

City of San Diego
Clean Syringe Exchange Program Facilitation Committee
February 5, 2004

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 approximately 12:10 p.m.

Members Present:

Martin Chevalier, Alternate for Mateo Camarillo
Cynthia Burke
Jim Dunford
Kathy Evans-Calderwood, Alternate for Lyle Neptun
Mike Franz
Stajabu Heshimu, Alternate for Debra Fischle-Faulk
Robert Lewis, Alternate for Fran Butler-Cohen
Linda Lloyd

Staff Present:

Lisa Foster
Stajabu Heshimu

Guests Present:

Donna Dow
Lora Folsom
Joel Harrison
Adrian Kwiatkowski
James Nelson
Sgt. Mike Parga
Michael P. Powers
Diana Spyridonidis
Jim Varnadore

2. Self-Introductions

Dr. Dunford asked for self-introductions of those present.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of December 4, 2003

The minutes were approved with one correction: the date the interim report was presented to City Council was January 7, 2003 (page 3 – 4d, line7). The corrected minutes will be posted on the City website.

4. Status Reports

a. Family Health Centers of San Diego –Bob Lewis

Mr. Lewis distributed the latest utilization statistics, pointing out that there were no exchange services offered on some days because of the holidays. Dr. Dunford recapped the total number of needles taken in and distributed since the exchange program became operational at each site. Mr. Varnadore questioned the number of people using the program to dispose of needles at both the downtown and North Park sites. Mr. Lewis stated that it is true that the program continues to be used by many individuals who are not illegal drug users to dispose of used syringes.

b. San Diego Police Department – Lt. Cesar Solis

Sgt. Mike Parga reported for Lt. Solis. Dr. Dunford asked about the white van that had been a continuous object of community complaint in North Park. Mr. Lewis said the white van had not been seen for awhile. Sgt. Parga said the SDPD received a complaint about two people in a fish market a block and a half from the CSEP site; officers were sent to investigate but did not find anything they could cite on. SDPD continues to follow up on all suspicious activity. However, it has not been established that any of it is directly connected to the CSEP.

c. San Diego Association of Governments – Dr. Cynthia Burke

Dr. Burke reported that SANDAG has now stopped conducting follow up interviews. They have a 90%+ rate in North Park and an 80%+ rate downtown. The interview team made special efforts to find and follow up with clients. They are now cleaning up their databases. Mr. Chevalier asked if the numbers of people coming into an area over time was being captured. Dr. Burke responded that zip code information is being collected.

d. City Manager's Office

Ms. Heshimu reported that staff had received questions on whether the City Council would continue to declare the Hepatitis C/HIV/AIDS health emergency which allows the syringe exchange program to continue to operate while the final report and recommendations were being prepared. She suggested that the Facilitation Committee, rather than staff, should make a recommendation to the City Council. Dr. Burke confirmed that SANDAG's final report would be available to the Facilitation Committee in 90 days, about mid-May. Dr. Dunford asked about the role of Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Lloyd said Johns Hopkins worked with SANDAG, providing comments in a consultant role and gave SANDAG their evaluation instruments. It is estimated that the Facilitation Committee recommendations could be prepared within 45 days of receiving SANDAG's final report such that the final recommendations to the City Council would be ready by July 1. Dr. Dunford commented that if the City Council did not continue to declare the health emergency, syringe exchange services would be discontinued for the next five months. Mr. Chevalier stated his belief that the program would be shut down on February 14, 2004, one year after the North Park site became operational.

Mr. Varnadore suggested that we check with the Mayor's Office to see if the Council's Neighborhood Services and Public Safety Committee should receive the report and recommendations before they are presented to the full City Council.

Dr. Harrison commented that if the program is discontinued the rapport with syringe exchange clients will be broken. He opined that the health emergency does not end on February 14. Mr. Kwiatkowski stated that he remembers this question coming up before and that the answer was that the syringe exchange program should run until the Council makes a decision. Dr. Lloyd agreed that in meetings with Council members her understanding was that the program would continue until there was a Council decision. She said it makes no sense to have services stopped while the health emergency continues. She also said that funding is in place to continue services at the two sites until the Council makes a decision on the future of the program.

Mr. Franz said that, speaking as a treatment provider, when he looks at the program stats and the number of individuals referred to detox and treatment, he is convinced that the exchange program should not be interrupted.

