# CITY OF OXNARD COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS
# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF NOVEMBER 4, 2019

On Monday, November 4, 2019, at 4:00 p.m. the Meeting of the Commission on Homelessness convened in the Oxnard City Council Chambers, 305 West Third Street, Oxnard, CA 93030. Peggy Rivera, Chair called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

1. **ROLL CALL AND CALL TO ORDER**
   Roll was called, the following Commissioners were in attendance: Ruby Durias, Yukio Okano, Mayra Plascencia, Peggy Rivera, Rene Camper-Stewart, Jose Negrete and David Littell. A quorum was deemed present.

   City of Oxnard staff members present were Emilio Ramirez, Housing Director; Karl Lawson, Compliance Manager and Angelica Navarro, Administrative Secretary III.

2. **COMMISSION BUSINESS**
   a. **Minutes of October 7, 2019 Meeting -** Yukio Okano made a motion to accept the minutes, second by Peggy Rivera. The motion was accepted by all and the minutes were approved.
   b. **Director's Update:**
      i. **Special Meeting on November 18, 2019-** Jose Negrete made a motion to hold a Special Meeting to consider the bylaws, conduct training on Brown Act and how to conduct a meeting, the motion was seconded by David Littell. A vote was taken as follows:
      Ayes: Ruby Durias, Yukio Okano, Mayra Plascencia, Peggy Rivera, Rene Camper-Stewart, Jose Negrete, and David Littell.
      Nay:
      ii. **Commission Retreat-** Jose Negrete made a motion to hold the Special Meeting to hold a retreat on January 11, 2020 from 10AM to 3PM, second by David Littell. A vote was taken as follows:
      Ayes: Ruby Durias, Yukio Okano, Mayra Plascencia, Peggy Rivera, Jose Negrete, and David Littell.
      Nay: Rene Camper-Stewart

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT**
   1. **Gaylyn Johnston-** Has been trying to get on Section 8 for the last five years since I moved here to Oxnard. Goes to HUD housing and gets sent to Colonia and calls the number and gets a recording. Back and forth and has never been able to get on Section 8 because of that. Just wants to know why she gets the run around, after all of this time she should have been on the list and she's not. Also, because she's in a sober living home and there's a lot of abuse going on there. She wants to know if there's help for people who are in sober living homes because their homeless and have nowhere else to go. They shouldn't be putting up with this abuse.
   2. **Jeff Burum-** Running for District Supervisor for District Five. Regarding the Homeless Shelter, what is the objective? Until that is clearly defined, doesn't think anything will get accomplished. Adopt a firm, fair and affordable policy. It's a complicated issue. Drug/alcohol abuse Job, temporary housing equal one objective. How do you deal with drug alcohol abusers? You have to involve professionals and you have to have a separate shelter for people who are drug and alcohol abusers. That facility should not be located in neighborhoods. He thinks that when somebody is on alcohol and drugs It's often a mental problem. Must be affordable and include local not for profit service providers.
   3. **Lucy Cartagena-** Would like the commission to consider on the 18th subcommittee language in the bylaws. There are still things from the Five-Year Plan that were never touched on again. Commissioner Okano's Safe Sleep Program that was approved, but never got off the ground. Tiny homes a subcommittee that she sat on. Says it is now known that the City is considering tiny homes as options for low income. Thinks they should bring that back up to see what they can do about that. The Safety and hygiene subcommittee, that should still be a constant work in progress because we have new ordinances that were implemented that some don't qualify for homeless court. We have the County of Ventura who doesn't have drug court anymore. So, that should be something to consider as it affects a big chunk of homeless. We still don't have

a dump site for waste. If there's campers and trailers there's not one from Malibu to Santa Barbara. That's something that really needs to be taken up. Don't forget about mental health. She's sure that they each have a subcommittee that is dear and true to them that they should be followed through because otherwise what was the point of Mr. Okano working so hard on the Safe Sleep program and then nothing happened. So, the Commission has to make things happen and that's what they are there for. To tackle tasks and speak for the community. Staff doesn't live in the Community, but the commissioners do.

