

MEETING/WORKSHOP MINUTES
COMMITTEE ON HOMELESSNESS

SOUTHERN NEVADA REGIONAL PLANNING COALITION

July 10, 2008

In attendance:

Orlando Sanchez, Chair, City of Las Vegas
Maryann Ustick, Vice Chair, City of North Las Vegas
Adrienne Cox, Focus Property Group
Myra Berkovits, Clark County School District
Rose Ann Miele, City of Boulder City
Skeet Fitzgerald, City of Henderson
Mark Smasal, Veterans Administration
Richard Failla, Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services
Mike Darley, Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce
Gina Jackson, Nevada Homeless Alliance

Absent:

Darryl Martin, Clark County
Gary Schofield, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department

Agenda Item 1. Luncheon Presentations (Martha Fleetwood – Homelessness in the U.S. and Shannon West – Homeless Efforts in Southern Nevada).

The meeting/workshop of the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition Committee on Homelessness began at 12:10 p.m. on Thursday, July 10, 2008, with two presentations during lunch.

The first PowerPoint presentation titled “Southern Nevada Regional Planning – Briefing on Homelessness” was presented by Martha Fleetwood.

The second PowerPoint presentation titled “HelpHopeHome:The Regional Effort to End Homelessness in Southern Nevada” was presented by Shannon West, Regional Homeless Services Coordinator.

There was no discussion by the Committee; and no motion or action was required on this agenda item.

Agenda Item 2. Call to order, notice of agenda compliance with the Nevada Open Meeting Law.

The meeting/workshop of the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition Committee on Homelessness was called to order by Orlando Sanchez, Chair, City of Las Vegas, at 1:20 p.m., on Thursday, July 10, 2008, in Conference Room 108 at Nevada Partners, 710 West Lake Mead, North Las Vegas, Nevada.

The agenda for the July 10, 2008, meeting/workshop was duly posted in compliance with the Nevada Open Meeting Law requirements.

Agenda Item 3. Approval of the Agenda for July 10, 2008.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda for the July 10, 2008, meeting/workshop. The motion was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item 4. Workshop on Homelessness (I. Discussion of concerns and issues related to homelessness in Southern Nevada; II. Current homeless funding; III. Current shelter and program capacities; IV. Discussion of strategies and priorities to address the Regional Implementation Plan for the next year). Recommended action - Take any necessary action.

There was discussion by the Committee related to transitional housing availability; phasing out transitional housing to focus on permanent housing; definition of and criteria for transitional housing; “wet” housing; and transitional housing payment methods.

Sheila Harris, facilitator, gave an overview of what to expect, her role and the “rules”. She stated that no one stakeholder bears the burden alone for the solution.

Tim Burch, Clark County Social Services, gave a presentation on the dwindling affordable and attainable housing stock in the Valley and the mobile home park closures.

There was discussion by the Committee on top concerns related to homelessness. Member concerns raised during this discussion were as follows: Housing (especially transitional and harm-reduction); Better synergy/communication between providers; More use of HMIS; Employment readiness (including basic social skills); Shelter capacity issues; Help those who want to be helped first but what to do with those who don’t; Working poor needs to be sustained, too, not just indigent; Impacts on businesses (especially related to panhandlers, drunk, etc.); Need to spend money wisely and get a better investment on the money being spent; Mental health stigma; System, especially mental health, is overwhelmed; Lack of mental health beds; Budget shortfall/budget cuts (future as well as present); Competition for emergency room beds; Lack of adequate, permanent affordable housing (especially for veterans); Inadequate staffing (this will get worse with budget cuts); Not enough housing for Section 8 vouchers; Stigma with Section 8 vouchers; Absentee landlords restrict new arrangements with Section 8 vouchers; Difficult to document homeless (especially “new” homeless) and prevention efforts; Foreclosures; Renters paying rent but still losing their homes; No refunds of rent and/or deposits to renters getting evicted; Community involvement by business and for-profit community; Citizen involvement; How to market; Need to make the issue of homelessness “sexy”; Need to convince “regular Joe taxpayer” that it’s in their best interest to reduce homelessness; Need to get Las Vegas Convention Authority and hotels/casinos on board; Need a cheerleader to sell the cause and help overcome stigma of homelessness (since government cannot solicit); No empathy for homeless; Need to get private sector and for-profit involvement; Not just a government problem; More veterans in need (may be easier to assist because many have income streams); Shift focus to include men and children not just women and children; Ex-offenders/Ex-felons (EVOLVE program) are a regional issue not just a City of Las Vegas issue; Collaborate between housing authorities, cities, etc.; and Need permanent, supportive housing (not just permanent housing).

There was discussion by the Committee on consolidation of the priorities/concerns listed above. The top six issues identified were as follows: Men and children as well as women and children; Prevention; Community involvement; Veterans; Make homelessness “sexy”; and Mental health.

There was discussion related to “perception is key” (i.e. stigma to Section 8 housing next door to me but having a veteran in transitional housing next door might be workable/proud/feel-good).

There was further discussion on: Direction toward prevention; Marketing; Putting a human face on homelessness versus making it “sexy”; Service integration; Preventing homelessness altogether in an effort to end homelessness; Ending homelessness is not just a money issue, it’s also dependent on housing and staffing shortages; Finding a champion/cheerleader; Role(s) of a champion/cheerleader; Increasing the amount of affordable housing; Changing service delivery; Increasing money to mental health issues; Increasing affordable, permanent housing specific to families and veterans; and Identifying targeted focus groups

including men and children, women and children, and veterans.

There was discussion by the Committee on final consolidation of the priorities/concerns. The top three issues identified were as follows: Prevention, especially for families; Reconfiguring the delivery of services to veterans (integration of services and housing); and Marketing efforts and existing activities focused toward that.

No motion or action was required on this agenda item.

Agenda Item 5. Public Comment.

Frank Perna, Homeless Advocate, submitted an article (letter to the editor) from the June 5, 2008, issue of the *Las Vegas Sun* titled "War veterans deserve better treatment"; and he submitted a copy of the March 20, 2008, SNRPC resolution in support of accelerating the completion date of the V.A.'s medical center health complex and identifying funding for the construction of veterans' housing (domiciliaries) as follows:

**“RESOLUTION
IN SUPPORT OF ACCELERATING THE COMPLETION DATE FOR CONSTRUCTION OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS’ MEDICAL CENTER HEALTH COMPLEX
AT NORTH PECOS ROAD AND THE BRUCE WOODBURY BELTWAY; AND FURTHER IN
SUPPORT OF THE IDENTIFICATION OF FUNDING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF
VETERANS’ HOUSING (DOMICILIARIES)**

WHEREAS, approximately 216,000 veterans live in Clark County; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs is reconfiguring how care will be provided to 54,000 enrolled patients in the region, a client population that is expanding rapidly as service members retire to the area or return from foreign engagements, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs’ Las Vegas ambulatory care center was closed in June of 2003; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced the construction a future medical center health complex at North Pecos Road and the Bruce Woodbury Beltway consisting of a 90-bed hospital, outpatient clinic, 120-bed nursing home and benefits offices; and

WHEREAS, ground was broken for this facility in October of 2006, but the Health Complex is not scheduled to be operational until mid-2011; and

WHEREAS, acceleration of the completion date, and the addition of veterans’ housing, will enhance the care and services provided to persons who have served our Country;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition does hereby support accelerating the completion date for construction of the Medical Center Health Complex, and also would support the identification of funding for the construction of veterans’ housing (domiciliaries).

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 20th day of March, 2008.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition adopts this resolution.”

The meeting/workshop was adjourned at 4:37 p.m.