

CITY OF OXNARD
COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES
September 13, 2021

On Monday, September 13 at 4:00pm the Meeting of the Commission on Homelessness convened remotely via Zoom. Vice-Chair Yukio Okano called the meeting to order at 4:09pm.

1. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Present: Vice-Chair Yukio Okano, Commissioners, Ruby Durias, Rene Camper-Stewart, Alejandro Fregoso.

Regrets/Not Present: Chair Peggy Rivera, Commissioners David Littell, Jack Villa

Staff members present: Emilio Ramirez, Karl Lawson, Maria Santana, Jessica Petrillo

Guest presenter: Sandra Meyer from Salvation Army

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

3. INFO/CONSENT ITEMS

The minutes for the May 17th meeting and the August 2nd 2021 were not yet reviewed or approved. We will include these minutes at the October meeting.

Motion to accept the July 12 2021 minutes. Moved by Commissioner Durias, seconded by Commissioner Rene Camper-Stewart.

All in favor.

4. PRESENTATION

a. Street Outreach Program Update from Salvation Army

Sandra Meyer, Program Director of The Salvation Army (TSA) of Ventura County provided a presentation on the Oxnard Street Outreach Team.

- TSA Street Outreach team has served the City of Oxnard for just over a year now and currently has 3 outreach case workers.
- The Street Outreach team goes out into the community to proactively engage with people who are homeless and offer them services.
- TSA Outreach workers give information about services from TSA and other services that are available.
- The TSA Oxnard office is at 622 W Wooley Rd. Services at this office include food pantry, rental assistance, utility assistance, and a social services coordinator.
- The Street Outreach team has a weekly scheduled that was developed in collaboration with Oxnard PD and Jessica (Homeless Assistance Program Coordinator)

- The weekly schedule is flexible and the team responds to other areas as needed. One area the street outreach team focuses on everyday is downtown Oxnard. Right now, they are also providing daily services along K street. The team also responds to calls from the HLO (Homeless Liaison Officer) team and other calls for service from Jessica.
- August Service engagement data:
 - Engaged with 90 individuals
 - Gave out 100 hygiene bags
 - 20 individuals referred to other county services (eg Behavioral Health, Social Security etc)
 - 40 individuals helped with clothes and food items
 - 30 people helped in other ways including transported to appointments, help online with appointments or benefits, signed up for housing vouchers, presented at coordination meetings
 - 15 people placed into shelters.
- Participate in encampment response including weekly efforts by PD and the encampment response near Ormond Beach.
- We have permanently housed about 30 people since last year.
- Part of Ventura County HMIS system
- Collaborate with the CoC

The Commissioners discussed this presentation and Sandra Meyer answered the following questions:

Q) What are the work hours of the street outreach staff?

A) Typically between 8am to 5pm but the Street Outreach team is very flexible. For example, when there is encampment enforcement the team will often start earlier to participate in that.

Q) Are the members of the team reachable directly? For example if one of us came across a situation where we see someone who might need assistance?

A) Yes they are reachable but for third party referrals we typically receive those through Jessica. If there is a need for direct contact we can discuss that.

Q) Regarding the August numbers, is that normal? Or is it usually higher or lower?

A) That is pretty normal.

Q) What is the annual operating cost?

A) \$184,000/year (Jessica)

Q) Are the services Monday to Friday?

A) Yes. Those hours make the most sense because it is when other services are available so the Street Outreach workers can make referrals or provide practical assistance helping people navigate services. However, the team is quite flexible and can provide services on the weekend when needed.

Q) If there are children involved, is the Street Outreach team able to provide more immediate services?

A) Yes if there are children involved that usually opens other service options.

5. REPORTS FROM STAFF

a. Director's Report

Housing Director Emilio Ramirez provided the following report:

2nd and B: We have the entitlement approved. We have received funding approval for the first allocation of funding from No Place Like Home. We are preparing to submit for the permanent funding in tax credits in the next 30 days. If successful in the permanent funding we will be under construction in the earlier part of 2022.

Housing Authority: We are underway in the implementation of Mainstream Voucher Program (MVP) and Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV). Both of these are section 8 vouchers that are being targeted for homeless individuals.

Casa Aliento (previously Vagabond): Community Development Partners (CDP) are underway in their effort to convert Casa Aliento into Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). They have applied for financing including an allocation of project based MVP vouchers. They believe they will be under construction in the earlier part of 2022.

Housing First Initiative: We have this item later on in the agenda but we are proposing to develop PSH throughout the city in order to create enough housing to serve the homeless population. The first project from this effort is 2nd and B. As discussed in the last meeting we are also undertaking an effort to build a mixed purpose drop in center with PSH units.

The Commissioners discussed the report and asked the following questions:

Q) How many vouchers from MVP and EHV?

A) 40 MVP and 56 EHV

Q) When will Casa Aliento be converted?

A) We are hoping by summer of 2022

Q) For 2nd and B - what was the funding that has been approved and what is the tax credit portion?

