

# HSNAC Community Meeting Minutes September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019

## **Community Representative Attendance**

1. Connie Zuniga
2. Gloria Andrade
3. Louise Torio
4. Tomas Perez
5. James Justus
6. Marco A. Cisneros Jr.
7. Paul Sweeney
8. Susan Sweeney
9. Gene
10. Steve Veach
11. Connie M. Romero
12. Eddie Padilla

## **Storage Center Staff (and affiliated partner staff) Attendance**

13. Veronica Aguilar, MHS
14. Sarah Nudel, MHS
15. Richard Penka, MHS
16. Mario Sierra, Environmental Services Department
17. Ruben Gutierrez, San Diego Police Department
18. Captain Scott Wahl, San Diego Police Department
19. Carmen Rivera, San Diego Police Department
20. Sarah Jarman, City of San Diego
21. Casey Nguyen, San Diego Housing Commission
22. Marley Williams, San Diego Housing Commission
23. Carly Owens-Turner, San Diego Housing Commission
24. Marcel Aviles, San Diego Housing Commission
25. Dijana Beck, County of San Diego

## **Next HSNAC Meeting**

**Date: Wednesday, October 16<sup>th</sup>**

**Location: Logan Heights Library**

## **Staff Reports**

Mental Health Services (MHS) staff reported on bin usage.

San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) staff reported on usage statistics, overall client demographics and exits to permanent housing.

Environmental Services Department (ESD) staff reported that ESD crews are working 24/7 conducting litter removal twenty-four hours per day. Staff reported that ESD has a partnership with the Downtown San Diego Partnership to conduct additional emptying of street litter containers. Staff reported that the City will soon have a maintenance agreement in place with

Caltrans that will give the City the authority to remove litter and conduct abatements on Caltrans property.

### Community Comments

Community Comments: Question about when the City will have a comprehensive plan in place for eliminating or reducing homelessness in the City. Question about a recent report that stated that Homeless shelters increase homelessness.

City Staff Response: Informed community representatives that SDHC and the City are working on a strategic plan for the entire City that is expected to be released in October. Informed committee representatives that the plan will offer a comprehensive strategy for how to reduce homelessness short and long term, as well as strategies for paying for services. Staff commented that there was a report from the Council of Economic Advisors that spoke how interim shelters can increase homelessness if they are ineffective, however, the report also stated that effective interim shelters will decrease homelessness. Reported that the report also spoke to the need for reducing regulations as they pertain to housing in order to reduce homelessness. City staff stated that the City is working to reduce regulations, which they believe will help increase the housing stock in San Diego.

Community Representative Response: Question about what else the City is doing to loosen regulations on building housing. Question about how the City is working to incentivize developers to build more housing in the City.

City Staff Response: Staff responded that the City has an entire plan for incentivizing further housing development, from reducing permitting costs to streamlining processes for permanent supportive housing development to locating more revenue for building more units. City staff offered to email representative with more information about the City's approach to building more housing.

Community Comments: Question about how the City is helping individuals who are experiencing homelessness but who are not looking for work and who do not want employment. Community representative stated that homeless individuals are more likely to commit a crime, especially those who are chronically homeless. Question about why the homeless problem is increasing. Community representative stated that people are more concerned with politics than helping people. Comments that the problem of homelessness keeps getting worse. Comment that the City has funding since they are paying \$500,000 a month for an empty building. Question about why the City is not paying for more drug rehabilitation and mental health facilities. Question about why the County is not investing more money into mental health services. Representative stated that individuals with a mental health need should be taken off the street for their own good.

City Staff Response: Staff informed community representatives that it is important to remember that being homeless is not a crime and that many cities are struggling with the same issues. Staff stated that the Mayor is committed to ending street homelessness and that often individuals need progressive engagement. Staff explained that homeless individuals themselves are often victims of crime and that homeless individuals are not necessarily prone to criminal activity.

County Staff Response: Staff reported that the County Behavioral Health Services did receive additional funding for mental health treatment and approaches and that there are a lot of new programs rolling out to address individuals with a mental illness. Staff offered to invite a representative from Behavioral Health to present on the new services at the next HSNAC meeting.

