

MINUTES - REGULAR MEETING

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT AND CONSERVATION COMMISSION (NICC)

Community Meeting Center, Council Chamber
11300 Stanford Avenue

Monday, June 5, 2017

CALL TO ORDER: 6:36 P.M.

ROLL CALL:

COMMISSIONER BLACKMUN
COMMISSIONER BRIETIGAM
COMMISSIONER CRAWFORD
COMMISSIONER MCINTOSH
COMMISSIONER PHAM
COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ
COMMISSIONER SERRANO

Absent: McIntosh, Pham

Vice Chair McIntosh joined the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

ALSO PRESENT: Nida Watkins, Project Manager; Jimmy Nguyen, Program Specialist; Police Officers Brian Hatfield and Bryan Meers; Council Member Kris Beard; Judith Moore, Recording Secretary.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Officer Hatfield.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – PUBLIC: Ms. Claire Bischoff asked if the City had resources to pick up approximately fifteen black trash bags, filled by volunteer Todd, located along Trask Avenue and Magnolia Street by USA Gasoline. Also, approximately ten of those bags were in her neighborhood at Lampson Avenue and Gilbert Street. Staff responded that the matter would be forwarded to Public Works.

MINUTES: It was moved by Commissioner Serrano and seconded by Commissioner Crawford, to receive and file the Minutes from the April 3, 2017 Meeting. The motion carried by a 5-0 vote, with Commissioners McIntosh and Pham absent, as follows:

Ayes: (5) Blackmun, Brietigam, Crawford, Ramirez, Serrano
Noes: (0) None
Absent: (2) McIntosh, Pham

MATTERS FROM STAFF: HOMELESS TASK FORCE PRESENTATION: Staff gave a general outline of the City's current administrative and funding processes to address homelessness in Garden Grove. Included was a description of the Point in Time

(PIT) data, which is gathered every two years for Orange County (OC), and which shows a homeless count divided into two groups, unsheltered and sheltered, with an overall increase of 7.6% from 2015 to 2017. The Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), a funding source for homelessness, has been granted to three OC cities, Santa Ana, Anaheim, and Garden Grove, aka, the OC Collaborative. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) decides on the homeless population for a city and determines how much each city receives per year, however, the OC Collaborative collectively makes the funding recommendations. The funding flow begins with the Federal Government, with funds sent to a city or county, and finally, funds are allocated to the service providers who assist the homeless individuals.

Under the federal guidelines of HUD, the total estimated FY17/18 ESG allocation of \$175,000 has been recommended to be distributed as follows: street outreach (\$25,000), emergency shelter (\$70,000), both for the operation of the shelter and essential services such as case management and career counseling, as well as homeless prevention (\$17,500), rapid rehousing (\$44,125), data services (\$5,250), which track Garden Grove's homeless clients to be entered into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and program administration (\$13,125).

Commissioner Crawford asked if the Police Department was a part of the funding. Staff stated that police involvement was funded by the general budget, rather than ESG.

Chair Ramirez asked why the numbers of unsheltered individuals were on the rise. Staff responded that the increase was due to a combination of factors county-wide.

Police officer Brian Hatfield then presented an overview of Garden Grove's volunteer Homeless Task Force. He noted three types of calls for service codes, F60 for outreach and street contact, 415T for transient-related disturbances of the peace, and 5150 for welfare for mental health. The number of calls collectively totaled approximately 1,600 in the last six months.

Hatfield noted that street outreach projects with network connections to private and civic resources produce job fairs for the homeless, such as rehabilitation programs, mental health facilities, housing programs, and church groups; and that areas of interest included Knott Street & Garden Grove Boulevard, Brookhurst Street & Jennrich Avenue, Beach Boulevard, Magnolia & Gilbert Streets, and Gilbert Street & Chapman Avenue. He added that areas with enforcement issues in the City were the Coco's at Valley View Street & Cerulean, and the 405/22 Freeway encampment, with joint forces such as Westminster Police Department, Cal Trans, and CHP, providing resources and looking at environmental concerns. The OC Flood Control channel resources included both outreach and enforcement and the Harbor Boulevard and Chapman Avenue resort/hotel area had shared assistance between officers. He also mentioned that the referral program had 17 persons relocated with only three returning to a homeless situation.

