

Approved



HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Thursday, March 12, 2015

Council Chambers

Palo Alto Civic Center

250 Hamilton Avenue

7:00 PM

REGULAR MEETING

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: Chen, Morin, O’Nan, Savage, Stone

Absent: Alhassani, Bacchetti

Council Liaison: Council Member Berman

Staff: Minka van der Zwaag, Mary Constantino

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:

Mr. Jay West lives at Alma Place which is managed by Palo Alto Housing Corporation. Mr. West decided to organize the residents for the approval of post office boxes installed at the facility. Currently the U.S. Postal mail gets delivered to the management office and then the mail is distributed to the tenants. The tenants have not been getting their mail in a timely manner, told to wait to receive their mail or the mail has been given to the wrong people. The tenants created a petition with 55 signatures and sent the petition to the postmaster asking that the tenants want their own mailboxes. The residents wanted to make an announcement in the resident newsletter but management did not approve it, and we were taken back by their decision. On another issue, Alma Place Apartments went through improvements and residents were made to move out and it was causing hardships because PAHC did not provide a place for the residents to go and the residents had to incur the costs.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Savage made a motion to approve the minutes of January 8, 2015 HRC meeting.

Seconded by Commissioner Chen. AYES: Unanimous.

Commissioner Savage made a motion to approve the minutes of February 12, 2015 HRC meeting.

Seconded by Commissioner Morin. AYES: Unanimous.

AGENDA CHANGES, REQUESTS, and DELETIONS:

BUSINESS

- 1. Draft 2015-2020 Consolidated Plan Goals and Priorities – Consuelo Hernandez – Action - Public Hearing**

Consuelo Hernandez stated that she tried to simplify the Consolidated Plan by the summarizing

Approved

proposed goals for the next 5 years. Through the city's outreach effort we identified five goals and had to project how we were going to use the funding within the goals and what the City hopes to gain from it and what it looks like on an annual basis. The HRC made recommendations in February to show the connection between the goals that are for the 5-year strategy and how it makes its way into the one year plan. The report shows the 5-year goals with specific priorities which were designed from public feedback and the selection committee to have the maximum allowable amount of 15% of total funding go towards public service. The HRC does have the ability to bring the number down but staff indicated based on previous years that the HRC wanted to maximize the 15%. The HRC has the ability tonight to change that. Affordable housing has been a top priority. 40% of the CDBG funding over the next 5 years will be spent on affordable housing through the rehabilitation of existing affordable units. In two years when the HRC is looking at funding recommendation for year two of the cycle, this is what we will be using to base our recommendations. Chair O'Nan asked Ms. Hernandez that if we sent aside 40% for affordable housing and if Buena Vista Mobile Home Park were able to stay open but needed extensive rehabilitation, could those funds be used. Ms. Hernandez stated that it depends on the nature of the program and project. Based on CDBG funding we are required to have a project that is eligible and meets a national objective. The national objective is that it benefits low to moderate income individuals. It is difficult without knowing what type of project it will be but mobile home rehabilitations are an eligible activity but there is more information that is needed to determine if the project and items that they are requesting funding for would qualify. If you think about the project we are recommending for next fiscal year, the ADA compliance is a key point for HUD which is to insure accessibility of the units. That is the case you can make the recommendation and the units are already affordable.

2. Subcommittee recommendations to the HRC for Human Services Resource Allocation Process (HSRAP) Funding for Fiscal Years 2016-17 – Commissioner Stone – Action

Commissioner Stone reported that the Subcommittee met twice to discuss the applications. The issue was that the requests exceeded the funding amount by \$617,855. The Subcommittee created a preference for HSRAP agencies that had been previously funded, be as consistent as possible and not make major cuts that agencies would have to react to. The Subcommittee came up with priorities that it found important. It decided not to recommend any funding for Health Advocates because the amount was too large and the city already has similar services for the homeless community provided pro bono through the Stanford Law School Social Security Disability Project.

