson, Executive Secretary (KL)

DATE: December 4, 2017

SUBJECT: Report from Sub-Committee on Downtown Safety and Hygiene

This morning I received the attached communication from the Safety and Hygiene sub-committee, which consists of seven elements. The sub-committee has requested that their recommendation be printed and disseminated to all Commissioners.

Two of the seven elements relate to matters which the full Commission on Homelessness has previously addressed in adopted Resolutions, while other five are being set forth in writing for the first time. The two that were previously acted upon by the COH are:

Item #2: On July 27, 2015, the Commission adopted Resolution No. 2015-01, and on September 27, 2016, the Commission adopted Resolution No. 2016-06. In both of those resolutions, the COH recommended that Council consider declaring a State of Emergency for homelessness.

Item #6: On December 3, 2016, the Commission adopted Resolution No. 2016-07; in which the COH recommended that Council retain a grant-writer to pursue grant funding for projects that ameliorate and/or address homeless issues.

The other five items can be summarized as follows:

Item #1: The Council allocate sufficient funding for the Economic Development Department so that it can back to full staffing capacity.

Item #3: That the City identify a property where a tent city could be created, utilizing funding made available by declaring a State of Emergency, and retaining a service provider to oversee such tent city.

Item #4: That the City identify a property where a "tiny village" could be created, working with developers, and utilizing funding made available by declaring a State of Emergency for such a development.

Item #5: That the City Attorney and the Police Department develop a "homeless court" in Oxnard, and update existing ordinances that address issues of homelessness.

Item #7: That the City implement a dump waste site (for vehicles such as motorhomes to empty their waste tanks); and that a system be created whereby the dumping fee and water fees are waived.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the full Commission receive the report from and provide input to the sub-committee.

ATTACHMENT

Email from Commission Vice-Chair Lucy Martinez dated 12/3/17



Lawson, Karl <karl.lawson@oxnard.org>

Recommendations

1 message

Lucy Cartagena <lucycartagena@yahoo.com>

Sun, Dec 3, 2017 at 10:06 AM

Reply-To: Lucy Cartagena <lucyacrtagena@yahoo.com>

To: Karl Lawson <karl.lawson@oxnard.org>, Mark Alvarado <mark.alvarado@oxnard.org>, Arturo Casillas <arturo.casillas@oxnard.org>

Karl,

Here are the sub-committee, on the Safety and Hygiene, recommendations:

- Allocate funding for the Economic Development Dept. So that it can get back to full capacity staff, to best serve the City's infrastructures.
- Have the City declare a State of Emergency for Homelessness
- Direct the City to find property so that a "tent" city could be implemented with the "State of Emergency" money and a service provider to oversee it.
- Direct the City to find property, and work with developers so that a "tiny living" village can be erected and implemented. Also, with the "state of Emergency" monies.
- Direct the City Attorney's office to work with the police dept. to implement a "Homeless Court" in Oxnard. And work on our City's dated Ordinances.
- Direct the city manager's office to hire a full/part time Grant writer to find funding federal or state for homeless services.
 - Direct the City to implement a dump waste site for the City and have a system set up with service providers to wave dumping fee and water cost.

Τηάνκ που,

Lucy Cartagena Martinez
Family's First, Facilitator
805-418-3478

Be the change you want to see!

Like us on FACEBOOK!" Family's First"

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Familys-First/1444272555788199?ref=hl>

<http://familysfirst.wix.com/lucy>

Column Living in a parking lot amid Santa Barbara's wealth is a kind of middle-class homelessness



Marva Ericson, 48, sleeps in her car in Santa Barbara, Calif.



By **Steve Lopez**

DECEMBER 23, 2017, 8:55 AM | REPORTING FROM SANTA BARBARA

Kathy is a senior citizen, Marva is a nurse, Santiago is a chef and Luis is an eighth-grade student. All of them live in Santa Barbara with one thing in common.

When night falls, they head to designated parking lots and sleep in their vehicles, all clients in the region's Safe Parking program.

"I was always into December and making the house wonderfully warm and beautiful," said Kathy, whose holiday celebration is somewhat more austere these days. "I've got some little lights on the ceiling of the RV, and I got out my mom's old snow globe, with a music box on it."

Kathy is 65 and her longtime companion and RV-mate Phil is 74. Like so many others, they live on the edge in California, where high housing prices have pushed thousands of people to un-imagined extremes.

Living in a vehicle is obviously better than living in a tent or a box — it's a kind of middle-class homelessness. But in affluent Santa Barbara and elsewhere, the ever-present convoys are another sign of growing income inequality and one of the state's most vexing problems — even working people can barely afford to live in many parts of California.