Hatfield pointed out that Garden Grove did not have a full-time homeless outreach program; that he and five others in the resource team were full-time patrol officers

going to homeless camps during breaks in activity; that City Net, Illumination Foundation, and many other programs had dedicated street outreach teams with proven tactics; that 17 relocated homeless out of 200-300 did not seem like much, however, services were provided on a voluntary basis and that people could not be forced to go elsewhere; that the Police Department and organizations needed to build relationships; that when arrests were made, the cases were not filed in the District Attorney's office as homeless were already viewed as having a hard time; and that if an arrest was not appropriate, he or she may be referred to a program.

Hatfield then referred to the large encampment in the Santa Ana river bed and noted that a relocation effort was being addressed through a land maintenance program; that left over personal property was placed in a holding yard in Lake Forest for 30-60 days, but the distance for the homeless to retrieve such property was too far and the new requirement was for property to be a 15-minute walk or bike ride away; that there was a 72-hour notification to evict prior to enforcement from the public land flood-control channel; and that the 57 Freeway was a public access area.

He then explained that upward to 500 homeless occupied the Santa Ana Civic Center; that the County created the Santa Ana Bus Depot shelter with programs to assist and stabilize people emotionally and physically; that wrap-around services addressed mental health, drug addiction, other helpful services including shower and bathroom facilities; that Susan Price, the Community Care Coordinator for the County, suggested the County be sectioned into three areas - north, central, and southern county areas, where at least one shelter program would open in each region; that the Anaheim location was opened with a screening process for walk-ins to be screened to determine where they were from, where they lived, and what services they need, in order to keep them in the regions they were from, however, people do not need to be referred.

Commissioner Crawford noted that in the current OC Register newspaper, the policy seemed to be that homeless needed to be referred to the Anaheim facility, however, the information could be inaccurate.

Hatfield added that the Santa Ana bus shelter was a 24/7 facility for people to receive services, however, when the facility opened, there was a huge influx of homeless from all areas. The population willing to receive services was placed into permanent housing programs to prevent overcrowding.

Officer Hatfield then described a class called "Crime Prevention thru Environmental Design," which addressed how an environment could create a desirable area for the homeless. Surveys were done and provided to the Garden Grove Boys & Girls Club to address trespassing issues, which included camping and graffiti issues at the steel structure nearby. Recommendations to the Club included lighting concerns, tree trimming, and different positioning of vehicles for natural surveillance to help reduce trespassing and criminal concerns. Often, the environmental aspect was underutilized.

Vice Chair McIntosh mentioned Potters Lane in Midway City, where the homeless facility was welcomed, and suggested creating a second location in Garden Grove, especially with Garden Grove declared as a Purple Heart City. This would be good for veterans and he suggested inviting American Family Homes to a future meeting.

Officer Hatfield had visited the Potters Lane site during construction and observed the surrounding neighborhood noting that there was little pushback from the residential community, and that the program was run well and professionally with on-site counseling.

Commissioner Blackmun asked Officer Hatfield for the number of hours the task force devoted to volunteerism. He responded not enough and reiterated there was no full-time position to dispense services. Police agencies that had positions were able to build relationships sooner.

Commissioner Blackmun asked if outreach could be provided to residents as they may not have an understanding of the issues. Hatfield stated that he had spoken on the topic at neighborhood meetings and that public education may be more important than field education. He added that when residents wonder why the homeless population had increased in their area, he questions residents if they had been generous by handing out money to people on off ramps, or buying food for them as the homeless flock to areas where the best resources were easily obtained. Giving hearts, as they relate to homeless, were creating issues.

Commissioner Blackmun asked about the drug scene at the Chapman Avenue & Brookhurst Street area. Hatfield noted that the Social Security office was nearby for the coordination of benefits and that Walmart was a low-cost discount store; that the right-of-way vacant property, currently occupied by new cars, had an 8'-0" gap where camps were located; that shopping centers were used for their facilities; and that he daily saw how much food, money, and supplies were handed out.

Commissioner Serrano thanked Officer Hatfield and asked if the Police Department could provide a dedicated officer, along with the five volunteers, perhaps through a grant or partnership with mental health services, to continue program maintenance.

Vice Chair McIntosh agreed, but would like four dedicated officers, one for each beat, or a volunteer citizen's team to work with the police and churches. He asked if the philosophy was that if certain homeless were not a problem, the officers let them be, such as campers in the Walmart parking lot.