The subcommittee determined there were two agencies whose funding should be increased. One was La Comida, which needs a \$300.00 increase because 10 percent of their total funding must come from a local agency in order to get their bulk funding from the county. The other agency was Adolescent Counseling Services (ACS) because the city needs to take on a proactive approach to youth well-being. The subcommittee all agreed unanimously that youth well-being needs to be a priority. Mayview Community Health Center was the one agency that received decreased funding. They previously received \$29,013. but requested only \$25,000 so the subcommittee moved that money to Adolescent Counseling Services and La Comida and all of the other agencies received the same as the last funding cycle. Commissioner Chen stated that she agreed with Commissioner Stone. Commissioner Stone added that the Subcommittee decided to have alternatives in case the Finance Committee decided to increase the funding and to have options to give a better insight on the Subcommittee's priorities. Ms. van der Zwaag stated that the Subcommittee looked at past history, and in the last two HSRAP cycles there has been an increase recommended by the Finance Committee where they requested HRC to comment on how they would allocate the increase. The Subcommittee

Approved

thought that since they had thoroughly read the applications that they would be the wisest group to look at the alternatives. As you notice in the staff report, staff is not seeking a recommendation because that would be presumptuous to do before Council recommendations, but the purpose at the HRC meeting was to share the Subcommittee's thinking to the full Commissions and allow them to ask questions. Commissioner Stone discussed alternative #1 if there was a 5% increase from FY2015. The Subcommittee identified the priorities for the city and decided that youth well-being services were the most important thing that was identified. The Subcommittee decided not to evenly divide the money among the agencies because a very insignificant amount of money would not be able to do much, but if targeted one agency of category of need, the HRC would be able to make a difference with the money. Alternative #2 which was a 10% increase, the Subcommittee would maintain alternative #1 for the first 5% funding and the second 5% would be split between two areas which are physical and mental healthcare and food services to the vulnerable population so 2.5% would be distributed between Mayview Health Center and the second 2.5% would go to Innvision Shelter Network and La Comida. If there was anything above 10%, the subcommittee recommends maintaining alternatives #1 and 2 and evenly distribute the funding among the applicants.

Comments by the public to this agenda item followed:

Jo Jaris, Supervisor of Social Services and Licensed Social Worker, Vista Center for the Blind or Visually Impaired: Vista has been in Palo Alto for almost 80 years. It continues to see many Palo Alto residents with vision loss and blindness. Vista saw over 50 seniors last year giving them comprehensive assistance to help them become safe and independent. Vista provides home assessment, emotional support and educating them as basic as exiting the house, calling emergency services, preventing them from falling, basic food preparation, safety, help accessing their medicine, money management and finding alternative ways to read. Vista training also helps clients learn how to travel in their neighborhood, cross streets and use public transit. Vista educates them about their eye conditions. Vista has a low vision clinic that helps to maximize the vision that clients have. They aim to prevent institutionalization and loss of independence. They teach assisted technology to enhance independence and employability and provide counseling and support groups. They have a store that provides aids as well as a branch at the Stanford Health Library so that people can become knowledgeable about their health conditions. They work with school children and youth groups. They serve all clients regardless of their ability to pay and have a diverse population. The HRC's support with the level that was requested would better help the Vista Center.

Frances Roth came to add support for the Vista Program. Ms. Roth stated that she had fantastic vision until six years ago and it is very demoralizing to find that your vision was going away. Ms. Roth added that she can see the outline of you but not your features. Vista provides physical support but also emotional support. They have a wonderful program that deals with what happens to your psyche when your vision goes away. Ms. Roth stated that she has Macular Degeneration which has stabilized but may get worse. Vista is very helpful. Ms. Roth had an occupational therapist that came to her house to show her where to put lamps and how not to fall down the stairs. She stated that the service Vista provides is invaluable and they never ask you for money. They take care of anybody who needs their help.

Sheridan Nicholau, Associate Director of Abilities United. Ms. Sheridan stated that she is thrilled to be here and wanted to extend a thank you and appreciation for the city's continued partnership over the years. Abilities United has been serving Palo Alto since the 50's and formally incorporated 1963.

