

City of San Diego
Clean Syringe Exchange Program Facilitation Committee
Minutes of the Meeting

December 5, 2002

12:00 p.m.
Civic Center Plaza
1200 Third Avenue, 9th Floor Conference Room
San Diego, CA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the chair at 12:15 p.m.

Members Present:

Daniel Bess
Jim Dunford
Robert Lewis, Alternate for Fran Butler-Cohen
Cynthia Burke
Debra Fischle-Faulk
Mike Franz
Stephanie Casenza, Alternate for Linda Lloyd
Cesar Solis
Jim Varnadore
Leslie Wade

Staff Present:

Lisa Foster
Staajabu Heshimu
Jason Hooper

Guests Present:

Martin Chevalier
Lesley Davis
Donna Dow
Vicki Granowitz
Adrian Kwiatkowski
Jack Monger
Suzie Pennell
Michael Sprague
Patty Vaccariello

Dr. Dunford stated that he would like to keep the meeting to one hour. Toward that end, he has imposed time guidelines on each agenda item and put the public comment period at the end of the business agenda.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of November 7, 2002

The minutes of the November 7, 2002 meeting were approved with no changes and will be posted to the City web page. Dr. Dunford encouraged committee members to send comments on the draft minutes directly to Staa Heshimu.

3. Status Reports

- a. **Family Health Centers of San Diego – Fran Butler-Cohen/Bob Lewis**
Bob Lewis gave the update and distributed the most recent Service Utilization Report from the downtown site. No services were offered on Thanksgiving Day. Family Health Centers of San Diego (FHCS) continues to work with Council District 3 and hopes to have the two sites in North Park and City Heights up by the end of January. Mr. Lewis responded to questions about how clients are counted and classified and explained that the Service Utilization Report is a field work report only; the program evaluators will prepare more in-depth assessments.
- b. **San Diego Police Department – Lt. Cesar Solis**
Lt. Solis announced that the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) is gearing up for the Super Bowl and has planned for a prisoner-processing center a block from the downtown exchange site.
- c. **San Diego Association of Governments – Dr. Cynthia Burke**
Dr. Burke gave the status report and explained that because of limited space in the motor home and the impossibility of rounding up clients after-the-fact, they are conducting client interviews outside the van. Donna Dow, a guest, complained that the interview set-up with a canopy extending from the motor home and chairs for two clients and two interviewers placed on the sidewalk was unsightly. Leslie Wade commented that this set-up looks like loitering to neighbors and asked if the interviews couldn't be conducted elsewhere. Dr. Burke said there is no indoor facility available but they try to keep clients as close to the motor home as possible. She agreed that this was good feedback to be incorporated in the final report. It was suggested that with a larger motor

home the client lines could be reduced and, likewise, the appearance of loitering.

d. City Manager's Office

In response to questions raised by concerned citizens during the public comment period at the December 3, 2002 City Council meeting, the Council has asked for a response from staff at its January 7, 2003 meeting. Discussion is expected around a report from the City Attorney's office on legal issues, primarily land use and permitting, which were raised about exchange program siting.

Ms. Heshimu distributed a copy of the staff-prepared status report on the Clean Syringe Exchange Program that will be distributed to the Mayor and council members on December 6, 2002. The memo was prepared primarily for the benefit of the two newly elected council members in Districts 2 and 4 to provide background information for them prior to their first vote on extending the emergency ordinance, which will take place on December 10. Debra Fischle-Faulk stated that future reports to the Council would come from the Facilitation Committee, rather than from staff.

4. San Diego Police Department Orientation Video

Lt. Solis explained that the video was developed for officer training. It was delivered to each of SDPD's eight commands and has been or will be used in downtown, Western and Mid-City prior to implementation of the CSEP in each area. The video was then shown to the committee.

5. Discussion: Assessing Neighborhood Impact Objectively

It was suggested that if the committee was interested, the next meeting could be held at the FHCSO offices. Ms. Wade suggested, with Mr. Varnadore in agreement, that one-by-one each committee member should visit the program site, escorted through the motor home by staff. It was stated that clients get nervous around visitors or when photos are taken and that all of this is intrusive; there are also issues of confidentiality. On the other hand, it was pointed out, the program is operating on a public street. Stephanie Casenza stated that the media is always interested in needle exchange and wants to bring cameras, which is disruptive to the program. She said that Alliance Healthcare Foundation had prepared a 4-minute video to show the media what happens and which they could also use on

B-roll. It was suggested that the video be shown to the committee at the next meeting. Ms Wade asked in the meantime if we could refrain from telling the media the exact location of the program sites so they don't flock to the area. Dr. Dunford commented that he had visited the downtown site and spoken with a Smart & Final security guard who said the program seemed to be running smoothly.