Officer Hatfield noted that there was an issue with private vs. public property; that Walmart was private property and did not want to be known as too hard on a certain segments of the population, such as not being sensitive to the homeless needs. He made contact with the Walmart population every weekend and asked their intentions, however, if Walmart did not want them removed, he could not overstep his grounds.

Commissioner Brietigam asked if it was difficult for a private business to sign trespass warnings or take action. Hatfield replied that most businesses were

cooperative with giving a verbal warning, though no action could be taken without a signed document for a private person's arrest for a misdemeanor crime. Most businesses would not sign and only wanted the trespasser to go away.

Commissioner Brietigam asked what would happen if a call was received from a grocery store to press charges for shop-lifting by a transient. Would a trespass warning be issued to the store if the person was seen on the site again, and could the trespasser be arrested on site?

Hatfield replied that the matter would be handled through the shopping center property management company, and that years ago, trespass letters, by agreement through the police department and property management/owner, could authorize an arrest. The method was challenged in court, that trespass letters could not be issued to anyone on property, however, Los Angeles had gone back to trespass letters for certain areas and this method was trickling down to Garden Grove.

Commissioner Brietigam suggested that after transients were arrested on private properties, the management companies could issue trespass warnings.

Commissioner Serrano recalled the trespass letters and mentioned that Santa Ana still used them. Hatfield added that the warning was only good for seven days, then the process was gone through again.

Commissioner Blackmun asked about the new City Net contract. Hatfield said he looked forward to the partnership as he has contacted them for many cases. Case workers ride with the officers, with the sworn officer making the initial contact to eliminate any safety issues.

Ms. Claire Bischoff asked for profile trends in the homeless from the data collection, as being a teacher, she wondered if any homeless had gone through the Garden Grove school system. Staff responded generally that the information was confidential. Hatfield added that the homeless were people falling on hard times, the 35 and under younger population was on the rise, and that the criminal early release program created a difficult environment as many people end up couch-surfing.

A resident approached the Commission and stated that she had seen the change in Garden Grove and thanked the Garden Grove Police Department for sharing the information, especially regarding the 405/22 Freeway area. She would like to be involved and wished more of the community had known about the session.

Chair Ramirez then noted that the Commission was not a policy making body with a direct influence on budgets like the City Council and that budget constraints would hinder providing an additional four officers. He encouraged the Commission to speak to the City Council members. He added that homelessness in the area had increased and was geographically everywhere. He did not like peddling, and though people had big hearts, the donations took away from the ability of the service providers, who had structures and systems to serve the communities. He did not give money out, though donated through his church, and suggested that the

community, instead of handouts, could refer the homeless to resources already in place.

MATTERS FROM COMMISSIONERS: Commissioner Serrano thanked Officer Hatfield and suggested that one or two officers dedicated to the homeless issue would reduce calls for service and allow other officers to respond to more serious matters.

Vice Chair McIntosh also thanked Officer Hatfield for volunteering and encouraged the City to reach out to American Family Homes to possibly do a presentation. He also encouraged residents to continue coming to the meetings.

Commissioner Crawford appreciated the presentation and acknowledged that police work was a tough job especially with spending off duty time with people on the streets. She inquired if larger developments, such as the Brookhurst Triangle, had a tie-in to increase Police and Fire personnel, and if not, this would be a disservice to the City. Chair Ramirez responded that it was not uncommon for cities to have impact fees related to Police and Fire services, though not all cities had them. Staff would look into the matter and respond to Commissioners with a follow-up.

Commissioner Brietigam thanked Officer Hatfield and commented that though Garden Grove had a big heart, this partially fueled the homeless issue, in addition to property owners who did not police their property.

Commissioner Blackmun stated the presentation was enlightening as the Commission was often pressed for answers. She would like to coordinate a public meeting to educate residents about the homeless. Also, Garden Grove will hold their annual meeting Saturday, June 10th at 12:30 p.m. at 12381 Meade Street. In attendance would be Police Chief Todd Elgin, Lisa Kim, Supervisor Do, and notables such as Council Members and Lou Correa. The public was also welcome and Public Works would be there for Animal Care to license pets.

ADJOURNMENT: Chair Ramirez adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m. to the next regular meeting of the Neighborhood Improvement and Conservation Commission to be held on Monday, September 11, 2017, at 6:30 p.m., at the Community Meeting Center Council Chamber, 11300 Stanford Avenue.

Judith Moore
RECORDING SECRETARY