Approved

While they support San Mateo and Santa Clara County their focus has always been in Palo Alto. They provide a variety of services such as early intervention services, serving at risk and delayed infants and toddlers and their parents, therapy services, occupational speech and speech and language, physical therapy, mental health support, early intervention support, assessments, parent education and training, inclusive preschool, variety of therapy services, they do respite home companion services, afterschool socialization, which is a key resource to support kids and teenagers, run two summer camps and have a valuable partnership with City of Palo Alto. They have employment services and placed over 350 people in competitive employment across the Bay Area. They offer day programming for adults that are building vocational and daily living skills and provide adaptive aquatics and customized therapeutic swim lessons for children. They are very happy to report that we have exceeded our targets for service hours in Palo Alto. Ms. Sheridan stated that Abilities United looks forward to their continued partnership with the city to serve the people in Palo Alto.

Barbara Sih Klausner, Executive Director, Dreamcatchers: Ms. Klausner thanked the Subcommittee for making their recommendation. They appreciate the subcommittee's comment about stability because having consistency in funding with no up and downs makes a huge difference for a small nonprofit. Ms. Klausner thanked the Subcommittee and the HRC for continuing the partnership because as a nonprofit to present ourselves with the community as a worthy cause by having the county, city and the district funding us sends out an important message to the community that Dreamcatchers is something of great value that we provide to Palo Alto and Dreamcatchers is the only program that is an afterschool tutoring program for low-income middle school students that welcomes every single Palo Alto resident because most afterschool programs are often geared toward students who come from East Palo Alto. They are primarily an afterschool tutoring program but also mentoring program providing academic support but because we provide one-on-one volunteer tutoring from many undergraduate Stanford students, Palystudents and now some volunteers from downtown Palo Alto, they have created a support network for students and help them develop close mentor relationships.

Beatrice Lopez, Staff Attorney, Senior Adults Legal Assistance (SALA): SALA is a nonprofit law office that has served the county and Palo Alto since 1973. They target clients who are low income, at risk of abuse or loss of independence. The funding has allowed SALA to expand appointments at Stevenson House and Avenidas. Last year 71% of Palo Alto seniors that were served were very low income which is below 50% of the median level and 53% were 75 or older and 38% were disabled and these factors places them at greater economic and social risk. At SALA we continue to see seniors that have problems receiving their public benefits to meet their basic needs such as Social Security, Medicare and Medi-Cal. They also assist seniors facing eviction and seniors facing elder abuse who are usually being abused from someone in their homes and senior who need to do basic planning or incapacity and end stages of life to allow them to age in place and remain independent and avoid conservership. SALA cannot charge any fees for our services or accept any fee generating cases. The only way SALA can support our services is through government grants and private sources. They hope the HRC will support the HSRAP Subcommittee's recommendation.

Heiri Schuppisser, Homeless Outreach Specialist, Momentum for Mental Health. Mr. Schuppisser stated that he is a homeless outreach specialist throughout the County of Santa Clara who builds trust and report with the unhoused population and navigates them to the right direction by referring them to the 1-800 number which is the first step to access mental health assistance. If they need drug and alcohol assistance they are referred to DADS. Mr. Schuppisser stated that he allows them to use his

Approved

cell phone for obtaining services. The main population that he works with are the mentally and it takes time to build trust with them and help them get through the system. Currently he is working with the courts in Palo Alto under the Public Defender Gary Goodman, Cindy Greenwood from DADS and Mr. Schuppisser is the health component along with Julie Wang from Downtown Streets Team. The group is called PAR for Palo Alto Review. They work with people who have had contact with police departments and receive misdemeanors. They are able to have charges dismissed and give them hope. PAR is receiving positive reviews and other counties want to implement the program.