Discussion ensued on the question of "objective" vs "subjective" measures that could be or should be applied to the program's impact on neighborhoods. Mr. Varnadore maintained that it is a "subjective" issue and that the question of impact on community is qualitative and not data-driven. He said he hoped the council's discussion on January 7 would go further and involve a political discussion about issues of community impact. Dr. Dunford stated that we need some kind of scale that can be used to show how distasteful a community finds the program to be.

Ms. Wade suggested interviewing neighboring businesses and residents to get their feelings about the program operating in their neighborhoods. Martin Chevalier, a guest, agreed and said that people he talked with at Jerome's Furniture were unaware that the program was operating in the vicinity. He and others offered that we should get input from local businesses on how their businesses are impacted, e.g., their employees are frightened, something more than that they just don't like or want needle exchange in their immediate neighborhood. They should be asked to tell how they are impacted. The committee should have a process in place to look at this. Mr. Varnadore said people don't know much because of the secrecy of the program and program-related meetings where they are told that everyone is o.k. with it. Mr. Chevalier said that he has been to the last four Council meetings to protest the notification process based on his experience in locating a site in North Park. He believes the public process is inadequate and the process for notifying people should be formalized by the committee. Daniel Bess said he understands this is a big issue and asked for suggestions on how the process could be improved.

Debra Fischle-Faulk commented that the Facilitation Committee should be putting together a "lessons learned" report, e.g., here's what works well, here's what doesn't, and here's what we could do differently if this pilot program is to go citywide. She gave the example of the City's experience with the Cortez Hill homeless shelter and the paradigm shift that occurred with public education. She said we must look for ways to facilitate a paradigm shift with the CSEP to affect people's stereotype of what a drug addict is.

Guest Adrian Kwaitkowski suggested a subcommittee be formed to look at these issues. Mike Franz offered that people are most frustrated when there is no avenue for their views to be heard. We should provide an avenue to hear and address their concerns. Dr. Dunford commented that there is no public health infrastructure in the City administration but since the County refused, the City decided to pilot the needle exchange program; therefore, we are learning as we go. He said we should seek to empower the boards that are already in these communities.

It was decided that a subcommittee on community impact would be formed, tasked with exploring objective ways to measure subjective responses. Mr. Varnadore was volunteered for the subcommittee in his absence. Ms. Wade wants to receive a report on how noticing has been done to date and volunteered for the subcommittee. Mr. Chevalier said the right people must be noticed.

MOTION: that an Outreach Subcommittee be convened to make recommendations to the full committee on how to gauge community impact and that this subcommittee is to be provided documentation of the current outreach program. Wade/Bess passed unanimously 8-0 with Ms. Fischle-Faulk, Mr. Varnadore and Dr. Mathews not present.

6. Roundtable/Public Comment

Mr. Chevalier suggested that the downtown program be moved onto police department property. Lt. Solis responded that SDPD would not agree to that.

Dr. Dunford asked if we had to have three sites. Mr. Bess said he believes we need sites in both North Park and City Heights. Ms. Wade asked what will happen between now and the February meeting. There will be a progress report on site selection in February.

Ms. Wade asked if the City Council specifically said we did not have to do noticing within 300 ft. of a proposed site. Mr. Kwaitkowski said there are no noticing requirements related to the syringe exchange program but they had been voluntarily noticing for 300 ft., that in the case of the downtown site, Jerome's Furniture owns all the property within 300 ft. of the site. Mr. Kwaitkowski added that he had been documenting all the outreach activities they are doing. Ms. Wade commented that she agreed there should be a formal notification process. Mr. Franz also agreed and said standards should be in place that people can agree on to prevent having to fight battles after-the-fact. There was a comment that if it

were the case that no one knew the program was operating in their area, this was not necessarily a bad thing; perhaps that could be viewed as a good thing because if the program were a bad neighbor we would surely be hearing about it.

Mr. Kwaitkowski offered that he could give the subcommittee a written report as requested, that, in fact, this would probably be needed for the January 7 Council meeting.

Vicki Granowitz said the North Park Planning Committee tried hard to keep people informed via public meetings on the North Park site selection process but that program opponents misled people to the extent that many believed it was a methadone clinic going up. They, too, are learning as they go along and asking what notification is good enough. She said they were going door-to-door in surrounding neighborhoods to let people know. Donna Dow, a guest, said she believes formal written noticing should be done since this is a public project. Mr. Kwaitkowski stated that they deliberately chose the more personal notification process as they believed if people received the notice by letter they would be more frightened. They did not want to create community hysteria. Ms. Wade said she agrees that this is a more effective approach but one that must be complete.

Michael Sprague, a guest, commented that the level of support for the program was tremendously high in City Heights and said he also believes the face-to-face approach is best. He said it is important that the community's representatives on the Facilitation Committee share information with the communities they represent. Mr. Sprague added that he also doesn't like the awning and chairs set-up outside the program motor home.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the full committee was set for February 6; there will be no meeting on January 2 as many committee members will be vacationing for the holidays. The new subcommittee is to meet later in January.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:30 p.m.