

CITY OF ANAHEIM
HOMELESS POLICY WORKING GROUP

MINUTES
August 11, 2017

Agenda Posting: A complete copy of the Homeless Policy Working Group Agenda was posted on Monday, August 7, 2017 at 2:30 p.m. at Anaheim City Hall and at the Anaheim West Tower.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. on Friday, August 11, 2017 at the Gordon Hoyt Conference Room, Anaheim West Tower, 201 S. Anaheim Blvd., Anaheim, California.

Working Group Members Present:

1. Natalie Wieckert, County of Orange
2. Mike Robbins, People's Taskforce
3. Eve Garrow, ACLU
4. Linda Lehnkering, Poverty Taskforce
5. Captain Eric Carter, City of Anaheim
6. Matt Bates, CityNet
7. Mayor Pro Tem James Vanderbilt, City of Anaheim
8. Council Member Jose Moreno, City of Anaheim
9. Council Member Denise Barnes, City of Anaheim
10. Jesse Ben-Ron, State Assembly
11. Calvin Sung, State Senate
12. Jay Burress, Visit Anaheim

Working Group Members Absent:

Norma Campos Kurtz, State Assembly

Staff members were present:

Kristine Ridge, Assistant City Manager
Sal Figueroa, Council Aide to Council Member Moreno

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comments were open for two minutes.

Mark Daniels commended the Working Group for having these meetings but recommended increasing promotion of these meetings to the community. Daniels also recommended taking a look at the El Fresno Gardens Plan because he believes it is an efficient plan. Lastly, he recommended to not focus on NIMBYism.

Lou Noble discussed homelessness as a health hazard. Noble mentioned that many people work but there is a lack of affordable housing to get them into a home. Noble said that shelters are great but they are not enough. Noble stated that homelessness is health hazard in the riverbeds and the trails. Noble also said that many of those who are homeless have mental health issues and need assistance, stating that they do not need to be penalized.

Jeanine Robbins thanked the Working Group for participating. Robbins then stated that she attended a CityNet meeting at the library. She mentioned a presentation given at that meeting by United Way based on a UCI report on homelessness. Robbins mentioned that there are three causes of homelessness, she learned from the presentation and mentioned two of them as prevalent in the City: 1) lack of a sustainable wage, 2) lack of affordable housing. She recommended that companies who get funding from the City be faulted if they do not provide a sustainable wage.

Victoria Michaels stated that she also attended the meeting where United Way gave a presentation. She recommended that the City incentivize businesses to hire homeless individuals after they have gone through training. She then distinguished the importance of differentiating between chronic homeless and not chronic homeless. Michaels also announced that on September 20, 7pm, at the Phoenix Club, the Anaheim Republican Assembly would be having a presentation on homelessness.

Wes Jones stated that he does not see a purpose of the Working Group. He states that the City tax structure does not allow the City to provide housing, such as state and federal entities. He said that Working Group is supposed to focus instead on the camping ordinance and the criminalization of the homeless. He stated that probable cause is needed to stop and search somebody, but for someone who is homeless, their probable cause is the fact that they are homeless. Jones said that homeless individuals then get tickets, go to jail, and obtain warrants, which increase financial burdens. Jones stated that you cannot police your way out of the homelessness crisis and other structures are needed.

Bill Taormina thanked the Working Group for taking the time to be present for this important issue. He mentioned that he has conducted several polls and has seen that this issue affects everyone. He stated there are a series of unmanaged resources that need to be connected. He asked for city corporations, resorts, and non-profits to come together to pull their resources to address homelessness. Taormina then introduces Linda Newby.

Linda Newby tells the story about an individual who went to a local CVS and asked if he could work by cleaning up the parking lot in exchange for staying in the back of the store. The CVS Manger agreed. Newby stated how impressed she was that businesses could assist individuals.

Wes Jones asked a question about directing questions to individuals on the Working Group and was told that he could but that a conversation could not take place. Council Member Moreno stated that any questions posed could be agendized for a future meeting if the Working Group so chooses.