Leif Erickson, Executive Director, Youth Community Services. Mr. Erickson thanked Commissioner Stone for framing the strategic direction and conversation in a context around the loss of the student at PALY and each of the Commissioners and those who lead the safety net are grieving and concerned. YCS was a founding member of Project Safety Net (PSN) that sharpens the work and leadership of PSN to bring forward to the Policy and Services Committee and School City Liaison Committee. One of the contributions of PSN is putting together crisis protocols this week while hundreds of students are having one-on-one conversations with mental health professionals from Stanford campus, ACS, CASI and KARA. A lot of the work is intervention but an important part of the prevention work is to build wellness and self-respect and communication which is what Dreamcatchers and Youth Community Services do so well. It has been a growth year for YCS working more on intervention being called in to work with students with truancy issues, bullying issues and other areas where students are not fitting the campus culture. They lift that up with an area of growth and learning. They also lift up to the HRC a unique opportunity for leadership in responding to the youth crisis is a whole array of intergenerational groups and many are involved in mental health which is how to increase the fluency so the stigmas go way down and everyone is free to talk.

Aarika Riddle, Advancement and Marketing Director, Adolescent Counseling Service. Ms. Riddle thanked the HRC Subcommittee for recognizing the need for youth services and increased funding especially in regard to mental health. Emotions are high because at ACS it has been a tough year. At Gunn High School they have seen double the number of students from all of last year and it is only March. This week at PALY they worked with the other agencies and over 200 students were seen. ACS will continue to be there to make sure that those who need to be seen will be seen and those who just want a check-in, ACS will be there. On behalf of ACS, they thanked the HRC for the recommendation for increased funding for more experienced interns.

Chair O’Nan stated that she read through the recommendations and has concerns on how much of the funding is recommended for ACS. ACS is HSRAP’s largest funding agency. If they are going to get a chunk of the pie in the alternative 5% distribution, they are really getting double. Chair O’Nan stated that she is very upset about the suicide clusters and it is a complex issue that we must make sure all of the children are getting what they need all along the life cycle before they get to crisis. Mental health issues do not just affect the young. We have had senior suicides and homeless seniors freezing in the park. She wants to be a voice for the whole community. Chair O’Nan stated that she supports the categories the Subcommittee funded but the alternatives are a little too narrowly focused and the agencies that are youth oriented they leave out Abilities United and they have early intervention programs for youth people

Staff van der Zwaag asked Chair O’Nan to speak to the main recommendation because the alternates are more of a discussion item. The HRC can suggest changes to the Subcommittee’s main recommendation first because the other alternatives are hypothetical. Chair O’Nan stated if this is the

Approved

budget we have with no hypothetical increase than she supports the distribution with the excess funds to ACS and a small increment to La Comida so they can receive county HUD funding. She hopes when the HRC goes to the Finance Committee that they will be open to get more money to HSRAP given the need of the community.

Chair O’Nan stated that she does have concerns that the categories are too narrow. Abilities United would be an eligible agency for serving youth and Momentum for Mental Health would be an eligible agency providing healthcare. A final point that she is uncomfortable with is overlooking agencies all together because the cost of living is so high and when the HRC does not add anything to the agency she feels the HRC is cutting them and makes her worried about them going forward.

Chair O’Nan asked what the Subcommittee thought about her comments. Commissioner Chen stated that some of the agencies asked for 75% more than last funding cycle so they decided prioritize the areas that needed funding. Commissioner Stone stated that Palo Alto is under a pandemic and viewed ACS as the front lines of the issue. If the Subcommittee split up the money evenly into small increments what would the agencies be able to with a few hundred dollars? All of the agencies are deserving of more money. As the representative from ACS mentioned they are already at the double of the students that they saw last year. Commissioner Stone stated that right now he stands by his recommendation. Commissioner Morin asked if Commissioners Stone and Chen would speak more about the increase for La Comida. Commissioner Stone added that the reason for that is La Comida receives most of their funding from the county and in order to receive the funding they must receive 10% funding from a local source and they increased the funding so they would get to their 10% threshold. Chair O’Nan agreed with the Subcommittee’s strategy with the increased funding to ACS and protecting La Comida’s funding source and that her concerns are with the alternatives. Staff van der Zwaag stated that if the Finance Committee wants to increase funding they could have ideas and a specific direction. When the money was added last year the Finance Committee wanted the HRC to look at emerging needs. If that time comes the staff will take their direction into effect and bring their recommendation back to the HRC.

Commissioner Stone made a motion to approve the Subcommittee’s recommended HSRAP funding allocations. Seconded by Commissioner Morin. AYES: Unanimous.

