

CITY CLERK'S RECORD OF MEETING

City Council Subcommittee on Homelessness
September 28, 2021

Present: Mayor Lauren Meister, Mayor Pro Tempore Sepi Shyne, Director of Human Services & Rent Stabilization Christof Schroeder, Strategic Initiatives Manager Corri Planck, Social Services Manager David Giugni, Social Services Administrator Katie Egan, Strategic Initiatives Program Administrator Elizabeth Anderson, Director of Public Safety Kristin Cook, Property Development Manager Brian League, Urban Design and Architecture Studio Manager Ric Abramson, and City Clerk Melissa Crowder.

The meeting was called to order at 8:31 A.M.

Mayor Pro Tempore Shyne made a motion to approve the meeting agenda and seconded by Mayor Meister.

Public Comment:

Michael Wojtkielewicz, West Hollywood, spoke about the last subcommittee meeting and Dr. Sherin's presentation.

Item 3.A. Development Of Citywide Behavioral Health Crisis Response Unit

Strategic Initiatives Manager Corri Planck provided a PowerPoint presentation. She commented that the advisory boards and commissions have been surveyed on needs and will share valuable outcomes. The City has demonstrated a commitment to the wellbeing of community and civil rights and aims to do something different in its response to societal inequities.

To reduce the reliance on law enforcement and fire, the City would like to introduce another method of first responders with the addition of a behavioral health crisis response unit. An introduction to a behavioral health crisis first responder unit into West Hollywood's emergency service portfolio could broaden expertise and enhance crisis services available to the community.

The rationale for the crisis response unit would be to improve quality of life for housed & unhoused community members by connecting them immediately to appropriate level of supportive services, which would advance the City's racial justice and social equity values due to people of color and LGBTQ+ experiencing trauma and homelessness at higher rates. Having a unit that is culturally competent will ensure community members will be matched mid-crisis to services and divert them away from criminal justice systems. This reduces reliance on Sheriff's and Fire to meet social service needs by adding complementary behavioral health crisis expertise and increase connectivity between the City's emergency response system and City-funded social services.

Stakeholder engagement has been an important part of the design of the program. To date, the City has consulted with WeHo homeless service providers, CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets) research and similar models research and spoken to the Steinberg Institute regarding federal and state legislation, particularly the potential 988 system dispatch.

Strategic Initiatives Program Administrator Elizabeth Anderson provided a summary of what the proposed model looks like. The unit would be a peer to sheriffs and fire as a third option when calling for services to be dispatched. The unit would offer capacity to respond to mental health crises, provide first aid and non-emergency medical care, substance-use counseling, welfare checks, and transportation to additional services. The unit will not oversee moving people from public spaces nor discarding their personal items. Teams consist of a crisis worker, medic, licensed clinician, and a case manager. Ideally, teams would be available 24/7, but the program needs to grow into that through a phased approach.

Public Comment:

Michael Wojtkielewicz, West Hollywood, spoke in favor of this unit as it helps those in need and improves quality of life, but he noted bad outcomes by actions or inactions of law enforcement and other resources funded by the City. He referred to the Be Well program in Orange County.

Mayor Pro Tempore Shyne asked about the program in Orange County and Ms. Anderson responded that it is a promising model, and that the City will continue to monitor their progress. LA County Department of Mental Health is a possible funding partner. Ms. Anderson noted that federal Medicaid allows 85 cents of every dollar to be reimbursed to fund crisis response services.

Mayor Pro Tempore Shyne inquired if we have received advice or guidance from the CAHOOTS model. Ms. Anderson responded that CAHOOTS model doesn't have LPS (Lanterman–Petris–Short) Certified Clinician for 5150 holds, so as not to involve law enforcement to acquire 5150 holds. She further explained possibly looking at options for short-term space in shelters for behavioral crises, and to look for interim shelter during nighttime hours.

Mayor Meister asked if the unit could prescribe medication, and Ms. Anderson replied that the program cannot provide prescription medications in the field. Each interaction could be up to 2 hours, so it requires the presence of a Medical Doctor (MD) or nurse practitioner.

Mayor Meister then asked what happens if a situation becomes dangerous and the sheriff is not present, and Ms. Anderson and Public Safety Director Kristin Cook responded that there are complexities in dispatch and the unit will be highly trained in de-escalation, and if needed, will know when to back away from a dangerous situation. The CAHOOTS

model has reported that the police department calls them more than they call the police department.

Mayor Pro Tempore Shyne mentioned the 988 number when folks hesitate to call the sheriffs, and this can help our community get activated. Her hope is to not duplicate the negativities when calling 911, and Ms. Planck confirmed that is the goal.

Items from Subcommittee Members:

Mayor Pro Tempore Shyne had no additional comments.

Mayor Meister shared information about Neighborhood Support Day in City of Los Angeles, where they are providing showers, hot meals, clothes, housing resources, cell phones, haircuts, medical services, and more and she requested the City of West Hollywood do something similar.

Items from Staff:

Ms. Planck described a Connect Services Day, similar to Neighborhood Support Day, which staff hopes to implement in 2022.

Ms. Egan shared a report from the LGBT Center Senior Housing Program regarding the 2018 City Council allocation of \$2.1 million from the affordable housing trust fund to support construction and financing of this 98-unit affordable housing for seniors as well as modern amenities, access to onsite case management, and support services. As of August, the LGBT Center was awarded the Certificate of Occupancy for the building and 11 West Hollywood-resident older adults, 9 West Hollywood community members, and 2 people from the inclusionary housing list have signed leases and moved into the building.

Ms. Anderson provided an overview on the Westside Cities Council of Governments (WSCCOG) working group focused on addressing homelessness within the jurisdictions of Beverly Hills, West Hollywood, Culver City, and Santa Monica. The WSCCOG is working on a collective regional comment to provide to the survey asked for at the federal level. The group is also tracking the LA County Blue Ribbon Task Force and monitoring the work between all agencies.

Ms. Planck updated the subcommittee on the Feasibility Study and commented that future meetings are upcoming with homelessness services agencies. She will report back in November.

Public Comment:

Keith Carter, Social Program Cal State Los Angeles, commented on housing and mental health crises regarding expectation of rent payment and protection during eviction procedures.

The meeting adjourned at 9:44 A.M. to the next subcommittee meeting on October 28, 2021 at 8:30 AM via teleconference.



Alyssa T. Poblador, Recording Secretary

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