4. **Pat Browne-** Last week there was a meeting here on redoing Oxnard Blvd putting apartments above with businesses on the ground floor trying to upgrade Oxnard Blvd, but then here from what she understood. City wants to put another Rescue Mission. We've already got a Rescue Mission just a few blocks from 5th Street, on the east side of Oxnard Blvd. So, you want to put this shelter site south a block or so past the five-point intersection on Saviers Rd, on a building that's already there. That's all windows and with not very much parking behind. For all of those reasons she doesn't think it's a good idea. Put shelter somewhere in a warehouse area over on Sturgis or one of those big buildings over there. There's got to be an empty building. She just feels that that's the right place. Because she feels that it's best for the alcohol/drug abusers by keeping them away from liquor stores. Would like to see upgrades to Oxnard Blvd instead of downgrades.
5. **Darlene Gonzalez-** Thanked commissioners for the chance to speak and for their service as commissioners. Expressed her support for the shelter site. Homeless gentleman on tracks wanting to take his life. Went back and PD was there already. Right now, there's a lot of homeless in need of help. Get the shelter ready as soon as possible.
6. **Gabriel Teran-** Fremont South Neighborhood Council Chair, wanted to bring up specific to this commission but other commissions as well. Is aware of the City's budget cuts meeting recordings and broadcasting were discontinued and are not being recorded with the exception of the Planning Commission, the City Council and their committee's and the INCO's. Appreciates the City's financial position, however when it comes to the public and keeping them informed, having no information and no record of that information is just as detrimental as having bad information going out. Was unsure if the present meeting was being audio recorded as was going to be the fact for all of the CAG's. He looked back on the meetings for a year and saw that for the Commission on Homelessness there hasn't been a recorded meeting since February 4th, 2019 and for example wanted to do research he couldn't hear previous conversations. Please look into it so there's some public record of what is happening. At a bare minimum the publishing of the minutes.
7. **Jack Villa-** Chair to Hobson Park East. Wanted to share the experienced shelter challenges. One of the issues that they are concerned about is the abundance of RV's. The biggest concern out of that is where they dump their waste.

## 4. NEW BUSINESS

a. **Proposed Shelter Site Workshop-** Emilio Ramirez provided the Commission a PowerPoint presentation on the proposed site. Currently available is a 110-bed low barrier shelter. "Oxnard Navigation Center" 1258 Saviers Road. Community engagement process, Cal Gisler, Five-point North East, Hobson Park East. Attend Respective Meetings to continue the conversation. Current shelter is located at 351 South K Street. Gave thanks to Karl for hosting tour for the commissioners. Current site is 10,000 sq. ft and is need of substantial improvements. Site of the temporary facility. Has been used as the Winter Warming Shelter eleven times over a seventeen-year period. Has been in service since January 2019.

The County of Ventura, City of Ventura and the City of Oxnard entered into an agreement with Mercy House and they provide a variety of services: meal program, case management, housing navigation, pet accommodations, shower and laundry, etc. Current location is not feasible as it is within the runway protection zone. They are seeking termination of the shelter site. Potential loss in funding from County is greater than five million dollars, not to mention the one million dollars it would cost to do repairs on the site.

Efforts to search for sites began in 2017 and in June 2018 the committee disbanded. July 2019 effort to identify a site resumed, twenty-one sites were looked at owners not interested in use of the property. The Saviers site has surrounding services as shown on PowerPoint map. Site eligible with a special use permit. The property is listed by Lee & Associates. It is larger than the armory and allows for a complete and thoughtfully put together shelter. The site is immediately surrounded by commercial, also residential to the south and the west. Zoning map shows the C2 commercial zone. Site in Cal Gisler Neighborhood. Listing shows the cost at $1.25 per sq. ft monthly.

That is $21,875 per month or $262,500 per year. A partnership with the County where they will cover half of the cost for capital improvements.