A) Approximately \$7.5M has been approved of No Place Like Home funding. The tax credit portion is approximately \$22M. We should know if this is secured by the end of this year. Construction has to start by 160 days after the time of that approval.

6. COMMISSION BUSINESS

a) Housing First Sub Committee Update

Deferred to discuss during the next agenda item.

b) Longest Night of the Year Sub Committee Update

Committee members include: Ruby Durias, Alex Fregoso, Yukio Okano. Staff support provided by Jessica Petrillo.

- Have met 3 times
- Included representatives from the UU Church of Ventura who have held a homeless memorial in Ventura every December for the past 15 years.
- Have expanded meetings to include: OPD, City of Ventura, CoC, service providers and people who have experienced homelessness.
- Planning to hold simultaneous coordinated memorials in both Ventura and Oxnard.
- Our tentative date is December 19th at 3:30pm. This is not on the actual “Longest Night” but the committee discussed how this date and time helps to include more people including those who are homeless.
- We are discussing ways to include more people who have experienced homelessness
- Have also discussed planning a virtual component due to COVID.

c) Safe Parking Sub Committee

Committee members include: David Littell, Yukio Okano, and Ruby Durias. Staff support provided by Jessica Petrillo.

- At our last meeting we met with Sandra Meyer from Salvation Army and Cassie Roach from New Beginnings to learn about their programs.
- TSA program is smaller - currently 5 cars. Commissioner Okano has been involved with this program through his church.
- New Beginnings has 150 vehicles in their program.
- The New Beginnings Program is a nonprofit organization and gets a lot of funding donated. They have been operating since 2003. A point to note is their local waste management company provides RV dumping services for free. New Beginnings also provides the liability insurance.
- Our next step is to discuss a model.

d) Foul Weather Shelter

Committee members include: Yukio Okano, Alejandro Fregoso, and David Littell. Staff support provided by Karl Lawson.

- Met with Meredith Hart from City of Ventura and Pastor Jim Duran to talk about their program. Their program is a partnership between the City of Ventura, two local motels and 8 churches. They use \$25K in CDBG. The foul weather shelter is activated under certain weather conditions. On activated days people come to the River Community Church and local agencies and churches will conduct the intake and make triage decisions.

- At our last meeting, we invited Jessica Petrillo and Karl Lawson to discuss what the next steps would be if we wanted to recommend this model to the City.
- At this point, we are looking at this model more closely and are in the process of contacting Oxnard churches to see if they would be interested and able to participate.

7. NEW BUSINESS

a) Housing First Strategy Production

Housing Direct Emilio Ramirez provided a presentation on the Development of Oxnard Housing First Plan.

- Homelessness in Oxnard
- Five-Year Homeless Plan
- Housing First Overview
- Ten-Year Housing First Plan
- Oxnard Navigation Center

The Commissioners discussed the presentation and housing first plan, summarized below.

- The commissioners on the sub-committee are: Peggy Rivera, Jack Villa, Rene Camper-Stewart
- Appreciate looking at the big picture and planning things further out.
- May consider Tiny Homes in this plan
- Need for new developments to fit the neighborhood
- Can consider other types of mixed used spaces - eg PSH units with a culinary school below
- Q) Do we need to build new developments from the ground up? Or can we look into rehabilitating older buildings?
 - A) (Emilio) Absolutely. We can also use vouchers in the private market.
- Q) Does housing first necessarily mean housing? Or can it also mean shelter?
 - A) (Emilio) There is a need for actual housing. But yes, elements of housing first can be used in shelter spaces as well (eg. low barrier, individualized supports, community integration etc.)
- This is an early meeting that will be a part of a longer neighborhood engagement process that will lead towards the plan. We would like to schedule similar discussions in community forums and eventually take it to council.
- Public comment from Lorenzo Castillo - I am an affordable housing developer. I am building 30 units and we are going to have 77 beds that can be used for homeless people or for farm workers - including farmer workers who are homeless. I am excited by the plan.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:37pm.

DATE: November 1, 2021

TO: Commission on Homelessness

FROM: Commissioner Okano, Vice Chairman
Foul Weather Shelter Subcommittee

SUBJECT: Foul Weather Shelter Subcommittee Proposal for Winter 2021

RECOMMENDATION

That the Commission on Homelessness approve and recommend that the City Council and the City Manager approve the implementation of a foul weather shelter program for the City of Oxnard this winter season.

BACKGROUND

According to the 2020 Point in Time Count, there were 567 homeless people counted. Of this number, 379 were unsheltered. For many years, Oxnard and Ventura alternated as hosts for a Winter Warming Shelter. This provided overnight shelter for approximately 100 people from December 1st until the end of March. These shelters were located at the armories in each city. In 2019, Oxnard opened a year-round, 24-hour, 110 bed homeless shelter and navigation center. Mercy House was contracted to operate the shelter, also located at the site of the Oxnard armory.

In 2020, Ventura opened a year-round, 24-hour, 55 bed homeless shelter. This shelter is also operated by Mercy House.