3. Debrief and discussion of Joint HRC/Council Study Session– Chair O’Nan

Chair O’Nan thought the Study Session went quite well and they all had a chance to speak up and share their experiences and achievements and received great feedback from Council members. Commissioner Savage stated that Council was impressed with the HRC because sometimes it feels that it is the forgotten child because it does not have much power although the HRC is big on recommendations. Commissioner Morin said that they were impressed by the HRC’s enthusiasm but she was impressed by their enthusiasm. It was uplifting. Commissioner Chen stated that they were very impressed with the Senior Summit. Commissioner Stone was very impressed because there was a lot of enthusiasm from Council with the projects and they all loved the Senior Summit. Chair O’Nan stated that Council is eager to see what becomes from the Homeless Veteran Summit that Commissioners Stone and Alhassani are planning. Commissioner Stone stated Commissioner Alhassani has been reaching out to gather presenters and speakers and thinking of asking David Cortesi and Joe Simitian to speak at the summit. They are looking at a June or July date for the summit. Chair O’Nan stated that the Senior Summit was successful but the Subcommittee needs to identify projects and sift through the data from the Senior Summit and start to narrow down what it

Approved

thinks is actionable in the next year so it can come up with some funding proposals for the county and city. It is important that something actual comes from the summit that impacts the community in a positive way. It is doable as long as the HRC watches its milestones and have enough lead time. Supervisor Simitian was very supportive, and Chair O’Nan stated that she thinks the Council realizes the need to increase funding to the city’s large senior population.

Chair O’Nan stated based from Council’s feedback the HRC should continue with its work plans and make sure that the Subcommittees are meeting regularly and setting milestones and have check ins with everybody and hit dates throughout the year so they are meeting their goals so when they report back next year they can report on their achievements. Council Member Berman believes that being on the HRC you might feel like the forgotten Commission and that five to six years ago the focus was on fiscal responsibility and shoring up the budget and the past three years the focus was on infrastructure, traffic and challenges of development but now we are seeing a big shift in focus on the work that the HRC does such as Healthy Cities, Healthy Communities becoming a priority this year. The issue that is coming to the floor for the Council that are issues that they want to focus on. It is an exciting time for the HRC it is well on its way and he stated that the Council is here to embrace the work they are doing.

Chair O’Nan stated that she sees a change because she used to see a pushback around Human Services that the city is not in the social welfare business but these very tragic impacts that we can see or feel in our community make us realize that the health of one person is the health of everyone and sometimes you need to help each other because you cannot have a vibrant city if you have depression and suicide. She hopes that this is the year the HRC can really make some steps forward.

4. Discussion on the hosting of the HRC Breakfast and formation of Subcommittee – Chair O’Nan - Action

Chair O’Nan had offered to host the HRC Breakfast for the second time but the county is going to host the breakfast. The HRC will not have an opportunity to host the breakfast this year but maybe next year. It is always nice time to meet the county colleagues and colleagues from other commissions.

- 5. Discussion on projects for Housing Issues Subcommittee - Commissioner Chen – Commissioner Chen** stated that there are two programs to focus on relating to affordable housing for middle and low income families. How do we make a connection between the renters and landlords? One way is to collaborate with a nonprofit organization that has resources, is doing it already and can help expand the program with a rental connection. The second program is for senior co-housing which is a very good idea but it is difficult because how do you identify people who have extra rooms. Chair O’Nan stated that at the Study Session some resources were mentioned and one was the White Paper from San Mateo County and also Council Member Wolbach mentioned that we might speak to Brent Butler who is the Planning Manager of East Palo Alto. Chair O’Nan stated that the HRC may learn about some best practices from other communities and get some ideas and possible solutions. Ms. van der Zwaag suggested about looking into HIP Housing which is a shared housing program but not exclusively for seniors.

Chair O’Nan stated that many seniors wanted to have the zoning restrictions on their properties be more flexible so they could rent out an in-law unit in Palo Alto to collect some extra income but in some zones you cannot have a second kitchen. Ms. van der Zwaag stated that creating an ongoing

Approved

program is not the realm of the HRC but investigating an issue and presenting the findings that a local service provider may want to take on.