San Diego Police Department Staff Response: Staff responded that there was a 6% reduction Countywide in homelessness in the last year and explained that the City has increased shelter beds, safe places for people to park and store their belongings. Staff explained that without safe places for people to go and store their belongings, there cannot be enforcement and that enforcement is critical to ensure that less people are living in poor conditions. Staff reported that in the last count conducted by the Downtown Partnership, homelessness had decreased in the East Village by approximately 20%, which is a good indication that the situation is improving.

Community Comments: Question about whether the data being reported about the Storage Center is self-reported by clients. Community representative commented that the data is not accurate, especially the data about individuals with a drug and/or alcohol use disorder. Question about collecting more than self-reported data.

City Staff Response: Staff reported that self-reported data is the best source of data that the City currently has to assess the demographics of clients at the Storage Center. Staff informed Committee that the new strategic plan will look at other approaches to best solve the issue of homelessness.

San Diego Police Department Staff Response: Staff reported that it is likely that there are fewer current drug users at the Storage Center than what the community might see on the street since the majority of individuals who are actively using drugs are also not seeking resources.

Community Comments: Community representative announced that the Chicano Park Steering Committee is hosting a community discussion for residents of Chicano Park and Barrio Logan to discuss how gentrification and the rising cost of housing is impacting residents in those neighborhoods. Representative stated that Chicano Park and Barrio Logan residents, business owners and property owners are invited to attend the discussion.

San Diego Police Department Staff Response: Staff reported that the Department could attend the meeting as a partner if that is something the community would want.

Community Comments: Community representative reported that the County and Storage Center staff visited the area around the Villa Montezuma to identify strategies for individuals who are sleeping in or around the Villa. Community representative reported that the County and Storage Center are planning a targeted outreach event to make connections with individuals near the museum who need help. Community representative thanked staff for thinking outside of the box to support the Museum. Representative reported that volunteers have found beer bottles, alcohol bottles and used condoms around the Museum. Representative requested that when police are patrolling, they shine a bright light in the backyard of the Museum to dissuade prostitute and other illegal activity. Reported that one

homeless individual attacked a night tour group who conducts tours near the Museum. Question about whether the Museum could be fenced in a way that would make it more secure.

County of San Diego Staff Response: Staff reported that there is a small encampment in the area near the Villa Montezuma and that the County outreach workers, County public health nurses, the HOT team and the Storage Center outreach workers are going

Police Department Staff Response: Staff reported that the Department will work to support the event and that the Department is here to support the community with what they need.

Community Representative Response: Reported that the Friends of the Montezuma Museum are working to secure an operating agreement for the Museum with the City and that once the agreement is in place, the Museum will have a care taker on site and there will be more events and programming taking place that will make the Museum less conducive for sleeping in and around. Reported that the Friend of the Museum group had looked into adding fencing, however, the City stated that the fencing would make the work more dangerous for the police department.

Community Comments: Community representative requested an update on the construction happening on 17<sup>th</sup> and Imperial related to the new tent shelter.

City Staff Response: Staff responded that the City is working to address storm water requirements and paving on the site and that the hope is that the shelter will still open in the Fall.

Community Comments: Question about why individuals experiencing homelessness are allowed to lie on the street. Representative commented that nobody approaches these individuals and offers to help. Representative expressed concern that individuals could die on the street.

San Diego Police Department Staff Response: Staff responded that the Department does not allow structures or tents to remain on the sidewalk and that individuals are offered a shelter bed, however, 70% of those who are brought to the shelter leave on the first day. Staff explained that allowing tents and structures would create a bad environment for health that could lead to the spread of disease. Staff responded that the problem with tent encampments has appeared to grow in the past five years and that the law should change to prohibit people from living in inhumane conditions.

Community Representative Response: Question about whether charities are bringing tents for people to live in.

Community Comments: Question about the reason for the increase in litter in Logan Heights and why the "No Litter Signs" have been removed from most locations. Question about fines for people who litter. Question about whether SDPD issues tickets for littering. Representative

reported that there is a lot of trash near receptacles, but the trash is not placed inside the receptacles.

Environmental Services Staff Response: Staff reported that the Mayor has initiated the installation of more signs and cameras to monitor. Staff committed to work with community representatives to identify areas where additional signage is necessary.

San Diego Police Department Staff Response: Staff reported that individuals are given tickets for littering when the Department encounters that type of violation.