The current Oxnard Shelter and Navigation Center is not considered a permanent location as it is located within the airport flight path. Plans for a permanent shelter are under way in downtown Oxnard at 2nd and B streets near the library. If funding is secured, construction may start in 2022.

DISCUSSION

Need for a Foul Weather Shelter

Although Oxnard has created a year around overnight homeless shelter for 110 people, close to 400 people remain unsheltered on a nightly basis. Being homeless is a known risk factor for illness and death. In 2020, at least 76 homeless people are known to have died in Ventura County.

A foul weather shelter is designed to provide temporary night-time shelter to people when severe weather conditions occur. Meals may also be provided. The City of Ventura operated a foul

weather shelter last winter. The program involved providing motel rooms for homeless people. Night-time shelter was provided for approximately 20 people when specific weather conditions occurred.

Inclement weather conditions included a predicted rainfall of more than one inch and temperatures less than 40 degrees. The Ventura program was a collaboration between the city and the faith community in that city. Eight churches participated in the program.

Discussion with Meredith Hart, the Safe & Clean Manager for Ventura, and Pastor Jim Duran of River Community Church indicated that the Ventura program was considered to be successful and cost-effective. Ventura is planning to repeat the program this winter.

The Oxnard Foul Weather Shelter (FWS) subcommittee believes Oxnard could benefit from a foul weather shelter program as well to provide services to at least a portion of the 400 homeless residents who remain unsheltered.

The Foul Weather Shelter Proposal

The Oxnard Commission on Homelessness FWS subcommittee recommends that the City of Oxnard create a foul weather shelter program using the Ventura program as a model of best practices. Specific practices used in Ventura may be modified to reflect differences in each city's resources.

The foul weather season is defined as from December 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022. The proposed plan is designed to be a collaboration between the City of Oxnard and the faith community and other community-based resources. Adverse weather conditions would trigger activation of the plan, which involves providing motel rooms for homeless people.

The proposal recommends providing 30 to 40 motel rooms. Funding for the program is proposed to come from grants for homelessness services (e.g., Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)). Local churches and other resources would provide support by providing meals for the program participants. They would also help put together "stay warm packs" for those homeless people who may not qualify for the program or if there are not enough motel rooms available. Priority for rooms will be to those over age 65 and people with health conditions. Remaining rooms will be made available on a first-come, first-served basis. For those who will not get a room, a stay warm pack" will be provided. This pack will include items such as a blanket, socks, and a coat and/or rain poncho.

Basic program procedures include:

1. The FWS program will be activated when pre-determined weather conditions are predicted to occur. These conditions will be determined in coordination with the City of Ventura's program to avoid confusion. Although specific conditions of more than 1 inch

of rain and less than 40 degrees temperature were used by Ventura last year, these triggering criteria are subject to change.

2. The homeless coordinators for each city (Meredith Hart for Ventura, Jessica Petrillo for Oxnard) will monitor the weather and activate the program in coordination. No less than 48 hours of advance notice will be given to the homeless community.
3. Interested participants will be asked to appear at a designated community location (likely a church or other community resource) at a specific time in the afternoon or early evening.
4. Participants will be screened and triaged by social service workers (from local agencies).
5. Those qualifying for rooms will be transported to local motels.
6. Dinner and breakfast the following morning will be provided. Participants will be expected to check out at the standard time.
7. Security staff will be hired to ensure safety for participants.
8. As previously noted, the capacity to provide all of the above elements of the FWS program will be determined by available resources.

Status of Planning and Needs

The FWS subcommittee met with Meredith Hart and Pastor Jim Duran to better understand how their program operated. In addition, the subcommittee has reached out to the faith community and other resources in Oxnard to evaluate the level of interest in a foul weather shelter program for Oxnard.

Preliminary contact indicates there is great community interest in working with the City of Oxnard for a winter FWS program. Reverend Melissa Campbell-Langdell of All Saints Episcopal Church has secured varying levels of support from the Garden Church, City View Worship, New Life, and Our Redeemer Lutheran Churches. The FWS subcommittee met with the Oxnard Interfaith Council on October 8 and presented the plan and secure additional interest in participation.

Shelter Care Resources, a nonprofit in Oxnard, is also eager to provide support.

The FWS subcommittee has also met with Karl Lawson and Jessica Petrillo of the Oxnard Housing Department to better understand the process of presenting the plan to the Oxnard City Council. If the proposal is approved by the full Commission on Homelessness, it will be presented to the City Council Community Services, Public Safety, Housing, & Development Subcommittee.

Funding

The FWS subcommittee believes that CDBG funding may be an appropriate source of funds for

this project. In addition, 501c3 community partners may help provide additional financial assistance. Other sources of funding may also be available. We believe there is already sufficient community support to make the proposed FWS project viable.

Recommendation

The Foul Weather Shelter Subcommittee of the Oxnard Commission on Homelessness requests that the full Commission approve and recommend that the City Council and City Manager approve the implementation of a foul weather shelter program for the City of Oxnard this winter season. Such a program would follow the basic model used by the City of Ventura and would be coordinated with that city's program.