

WEST HOLLYWOOD HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES – AUGUST 14, 2001
COMMUNITY CONFERENCE ROOM, CITY HALL

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. CALL TO ORDER

The West Hollywood Human Services Commission was called to order by Chair Teresa DeCrescenzo at 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, August 14, 2001, in the Community Conference Room at City Hall, 8300 Santa Monica Boulevard, West Hollywood.

B. ROLL CALL

The Pledge of Allegiance was repeated.

Present: John D’Amico, Ruth Cislowski, Steven Davis, Teresa DeCrescenzo, Ponsella Gratton, Dr. Bill Griffin, Peter Mackler
Excused: none
Absent: none

A quorum was present at all times. Staff present included Tom West and Jeff Book. Councilmember Jeffrey Prang was also in attendance.

C. POSTING OF AGENDA

The Secretary reported that notices for the meeting had been posted as required.

D. PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Persons desiring to address the meeting were asked to complete a request form.

II. MINUTES

Minutes of the July 10, 2001, meeting were approved on a motion by Commissioner Griffin, seconded by Commissioner Mackler, with Commissioner Cislowski abstaining.

III. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. WOMEN HELPING WOMEN UPDATE

Alison Maker, social worker and talkline supervisor, reported on Women Helping Women, including their case management load, and domestic violence data. She

said the Talkline was not just a referral line, but involved listening and helping clients, some of whom have no other contact that listens.

Sudarshan Kaur, a client and student, said she had been greatly helped by WHW's services, which have helped her deal with a context in which neighbors often do not know each other. She said WHW's referrals had been very important in allowing her to pursue a nursing degree and organize her life.

Commissioner DeCrescenzo asked what kind of callers the Talkline receives, and Alison said most are depressed or anxious; low-income people seeking housing; those who have difficulty coping and feel isolated. Demographics are in the WHW reports. The Talkline is publicized through flyers, public service announcements, and TV ads.

Lori Karny, program director, said the program has a budget of approximately \$500,000, of which \$15,500 comes from the contract with the City of West Hollywood.

Commissioner Gratton asked if services are available to transgender persons, and Lori Karny said that they were. She said that WHW provides an intensive service, and stands out for the continuity and follow-through that they show toward their clients. She thanked the Commission for their continuing support.

V. B. CHARITABLE SOLICITATIONS

Without objection, the Commission moved next to Item V.B. on the agenda. Councilmember Jeffrey Prang thanked Commissioners Mackler and DeCrescenzo for bringing this item to the attention of the Commission.

Jeffrey Prang said that the West Hollywood community receives many appeals for funds, and that while many are legitimate, some are not. He noted that the City of Los Angeles requires agencies seeking funds from the public to distribute cards showing their registration with the City and the proportion of funds being used in various ways. He said that some in the City feel that there are promoters who promise to benefit social service agencies with fundraising campaigns, but wind up taking advantage of the agencies by consuming most or all of the proceeds in fundraising expenses.

Councilmember Prang asked Commissioners to consider whether any type of regulation would be appropriate, and if so, what kind. He hopes they will explore whether the public is misled in fundraising appeals, and whether steps can be taken to prevent or discourage this.

Commissioners asked for copies of the Los Angeles city ordinance and for the California attorney general's policy on fundraising solicitations, as well as

information on how some other cities deal with this, and views from local agencies as well as well-regarded promoters.

The Commission then returned without objection to Item III.B.

III. B. VAN NESS RECOVERY HOUSE

Kathy Watt of Van Ness Recovery House discussed the work of Van Ness, and the difficulty of persuading many women to seek help for substance abuse problems. In some cases, she said, people have suffered from post-traumatic stress disorders, and used substances as a coping mechanism to block or muffle their feelings.

Noting today's Los Angeles Times article on the leveling off of the decline in new AIDS cases, she said that social service agencies should consider adding drug and alcoholic abuse specialists or interventionists to their staffs.

In response to Commissioner Mackler's question about the implementation of Proposition 36, she said that it is currently a mess because judges and counties have been ill-prepared to implement it, and in many cases lack the resources to carry out the level of treatment and follow-up that the law directs. She said the situation could be improved with clearer understandings of who and what offenses are covered by the proposition's terms, improved training of judges on how to implement those terms, and improved understanding of the interaction between state and federal laws on these subjects.

Commissioner DeCrescenzo asked if she has seen any of the reported problems with oxycontin or the "design-a-drug" phenomenon, and Kathy said that while she had not yet seen oxycontin cases, she was aware of cases involving "CK" (cocaine and ketamine), as well as continuing problems with Vicodin and crystal meth.

Commissioner D'Amico asked about successes, and Kathy said that they have had good attendance at groups.

Kathy said she thought agencies should be asked to do a needs assessment on the impact of alcohol on their clients, which she said was an ongoing and primary element in many of her agency's cases. Perhaps, she said, a task force on alcoholism could consider ways of responding to this.

C. MAPLE CENTER

Ann Kellogg of the Maple Center discussed their crisis response team, which is a program newly funded by the City. She said they have had success in serving West Hollywood clients, through immediate crisis debriefing which helps mitigate long-term damage from traumatic situations. She said their presence at crisis sites

allows the Fire and Sheriff staffs to do other things. They have recently been named organization of the year by the West Hollywood Democratic Club -- and all of their services are provided free.

She said they have a limited number of volunteers who speak Russian and other languages, and that increasing this would enable them to improve their service to persons in West Hollywood who do not speak English as a first language.

She said a problem they are addressing is that they have an outside agency which answers their phones. She said they are looking for a crisis-dedicated phone service which will take this duty.

Commissioner Mackler noted that while funding for this program comes from the City's public safety budget, the social services staff monitors the contract. Tom West said this is working well.

D. GLC MENTAL HEALTH

Lori Elliman of GLC Mental Health discusses their program. Their strengths include the many years of clinical experience on their staff. She said many of their clinicians have more than 10 years of experience. She said they also have a superb intern training program, and have done good work in educational handouts.

A weakness, she said, is in the collection of accurate data. She said sometimes their system gets in the way, with interns leaving for summer, and others not arriving until fall. She said they also need more diversity on staff, having recently lost two Spanish-speaking staffers. She said 18 new interns are anticipated soon, including 2 Spanish-speaking, and 1 African-American.

The Commission discussed the agency's problem with having a consistent level of interns.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. MEETING DAY CHANGE

In response to a memo from Daphne Dennis, the Commission agreed to move its regular meeting date from the second to the third Tuesday of each month, on a motion by Commissioner Cislowski, seconded by Commissioner Gratton, and unanimously approved. Due to September holidays, however, the September meeting will be held on the second Tuesday.

V. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS

A. LIAISONS

The chairs meeting was cancelled this month. There were no additional reports.

C. RETREAT

Commissioner Mackler said the Commission should begin planning for a fall retreat, including time, location, and agenda. The consensus was in favor of a half-day retreat, running from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. on a Saturday, with a facilitator provided. Preferred scheduling was early to mid-November, prior to Thanksgiving. Further planning was placed on the next agenda.

Commissioner Cislowski asked for Sam Baxter to be notified that at Kings Road Park, there is a necessity for sand instead of woodchips, and the area should be covered, and that at West Hollywood Park there is a trash can needed in the toddler area.

VI. ITEMS FROM STAFF

Tom West provided condom distribution information from WeHo Cares. He noted that October is Healthy West Hollywood Month, and national Breast and Prostate Cancer Awareness Month.

VII. ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no additional items

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Signed: _____
Steven L. Davis

Attest:

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