III. PURPOSE STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

Chair Moreno refers to the draft he submitted of the Purpose and Objectives. Chair Moreno then stated that the Group wanted to look at the draft in order to ask questions or offer suggestions that would be taken into account at this meeting or at a future meeting.

Chair Moreno then read the Purpose Statement: Develop and recommend a policy framework, and ensuing policies, that seek to effectively and compassionately address homelessness in Anaheim. Chair Moreno suggested that the Purpose Statement might need to be clearer by saying that these recommendations would go to Council.

Chair Moreno then read the Objectives: Via examination of current policies, public input and testimony, and review of sample promising policies the working group will:

- Develop a policy framework embedded in compassion and spirit of kindness
- Develop policy recommendations that seek to reaffirm and/or restore balance in effectively addressing resident and community concerns
- Develop recommendations to align city policies and resources with county and state efforts for greater effectiveness and efficiency

Council Member Vanderbilt gave a recommendation that the second bullet of the objectives include the word “Anaheim” in front of the word “resident.”

Jay Burress made a recommendation to change “Develop” a policy framework to “Develop recommendations.” This is due to the Group only developing recommendations to Council not developing policy frameworks within the Group.

Matt Bates recommended adding “federal” to the last bullet point in the objectives.

Chair Moreno then stated that a final draft of the Purpose and Objectives would be presented for approval at the next meeting.

Chair Moreno then moved to the next item on the agenda.

IV. HOMELESS PANEL DISCUSSION AND Q&A

Chair Moreno discussed the importance of retaining humanity when discussing homelessness and introduced the panelist as an important component to better understand the condition of homelessness in the City.

Chair Moreno introduced Angel, who was invited by Mike Robbins, as the only panelist present.

Robbins described Angel as one of the leaders in the Riverbed; she has a vehicle and knows many in the Riverbed as well as their situation.

Chair Moreno began the discussion by asking Angel where she lives on a daily basis. Angel replied that she lives on the Riverbed.

Chair Moreno asked how long Angel has been living there. Angel replied she has been at the Riverbed since Thanksgiving and before that, she lived in her van for six weeks.

Chair Moreno asked if Angel was working. Angel replied with yes, she works two jobs. She works in retail and one day a week she is a caregiver.

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Chair Moreno asked about how many hours Angel works a week. Angel replied she works at least 31 hours a week.

Chair Moreno asked about how long has it been since Angel has had permanent housing. Angel replied since October 5.

Chair Moreno asked if those living in their cars are constantly moving their car to somewhere where they feel safe. Angel replied by saying they find places that are safe, hidden, and where they can get as much sleep as possible.

Chair Moreno asked about how safe Angel felt when she was sleeping in her vehicle. Angel replied she has been sleep deprived no matter what and she said that sleeping in her vehicle is about the same as sleeping in the Riverbed.

Chair Moreno asked about Angel's daily routine. Angel replied she gets up, has coffee, takes a shower at the gym where she has a membership, cleans up camp, and then works depending on her work schedule. She also takes her dog to the dog park and on her days off, she does her laundry. Angel stated she feels very fortunate to have two jobs that allow her to take care of everything, but cannot afford a house.

Chair Moreno asked if she was staying in the Riverbed in a tent. Angel replied with yes.

Chair Moreno asked where her dog stays when she is at work. Angel replied her dog stays at the Riverbed in a makeshift yard that she built using pallets.

Chair Moreno commented how many people might say, that if Angel has a job why does not rent an apartment. Angel replied by saying that she could rent a studio, but then she wouldn't be able to afford utilities, food or her vehicle; or she could have a vehicle where she can afford everything else.

Chair Moreno asked if she has accessed or reached out to any services. Angel said that when she knew she was going to be homeless she called 211 and every number that she was given to her by the Police and other organizations, but she still ended up on the Riverbed.

Chair Moreno commented that it appeared as if many people were willing to pick up the phone to help. Angel interjected by saying, sometimes and that not every organization picks up their phone or calls back.

Chair Moreno asked, what happens after making contact, do they try to find you housing? Angel answered by saying, not really and that every organization has different prerequisites for housing.