Ms. Heshimu read Mr. Green's statement opposing the continuation of exchange services (see attached) into the record as he requested.

Ms. Dow asked what a local health emergency is. Deputy City Attorney Lisa Foster explained that the City routinely declares a number of emergencies, this one is related to the Hepatitis C epidemic.

Mr. Chevalier moved that the CSEP be terminated on February 14, 2004, which he believes is the date the pilot study was to end. The motion died for lack of a second.

MOTION: That the Facilitation Committee recommend to the City Council that CSEP services continue as presently operating until the Council makes a final decision. Franz/Evans-Calderwood. Passed 8 –1.

MOTION: That the Facilitation Committee recommend that the City Council continue declaring a local state of emergency related to Hepatitis C/HIV/AIDS. Lloyd/Evans-Calderwood. Passed 8-1.

Dr. Dunford will prepare the recommendation to the Mayor and Council.

e. City Attorney's Office – Lisa Foster

Deputy City Attorney Lisa Foster reported that she is ready to talk about some remaining sections of the draft ordinance that pertain to operational issues. She said she has relied a great deal on the original task force report in preparing the ordinance. Ms. Foster suggested that a subcommittee meeting could be scheduled for March 4 at 1:30 p.m. after the Facilitation Committee meeting and presented to the full committee in April. In response to questions from Ms. Dow and Ms. Evans-Calderwood, Ms. Foster said the ordinance is not legally necessary but that the City Council has said it wants to see rules governing any future CSEP operations. Mr. Chevalier noted that a private attorney disagreed with the City Attorney's opinion on this.

5. Community Impact Subcommittee – Status Reports

- a. North Park Survey – Mr. Lewis said the draft survey is ready to go to SDSU's Internal Review Board. It will then be translated into Spanish.

He is guessing all this will take approximately 2 –3 weeks before the survey can begin. Ms. Evans-Calderwood said she has received written comments dated December 5, 2003 from a graduate Communications student on the wording of the survey which she would like to pass on to the Committee. She also stated that “a few vocal people in North Park does not make a neighborhood against this project” and that people in City Heights were looking forward to having the program. Dr. Harrison agreed that a few people are purporting to represent the whole community and this is not true.

- b. East Village Focus Group – Ms. Heshimu said a decision needed to be made on how the Committee would solicit community input to include in the final report from residents and businesses in East Village. Dr. Dunford agreed that the Committee needs something to present to Council that says how people in East Village feel about the CSEP. Mr. Chevalier suggested that the surrounding businesses, i.e., Smart & Final, GTM and the Bindery be asked what they think. Ms. Heshimu agreed to draft a letter to local businesses for the Committee’s review.

Mr. Kwiatkowski said the Monger Company has continued to keep the East Village Association and the Downtown Partnership informed about the CSEP and that he believes both groups would be willing to testify before Council. It was agreed that a letter asking for feedback would be sent to them. Ms. Dow opined that businesses are definitely impacted by the homeless lying around the area on Thursdays. Dr. Harrison commented that with no baseline data business owners may perceive problems that were pre-existing and have no connection to the CSEP. Dr. Dunford said they should be asked to think comprehensively.

6. Roundtable/Public Comment

A guest asked if syringes are tested for HIV and if this wasn’t important. Mr. Lewis responded that they are not. Dr. Dunford added that although we do know from a large body of national data that shared needle use leads to infection, this study was not designed to collect or measure this. Dr. Lloyd said the assumption is that 80-90% of injection drug uses are Hepatitis C positive; that information comes from studies that have collected this data.

Mr. Powers questioned the authority of alternates sitting on the Committee today, noting that Mateo Camarillo has resigned. Ms. Heshimu responded that the City Manager has not yet made a replacement appointment. Mr. Powers said he was recently elected to represent the Greater North Park Area Planning Committee on the Facilitation Committee and that although there are some opposed to the CSEP, there are many more in favor of it.

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Mr. Chevalier questioned Ms. Evans-Calderwood's sitting on the Committee citing a potential conflict of interest if she is involved in conducting the North Park survey. Ms. Evans-Calderwood responded that she is only delivering comments on the survey to the Facilitation Committee, not designing the survey.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting is March 4, 2004

8. Adjournment

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