**i. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

1. **Pat Brown-** Understands why you want to put the homeless right in the middle of town where they have all the facilities available. Probably because the majority of them are going to be on foot. But, at the same time we are going to be introducing marihuana, probably eight establishments, probably half of them are going to be near the five-points intersection, below it, above it, and around it. Wants to have facilities for them, but they're not using them. They come from the homeless shelter on fifth street and they go to the Plaza Park and spend their day at the park. Then they go back to sleep at night. They're not interested in anything. Put them in industrial areas where they can get jobs and they can work and make some money. So, they can get their own places. Get drug/alcohol users squared away. The people that want to work, we need to get them jobs, find jobs.
2. **Richard Tucker-** Secretary and Treasurer for Cal Gisler. Heard about this from Gabe and is extremely concerned. A. About the density of the area where is at. It's 120 feet from the first residential home on Ash Street. Spoke to business today, took a trip over there and spoke to all of the businesses on the commercial area that share the same fence line. Also went to the CVS Pharmacy shopping center to talk to the businesses there. All they could do was look at him with a gaping look of disbelief. No one was aware. Goes to the gym late at night and going up the boulevard the number of gentlemen with black hoodies riding unlit bicycles in the area at night is absolutely impossible; he sees 10, 15, 20. Just in that intersection the activity is unbelievable. That facility has twenty-eight parking spaces, that will include storage and showers. If you look at the current facility and compare…it doesn't work. Homeless people already sleeping in the doorway of that building, then turn around and leave everything they own there that they didn't want to take with them the next morning. The impact is present in the alleys. Gum tree alley by the train track area that's not too far away is impacted on the other side of the development. Neighborhood is a homeless collection there at night and it's dangerous behind those homes in the neighborhood. A 24-hour facility can be impacted at 3 o'clock when schools are getting out and emergency services will be parked right at Saviers Rd. It doesn't work. That neighborhood has two elementary, one middle school, Lathrop Park within half a mile of that facility and it makes it unsafe for our children.
3. **Gabriel Teran-** Fremont South Neighborhood Council sent a formal letter to the Housing Director and copied the City Manager. Discussion at their last neighborhood meeting of October 17th based on the information they had at that point. They decided to send a letter to the Commission based on the concerns that have already been stated at the meeting so far. As a neighborhood council they offered, as were already told that by December the shelter would be closed and moved. Even those that were not initially supportive of the shelter were willing to allow it to stay longer as long as they find an appropriate site. The concern is that there are several concerns and logistical challenges that may not serve the clients and residential citizens. Empathizes with the lack of properties. County five million dollars loss of funding. Wonders if there's a deadline attached to that? Must have location, lease by said date otherwise loosing funding for x number of time or years. Also wondering if the County's stance is to set such a deadline and rescinding those funds for the City of Oxnard? Wondering if County Administration outreach has occurred to request more time. County Supervisor's office and CEO, that would be John Zaragoza and Kathy Long would be the ones to be closely related to that location. Saw that Statham and North Rice were on the list, but were considered too large. How much is too large, considering we have more than 600 homeless individuals in the City and our current shelter consistently operates at capacity. Has there been outreach to commercial and residential tenants? Lastly, other amenities that are not nearby such as the Behavioral Health Offices on Rose at Williams Drive and the Vanguard Building on Rose Avenue. None of those are walking distance. Will a shuttle be provided? Emilio was asked by Chair to answer questions. There is no deadline, staff is engaged with County administration and they are being supportive and understanding. Rachel Wess, Program Operator with Mercy Housing was asked to respond to the vehicle question, Mercy House does not operate as a walk-up center, there is a lot of traffic coming in and out. However, there is a shuttle system offering transportation to clients which would avoid clients having to walk to other locations to receive services. RV's or motor homes are not allowed, personal vehicles only, one

vehicle per guest. Currently 20 parking spots in the lot available and not all used. In fact, most of the parkin slots are taken by the district office staff.

