

MEETING MINUTES

COMMITTEE ON HOMELESSNESS

SOUTHERN NEVADA REGIONAL PLANNING COALITION

March 12, 2009

In attendance:

Orlando Sanchez, Chair, City of Las Vegas
Adrienne Cox, Adrienne Cox Consulting
Gary Schofield, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department
Nancy McLane, Alternate, Clark County
Kenny Young, Alternate, City of North Las Vegas
Skeet Fitzgerald, City of Henderson
Gina Gavan, Nevada Homeless Alliance
Myra Berkovits, Clark County School District
Jodie Gerson, Alternate, Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services

Absent:

Darryl Martin, Clark County
Maryann Ustick, Vice Chair, City of North Las Vegas
Stuart Ghertner, Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services
Rose Ann Miele, City of Boulder City
Mark Smasal, Veterans Administration

Agenda Item 1. Call to order, notice of agenda compliance with the Nevada Open Meeting Law.

The meeting of the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition Committee on Homelessness was called to order by Orlando Sanchez, Chair, City of Las Vegas, at 2:00 p.m., on Thursday, March 12, 2009, in Commission Chambers in the Clark County Government Center, 500 S. Grand Central Parkway, Las Vegas, Nevada.

The agenda for the March 12, 2009, meeting was duly posted in compliance with the Nevada Open Meeting Law requirements.

Agenda Item 2. Approval of the Agenda for March 12, 2009.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda for the March 12, 2009, meeting. The motion was approved unanimously. Skeet Fitzgerald, City of Henderson, and Nancy McLane, Clark County, had not arrived yet although quorum was met without them.

Agenda Item 3. Approval of Minutes from the Meeting on February 12, 2009.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes for the February 12, 2009, meeting. The motion was approved unanimously. Skeet Fitzgerald, City of Henderson, and Nancy McLane, Clark County, had not arrived yet.

Agenda Item 4. Receive an update from the Regional Homeless Services Coordinator. Recommended action - Take any necessary action.

Gina Gavan, Nevada Homeless Alliance, announced that the Fall Project Homeless Connect would be held on

November 10 at Cashman Field.

Shawna Parker Brody, Clark County Community Resource Management, gave an update on the Neighborhood Stabilization Program fund disbursements and anticipated projects.

There was discussion by the Committee about the 18-month total timeline and unspent money being returned to the federal government.

No motion or action was required on this agenda item.

Agenda Item 5. Receive an update o the homeless prevention funds appropriated in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Recommended action - Take any necessary action.

Shawna Parker Brody, Clark County Community Resource Management, gave an update on the homeless prevention funds appropriated in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, otherwise known as the Stimulus Bill; and she presented backup materials titled “American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 – Homelessness Prevention Fund.”

There was discussion by the Committee about examples of existing streamlined programs that are “one door/one application programs”; discussions have been held with several entities/jurisdictions about the Homeless Prevention Fund but no decisions have been made yet; potential fund restrictions with regulations designated in the Neighborhood Stabilization Program; and the cities of North Las Vegas and Henderson have not committed funding yet until specific programming has been indentified and agreed upon.

A recommendation was made to ensure that representatives from all cities/entities are present at all discussions.

Frank Perna, Homeless Advocate, spoke about frustrations seeing the homeless face the same problems for the past 15 years, especially concerning the state veteran’s organizations and the Veterans Administration. He expressed concern that there was little or lacking communication, cooperation and/or coordination between the service providers; technology was available but wasn’t being used well, if at all; and he was frustrated with being ignored, commenting that if it was happening to him he was sure it was happening to others as well.

No motion or action was required on this agenda item.

Agenda Item 6. Approval of the creation of a Prevention Working Group. Recommended action - Take any necessary action.

Tara Ulmer, City of Las Vegas Neighborhood Services, requested approval of the creation of a Prevention Working Group, primarily to coordinate funding activities in a proposed homeless prevention system.

There was discussion by the Committee about the differences between the Prevention Working Group and the existing Technical Working Group; the expected focus of the Prevention Working Group and how it would report back to the Committee on Homelessness; costs associated with its creation; and whether it would directly tie into the funding discussions held in the previous agenda item (Agenda Item 5).

A motion was made and seconded to approve the creation of a Prevention Working Group. The motion was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item 7. Receive an update on the homeless management information system (HMIS). Recommended action - Take any necessary action.

Robert Herdzik, Bitfocus Inc., gave an update on the homeless management information system (HMIS) via a PowerPoint presentation titled "HMIS Update (Homeless Management Information System)."

There was discussion by the Committee about numbers of members using the system versus numbers of members sharing information; requirements of signed member agreements before sharing information; the number of non-duplicated clients entered in the system; statewide sharing of data between Southern Nevada and the North; and major stumbling blocks including confidentiality concerns and signed member agreements not being returned.

No motion or action was required on this agenda item.

Agenda Item 8. Receive an update on the 2008 Continuum of Care awards. Recommended action - Take any necessary action.

Catherine Huang Hara, Office of the Regional Homeless Coordinator, gave an update on the 2008 Continuum of Care awards; and she presented backup materials titled "2008 Continuum of Care Awards."

There was discussion by the Committee about this year's disbursement amount being less than last year's and being slightly less than the requested amount.

No motion or action was required on this agenda item.

Agenda Item 9. Receive an update on the Inclement Weather Shelter Program. Recommended action - Take any necessary action.

Catherine Huang Hara, Office of the Regional Homeless Coordinator, gave an update on the Inclement Weather Shelter Program; she presented monthly summary reports for the individual inclement weather shelter providers; and she stated that overflow beds had been used at Catholic Charities over President's Day weekend (from February 9th through the 16th).