You might ask why people of lesser means don't head to less expensive areas than Santa Barbara — it's a fair question, and I've written about people who eventually did make such a move. In Santa Barbara, the answers I got were the same ones I've heard elsewhere in coastal California. People hold open the option of leaving, but many are connected to specific places by history, family and employment connections, and they're not quite ready to give up on a turnaround, move to a place they don't know, and start over from scratch.

- 015 -

Besides that, local economies rely on those of lesser means, so where are they supposed to live?

"You know," said Phil, "there's a huge Hispanic population that does all the damn work around here. Every restaurant you go into, you can watch them slaving away. And they're taking care of people's gardens and everything else, and they wind up with eight or 10 people living in a one-bedroom place."

Phil said people may wonder why vehicle dwellers like himself don't move in with family. Well, good for those who are able, but easier said than done, said Phil. His son is already sharing space because of the high cost of housing.

Phil and Kathy described a middle-class life that fell apart for a variety of reasons, including an adjustable rate mortgage Kathy regrets buying into. Her paralegal career sputtered and she had several back surgeries while Phil lost his photo lab business, and their ages didn't help.

In 2013, they lost their condo and Phil invested in an old but serviceable RV, so they and their standard poodle would still have a roof, if not an address.

"My American dream was gone, and it broke my heart," said Kathy, who's living on a disability check, but that and Phil's Social Security income aren't enough to crack the housing market.

Marva Ericson, a certified nurse assistant, is another client in the Safe Parking program. She wore scrubs and was on her way to work when I met her. Her troubles began with a scare about three years ago.

"I was working full-time and studying to be a nurse and I collapsed at work and ended up in the ER, not knowing what happened," she said.

In California's economy, one bad break is tough to handle. Ericson had several. She suffered a series of seizures, had to quit her job, took care of her dying mother and was eventually diagnosed with a brain tumor. She fought her way back to health and to work, stayed with friends, lived in apartments that ranged from \$1,000-1,600 a month, but lost the last one when she fell behind on the rent despite working two jobs. Her pay, she said, has been in the \$12-\$14 an hour range.

Ericson has been living in her Kia for three months, settling each night in a church parking lot in the neighborhood where she grew up. Christmas trees are for sale in the parking lot.

"I wake up and I say, 'Thank you God for keeping me safe last night, and thank you for the Safe Parking program,'" said Ericson.

She is one of 150 clients who stay overnight in the parking lots of churches, nonprofits and government offices in a 12-year-old program run by New Beginnings Counseling Center.

The clients can park after 7 p.m., but have to clear out as early as 6 a.m. The benefit is that the vehicles are no longer parked on city streets, which riles some residents and merchants. And because the lots are monitored by New Beginnings, the clients, who all go through a screening process, can at least feel safe while they sleep.

Santiago Geronimo works in the kitchen of a high-end Santa Barbara restaurant and until recently, he, his girlfriend and her son Luis lived in a two-bedroom apartment shared by four adults and three kids. But the girlfriend, Luisa Ramirez, lost her retail clerk job because of a back injury, and they've lived in a Ford Explorer since September. Their new home is a church parking lot on the Goleta border.

On Monday, these folks all caught a break. The winds shifted, the smoke and ash from two weeks of raging wildfires subsided, and they could be outdoors and sleep without masks.

In the 18 months since my colleague Gale Holland wrote about the Santa Barbara program, the number of parking lots has grown from 20 to 23. The spaces are all filled, with a waiting list of 40 people, and there's been a slight increase in the number of people who work, but still can't afford an apartment.

Cassie Roach, the program coordinator, said 40% of the clients are employed, 35% are seniors and 30% are disabled. Six families live in vehicles with at least one minor, and only 25% of the clients have RVs, so the others are sleeping in smaller quarters. In downtown Santa Barbara on Monday night, two white-haired men prepared for another night of slumber in the back of their station wagon, one of the men already stretched out in the cramped space.

Los Angeles, by the way, has a far greater and increasing number of people living in vehicles — more than 8,000 by the latest estimate. And city and county officials have been trying, so they say, for at least 18 months to develop a safe parking program modeled after Santa Barbara's, or another one in San Diego.

So what's the problem?

There's one so-called demonstration program running in South L.A., with a capacity of 15 vehicles, and a smaller operation is in place at a Westside temple. One local advocate for more safe parking told me there's been a disappointing lack of support for the concept by business and faith groups. An L.A.