4. **Sal Gonzales-** Emilio has been generous with the shelter work. Hopes all commissioners read his letter because this dates back to 2006, they put in the Housing Element, that we were going to work towards it. In 2007, the State stepped in and said it was taking the Cities too long to build the homeless shelters. The State enacted Senate Bill 2 that said you designate an area or zone where you can build homeless shelters without a public hearing, without a special use permit, but by right. The City responded by saying we have such a place and quoted a City Resolution "The City has inventory sites for emergency shelters and has found the most suitable location for such facilities is C2, CM & ML zones because these properties would be so in designations that would be generally located by City centers. Six years later where we've been told that we can build a shelter by right. The commission has been through that process and has some blame to share. Why is it taking so long? Why are we here today not debating a shelter, but whether there should be a shelter there? The challenge for this commission is to advise to Council, where to have a shelter, which is driven by the need of the community. A few weeks ago, the City adopted ordinances that are punitive in nature which penalize the homeless for being out in the park, they are not allowed to store their personal belongings in City parks or another public property or for solicitations. This concern should be at top of the list. Do we care and what are we doing about it? We need to move forward.
5. **Jack Villa-** Thanks Emilio for inviting him and the other Chairs to meet. Chair to the Hobson Park East. Question whether if we rent or lease this facility, if the City was going to assume all the liability that comes with the property. The City is a precarious situation, fiscally were not where we want to be. What we decide has to be done right. Can't afford to make a mistake. A big decision for a big issue and it involves a lot of people and stake holders. It involves business, neighborhoods, could affect crime and safety, but most of all it has to be the right place. We're not in a position to make a mistake and hopes everyone comes together to decide.
6. **Jeff Burum-** What is the objective and is it affordable? Wants to share what he feels works and what doesn't work. Doesn't believe the current system at the armory works at all. Understands Oxnard, Ventura and the County each gave $200,000 for a total of $600,000, plus a free building. What we got for that was 110 beds or $60,000 per bed. It's way too much. Could have given them a job for that much. Went over there to ask what kind of services they give a bus pass and County services. What happened to tax payer money? That's what doesn't work. Wouldn't give the contract to Mercy Housing. Get a local service provider, keep it local and don't duplicate services. Hope Boys, Salvation Army, Rescue Mission, Goodwill, Community Action of Ventura County. Much Cheaper. Something like Hope Boys & Girls, they have in reach and outreach. They have drug and alcohol abusers and they live on site. They take care of one another. They receive counseling and eventually we can refer them out to Salvation Army, Goodwill, Second Chance and others. And it works! That's what you can measure. Can't find anything measurable at the armory. Work with the nonprofits which need support, they have the facilities and they have the knowledge.
7. **Francisco Jaena via Lucy Cartagena-** He was a commissioner and sat on the site search committee years ago. Asked for a list for three years. Wasn't given any information on what the City owns. Unless the City doesn't own any other proper you're being duped. It is fact that the City owns the Del Norte Site, which would make a great property. It is empty, but if we're spending 7.5 million for five years she's sure they can do something with that. Spending 2 million dollars renovating a site that we are not going to keep should make us think about how we're spending our money. Francisco suggests using City owned properties.
8. **Abel Magaña-** Director for the Downtown Management District wants to add his concerns to the location site. There are not ideal uses around such as the liquor stores and still too close to the City's center. With the recent code updates, we are looking for that downtown edge to be developed more high density, mixed use. Of course, developers look at what's existing around there and it's not ideal to see. If we want to raise the income level and the spending capacity around the downtown. That having a shelter right there wouldn't be ideal. Appreciates Sal Gonzales's compassion for the population and his comments for the ordinances, but they were just a push to receive services.

area rock push onto services. Another shelter at another district. Tent city models or other alternatives with access to services.

9. **Lucy Cartagena-** Had to submit three comment cards to speak. The main thing, permanent shelter is being forgotten. What's being proposed isn't permanent. Give Emilio direction to look for permanent shelter. Push back the December deadline to make it to March. So, it coincides to what they're looking at. So that we extend the December 31st to March also. So, it give staff enough time to look for that permanent shelter. Not going to work. Precise looking for something that will work, where it will work. Townhall meetings work, we are Oxnard strong, utilize them. Staff doesn't live in the City. It is up to us where we are going to feel comfortable, we live here. It belongs to our community prioritize then work on the other things.

**5. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

1. **Jose Negrete-** Urges everyone to reach out to Congresswoman Brownley's Office. He's been calling since August to get her input into helping us get a permanent site funding to better assist Emilio and upon reaching Sandra Bravo in her staff, was told they have better things to do. So, call to let her know that this is important.
2. **Peggy Rivera-** Ready to give her recommendation to Council. Would like staff to have a special meeting to share more information with the commission to prepare recommendation for Council.

**6. ANNOUNCEMENTS OF UPCOMING EVENTS**

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting stood adjourned at 6:16 p.m.

*Minutes prepared by Angelica Navarro*