Chair Moreno asked of the prerequisites that create impediments for obtaining housing. Angel replied by saying, that for her and many others it is the fact that she has a dog. Angel said that her dog helps her by providing a sense of security and companionship.

Chair Moreno asked if she has accepted any services or if she was just told that she would receive help but never did. Angel said, yes Mercy House had set her up with an organization to sign her up for housing, but she was never told that she needed to reapply every six months or her name would be removed from the waiting list.

Chair Moreno asked about the general experience of living on the Riverbed. Angel replied by saying, there is a community there and that people watch out for each other. She said there is a very small element of criminal activity. She said that those in the Riverbed do not get the police involved and that there is an order in the Riverbed.

Chair Moreno opened up the opportunity for questions from the rest of the Working Group.

Eve Garrow, reflected on Angel's comments related to not making a housing wage. The wage needed for housing, food, and utilities. Garrow then commented on the tight rental market that is present. Garrow also discussed her experience working for a nonprofit that had very limited resources, in terms of beds, to give to those who are homeless. She mentioned how they did not even have a waitlist at this particular nonprofit because it would have been too long. Garrow then asked if this concept resonated with Angel. Angel replied by saying yes, and how she has to keep calling places for help. Garrow then commented on Angel's comments about not getting law enforcement involved in the Riverbed and how that is a safety concern. Angel tried to explain the conflict that arises between police officers who have the ability to arrest those who are simply trying to scrape together resources to live. Angel then said that the environment should be different by having police officers go into the Riverbed to help those in the Riverbed, but even then, there is great fear because of the criminalization that creates barriers for people. Angel then mentioned how many people are targeted if they appear to be homeless.

Council Member Vanderbilt asked Angel how many times case managers have approached her. Angel said that the only time she was approached was when Jim Wheeler called the Illumination Foundation and Coast-to-Coast Foundation to tell them about Angel and to help her, since she had been speaking at the County Board of Supervisors' meeting, but she never received help.

Council Member Vanderbilt asked about other nonprofits/churches who offer supplies, and if that happens often. Angel replied it usually only happens on the weekends, which leads to an overload of food, but during the week supplies are scarce.

Council Member Vanderbilt asked about places nearby that offer soup kitchens. Angel commented that leaving the campsite at any time is risky and subject to criminals, drug addicts, or police officers.

Matt Bates thanked Angel for coming to the meeting. Bates then posed the statement said by many, "these people don't really want help." Bates then asked how Angel would suggest to reply to someone when this comment is made. Angel replied by saying that that just is not true.

Chair Moreno followed up by saying that the topic of homelessness was agendaized for the last four months at City Council meetings and one thing he has heard consistently is that it takes one to eight contacts to get someone who is homeless to go with a service provider because people have a hard time trusting the providers. Chair Moreno then asked, what can be done before the trust is gained between the person and the provider. Angel replied that it is important for those who want to help to be faithful.

Council Member Barnes asked Angel to address the health hazards that Lou Noble spoke of. Angel stated that not being able to shower every day is an issue and that people have tapped into water supplies to create showers.

Chair Moreno followed up by asking, where do people go, other than coming up with creative ways for showers, what about the restroom. Angel said that it is not something that is talked about, but that people do use buckets, they do not know what to do with them so they keep them on the Riverbed or throw it into the Riverbed. Angel also said that some people have gone to the nearby businesses, but now many businesses have put locks onto the restrooms and don't have access to them unless you are a paying a customer.

Council Member Barnes followed up by asking, would it be a priority to have a source for the restroom. Angel replied with absolutely. Council Member Barnes commented that Angel paying for a gym membership to use the showers was very smart.

Jay Burress thanked Angel for attending the panel. Burress then asked Angel what her perfect solution would be. Angel replied by saying, for her personally, it would be to have a home and a living wage that would allow her to pay for that home on her own. Angel then began to discuss how her daughter and grandkids live in Washington.

Burress followed up by asking Angel what keeps her here. Angel said absolutely nothing.