6. Update on the planning for the Civility Roundtable – Chair O’Nan

Chair O’Nan stated that the HRC was hoping to do a civility roundtable at the beginning of the year but the timeline was too compressed following the Senior Summit. The HRC cancelled the one it was going to do in February. Chair O’Nan stated that she would like to have a civility roundtable this year and Mountain View’s provided an excellent model to build on. She needs someone to take ownership with a long lead time at the end of summer or fall with the support of other Commissioners. The HRC needs to identify some team leads. She asked if anyone had interest in stepping up and doing one? It would be important to identify a date now because it needs to be plan a timeline. The HRC had talked about diversity, homelessness, and police and would like to show the film seen at the HRC. The Mountain View HRC partners with Project Sentinel and they set up the event for them, they find speakers and panelist. The Mountain View HRC chooses the topic and then they work with Project Sentinel to advertise in the community. Chair O’Nan stated that if no one wants to step up she would speak to Commissioner Alhassani when he returns. The summits have been more geared toward agencies and government representatives and it would be great to have a community event that is open to the public for all of Palo Alto to have a conversation. Civility roundtables are intriguing because Palo Alto has had a lack of civility in our own community and an inability to talk cordially and respectfully about difficult topics. Mountain View has the format that encourages civil discourse on a difficult topic and it is something to bring to our community and might be valuable to share the experience with the community at large.

Chair O’Nan added that another thought is to have the members of the Mountain View HRC share what their process is and borrow some of their best practices. Commissioner Chen stated that the HRC must identify a topic that is related to whatever the community needs and partner with a nonprofit and work on the subject together. Chair O’Nan stated that a big priority is youth wellbeing that we could partner with the school district, school board, or Project Safety Net and see if there is a difficult topic that would lend to a civility roundtable. Ms. van der Zwaag stated that a big push of Project Safety Net is mental health sigma reduction, a area that affects birth to seniors and that might be attractive to the HRC because it carries that full spectrum. Chair O’Nan stated perhaps the HRC could partner with a national organization such as NAMI, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, and really get some great publicity because mental health and awareness and the stigma surrounding of mental illness is one of the last taboos that people cannot talk about and it would be on point that the HRC to lead the way. Ms. Van der Zwaag stated that was one of Council’s comments from Monday night was to dig a little bit deeper with Project Safety Net. The role of the HRC is to bring important issues before the community to have those community conversations.

7. Recognition of Service – Chair O’Nan

Chair O’Nan stated that Ray Bacchetti has been an incredible touchstone for the HRC for approximately 10 years. Chair O’Nan met Ray about five years ago and Ray became her mentor. Ray is well known in the community and volunteered for various organizations and served on Blue Ribbon Infrastructure on the board of many nonprofits. Ray wanted very much to finish his final term but has been sidelined with health problems. Several members of the HRC expressed how much they appreciated all of the work he has done for the HRC, the city and community at large in every aspect in helping difficult budgets, being a patron of the arts, and helping fix the sidewalks.

Approved

8. REPORTS FROM OFFICIALS:

A. Commissioner Report

1. Commission Chen spoke in both Chinese and English at Senior Friendship Day on how to speak to their doctor so they know what services you need.

2. Commissioner Savage stated have she and Commissioner Stone been on interview panels since 8:00 a.m. for Palo Alto Police Department.

B. Staff Liaison Report

1. Ms. van der Zwaag stated that on May 4 a nonprofit partner, Palo Alto Mediation Program, will be having a partner presentation to Council. The item is first on the agenda

C. Chair O’Nan stated that there may not be an HRC meeting on April 9 because the HRC has to go to Finance Committee to talk about HSRAP.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL FOR AGENDA ITEMS (May 12, 2015)

- 1. Contact Brent Butler, Manager, East Palo Alto Community and Economic Development Department**
- 2. Affordable Housing - Commissioner Chen**
- 3. Homeless Vets Subcommittee**
- 4. Senior Services Subcommittee**
- 5. HRC Leadership**
- 6. Civility Roundtable**

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.