There was discussion by the Committee about available bed space; and Phillip Hollon, Catholic Charities, stated that program beds were available daily, and the winter and night shelter beds were full every night. Mr. Hollon also stated that individuals not willing to enter program beds were referred elsewhere.

There was additional discussion by the Committee about seeing an increasing numbers of tents, especially around Main Street and Owens; continuing work by Clark County Social Service to canvass areas and assist people; numbers of homeless, especially families, increasing at Catholic Charities; needing more case management and outreach efforts; difficulties of individuals not willing to enter programs in order to receive shelter; businesses becoming less tolerant because the homeless numbers are more evident and seem to be getting worse; concerns of potential health and safety issues; and individuals being more resistant to service requirements or restrictions to sheltering.

A recommendation was made that Shannon West, Regional Homeless Services Coordinator, needed to coordinate with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department to develop a specific game plan on resolving the discussed issues, especially before the summer begins.

Terry Lindemann, Family Promise, recommended developing a permanent, single location or building, without restrictions, to provide a roof and cots for the service resistant people so they would be off the street

and providers would have a central location to offer services to those who wanted them.

No motion or action was required on this agenda item.

Agenda Item 10. Receive an update on a community redirection campaign. Recommended action - Take any necessary action.

Tara Ulmer, City of Las Vegas Neighborhood Services, gave an update on a community donation redirection campaign; and she presented backup materials titled “Donate Responsibly – Be part of the Permanent Solution to Homelessness” and “How You Can Help end Homelessness in our Community – Some Do’s and Don’ts”.

There was discussion by the Committee about people giving directly to the homeless because of the immediate feedback they receive and they know the homeless get the items they’re donating; difficulties in getting people to go out of their way to find service providers (i.e. Opportunity Village, etc.) when they know homeless are at locations such as Main and Owens; developing signage for the providers near Main and Owens (i.e. Catholic Charities and Salvation Army) so people know where they can appropriately donate; connections felt by people when giving directly; narrow sidewalks can help with discouraging the pitching of tents and crime prevention through environmental design; providing recycle bins in front of agencies so people don’t necessarily have to get out of their vehicles; and intimidation limitations to people when they get to certain areas.

Ms. Ulmer then presented two public service announcements (PSA’s) that had been developed by the City of Las Vegas’ Neighborhood Services that were being broadcast on Channels 2 and 4.

A recommendation was made to hold an official press conference publicizing both the campaign itself and the PSA’s, as well as finding a more widespread way of distributing the PSA’s than just Channels 2 and 4.

No motion or action was required on this agenda item.

Agenda Item 11. Public Comment.

Terry Lindemann, Family Promise, presented *The Scarf Project: Kids Changing the World*, a book written by Ms. Devlin’s class at Paradise Elementary School. She also announced an interfaith homeless awareness event, “The Cardboard City”, to be held on Friday, May 1, at The Crossing Church.

Danielle Dreitzer, HopeLink, gave an update on one of their clients who was helped move from a cave outside of town into appropriate housing.

Frank Perna, Homeless Advocate, stated that he was disappointed no representative or alternate from the Veterans Administration was present, and he agreed with Ms. Lindemann’s recommendation of building a structure similar to the former tent city/MASH structure from several years ago. Mr. Perna commented on mental illnesses and the societal stigma associated with them being an ongoing problem, especially with the returning veterans suffering from TBI and other problems having no inpatient care options available to them. He submitted an article from the March 3, 2009, issue of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* titled “Tent dwellers to keep each other warm”; and he submitted a letter dated March 12, 2009, addressed to the SNRPC Homeless Committee, as follows:

“I want to bring to your attention an excellent human interest article written by Paul Harasim on March 3, in the L.V. Review Journal. The article was enhanced by a photograph of the homeless veteran, Carl Coe and his dog Champ. In the article Paul had comprehensive

information in order to solve Carl's lack of housing. In rechecking with Shannon West I was disappointed to hear that Carl had refused help.

There were some questions that I am suggesting be answered in next month's agenda.

Did anyone contact or was the veterans administration directly involved in helping Carl Coe?

Was there any direct involvement of a non-profit receiving V.A. compensation (per diem)?

It doesn't seem logical or rational that Carl would refuse service. Perhaps he would be a good case study, in follow up, to understand why he asked for help in the past and now refuses it.

In my 15 years of volunteerism there are many problems and barriers I've observed. Sadly they are the same now that were there 15 years ago.

Anyone in the non-profit sector that makes personal contact with a homeless person and gives him or her a bus token and a referral to another agency or gov't office has accomplished little. We have all of this wonderful and expensive electronic communication e-mail, fax, internet access, phone and videoconferencing that must be utilized to put persons in direct contact with an agency, nonprofit or government agency that can help him or her. We must have better communication, cooperation and coordination to deliver more efficient and timely services to the poor and homeless. Millions are being spent on the local level, and a portion of this is being wasted and people aren't being helped. This is especially important when our government is borrowing every penny spent.

I'll be looking forward to the agenda at the April meeting. (March 3rd article is included)."

Melissa Goodwin, the Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Southern Nevada, requested help and assistance for a 23 year old female who had become homeless but was turned away from all the service providers she had contacted because she was transgender.

Mr. Perna offered additional comments on a summit held in September, 2001, between the SNRPC and HUD, and eight years later the chronic homeless problems are exactly the same. He stated that money was being wasted and timely or economical services were not being provided.

Orlando Sanchez, City of Las Vegas, encouraged progress even though it seemed like slow going, and he congratulated everyone on a fantastic job, even if it seemed discouraging.

Phillip Hollon, Catholic Charities, stated that Catholic Charities provided lunch every Tuesday and Thursday from 11:30 to 1:00 at 2575 W. El Campo Grande in North Las Vegas.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:36 p.m.