Chair Moreno asked Angel what recommendations she could think of to take to the City Council as potential recommendations to address homelessness. Angel recommended that other states, like New Jersey, or countries like Canada be looked at in terms of examining their policies since homelessness is minimal in those places. Angel followed up by saying their solutions are usually housing.

Council Member Vanderbilt excused himself from the meeting due to another commitment.

Chair Moreno asked if police should be included in this work. Angel replied that many people on the Riverbed have had trauma, which makes it hard for them to trust anyone. Chair Moreno clarified, by saying, so there is a role for police officers, but it is important to humanize the role to decrease fear.

Chair Moreno asked Angel what she would recommend for the Anaheim Police Department to serve homelessness better and be more trusted. Angel stated that not having them in uniform would be helpful.

Chair Moreno referred to Captain Carter about the Police's approach to those who are homeless. Captain Carter said that their goal is to get those who are homeless to the resources they need. Captain Carter then said that their role is very small because all they can do is ask, but if they do not accept the help then the situation becomes complicated because someone has usually called in a complaint and something needs to be enforced.

Chair Moreno asked if there were any final comments that she wanted to share. Angel said that she believes that the general public needs to be educated on the cost of homelessness versus housing somebody.

Chair Moreno thanked Angel for coming to the meeting.

Mike Robbins made a comment about the appeal of tiny homes and if Angel thought, it would appeal to those who are homeless. Angel replied with yes.

Chair Moreno then moved to the next agenda item.

V. RECENT NEWS ARTICLES RELATIVE TO HOMELESS ISSUES

Chair Moreno referred to the models for housing that are relatively inexpensive for people to afford and to build.

Mike Robbins confirmed that they are about \$10,000 each, while the full homes with solar panels are \$30,000 - \$50,000 each to build. Robbins also pointed out a new 47-unit project in Garden Grove, supported by HUD and charities. They were built for \$300,000 each and took three years to build. The \$10,000 were built in two months. Robbins states that this idea is something to consider.

Jay Burress thanked the Working Group for all of the City materials provided. Burress commented on the importance of collaboration with everyone in the County.

Chair Moreno asked for any other news articles and welcomed the submission of more articles in the future.

Chair Moreno then moved to the next agenda item.

VI. FUTURE MEETING LOCATIONS AND TIMES

Chair Moreno discussed the importance of putting this item on the agenda because the idea arose of having the meetings at other spaces and at other times, for more people to attend.

Eve Garrow agreed with the idea of having various locations and times for meetings.

Chair Moreno then confirmed that most were in agreement with this idea and stated that the Friday meetings will remain, but the location is to be determined. Proposed times will also be distributed.

Chair Moreno then moved to the next agenda item.

VII. WORKING GROUP COMMUNICATIONS

Chair Moreno welcomed group communications.

Matt Bates wanted to know more about police engagement with homeless and they could discuss that in the future.

Chair Moreno stated that learning about the policies of the police department as they engage with people would be important to understand. Chair Moreno then asked if this information is available.

Kristine Ridge answered that the training bulletin is online. Chair Moreno asked for that link and for the information to be provided to the Working Group.

Chair Moreno asked if there was anything happening at the state level.

Jesse Ben-Ron said that from the senate side there are housing bills that are trying to address the affordable housing issue and that those should come to a vote soon.

Carl Sung stated that one example is SB2.

Chair Moreno stated that there will be presentations from the county, state, and city level to discuss what is being done.

Council Member Barnes asked Natalie to come back to the next meeting ready to discuss how the money is being spent on the County level.

Wes Jones asked how people are notified about the Working Group meetings. Mike Lyster answered the question stating that many steps are being taken to begin making all of the meeting resources public and to increase outreach communication.

Chair Moreno clarified that the shift in meeting dates and locations that were established at this meeting slowed down the outreach process, but that Mike Lyster will be issuing press releases to invite the public.

Chair Moreno stated that since there were no more communications, the next meeting is scheduled for August 25, at 8:30 a.m., the Gordon Hoyt Conference Room.

Chair Moreno gave one more communication about a report to Council about jurisdictional issues that will take place at the next Council meeting.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:13 a.m. to Friday, August 25, 2017 at 8:30 a.m.