

**CLERKS RECORD OF THE MEETING
CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD
CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELESSNESS**

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 2024
8:30 A.M.**

**COMMUNITY CONFERENCE ROOM
CITY HALL
8300 SANTA MONICA BLVD.
WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA 90069**

1. **A. CALL TO ORDER:** Vice Mayor Byers called the meeting to order at 8:30 A.M.

B. ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Vice Mayor Byers, Councilmember Heilman

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Director of Human Services & Rent Stabilization Christof Schroeder, Human Services Manager Wendy Barreno, Social Services Supervisor Derek Murray, Strategic Initiatives Supervisor Diane Kahn-Epstein, Strategic Initiatives Program Administrator Francisco Gomez, Director of Community Safety Danny Rivas, Public Safety Manager Anita Shandi, Facilities and Field Services Division Manager Helen Collins, Recording Secretary Alyssa Poblador.

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA: The Subcommittee approved the August 22, 2024 Homelessness Subcommittee Agenda by consensus.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.

3. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

3.A. HUMAN SERVICES SUMMARY IN RESPONSE TO SUBCOMMITTEE [C. SCHROEDER, W. BARRENO, D. KAHN-EPSTEIN, D. MURRAY, F. GOMEZ]:

SUBJECT: The City Council Subcommittee on Homelessness will receive updates from the Human Services Division on topics posed at the Subcommittee meeting held on July 11, 2024.

Social Services Supervisor Derek Murray provided background information as outlined in the staff report dated August 22, 2024.

Human Services Manager Wendy Barreno provided information based on the discussion at the last Homelessness Subcommittee meeting regarding individuals who refuse service. The Human Services and Social Services team reached out to Ascencia, HealthCare in Action, LA LGBT Center Youth Program, Step Up on Second, and TransLatin@ Coalition. Key findings from the outreach providers noted consent by the unhoused

individual as a large piece of the process to provide ethical care and successful outcomes. There is consistent re-engagement to build relationships and trust, and if necessary, requests for assistance from other entities such as for immediate medical attention or if the individual poses a threat to themselves or others.

Social Services Supervisor Derek Murray provided an update on the Homeless Concern Line. The average number of received calls is 2 per day.

Strategic Initiatives Program Administrator Francisco Gomez provided an update on the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) Homelessness Count from early July 2024, stating that West Hollywood has 82-85 individuals experiencing homelessness. 67 individuals were counted in public spaces, and 15-18 estimated in 9 improvised dwellings (cars, RVs, and makeshift shelters).

Councilmember Heilman thanked staff for the updates, for the information on the Homeless Concern Line, and suggested more publicizing of the phone line's existence. He further clarified that he did not want to monitor the service agencies during street outreach; that he envisioned the committee walking together to see the conditions on the street along Santa Monica Blvd. and Sunset Blvd.

Councilmember Heilman inquired about the number of shelter beds available and when law enforcement gets involved. Mr. Murray responded that there are 10 beds with Ascencia, no set number of beds at the LA LGBT Center, and no beds at Step Up on Second; however, they coordinate with motels where available. Director of Community Safety Danny Rivas responded that law enforcement will only be called if a person is behaving erratically.

Director of Human Services & Rent Stabilization Christof Schroeder offered information from staff regarding collaborative meetings taking place on unified responses between public safety partners and our service provider agencies.

Strategic Initiatives Supervisor Diane Kahn-Epstein shared that the CARE Team meets with the Sheriff's and Fire Departments' leadership monthly, HealthCare in Action joins in Sheriff ride-a-longs, and the MET Team works with Step Up on Second for situations involving severe mental health crises.

Human Services Manager Wendy Barreno further commented on the goal of a City strategy that is trauma-informed, social justice rights-based, and consent-driven approach which should be guided by our core values and that forcible removal is a last resort. The view of this strategy under the umbrella of Community Safety and Well-Being and articulating this via a community event or educational component was recommended.

Councilmember Heilman expressed disagreement in focusing on the needs of the homeless individual rather than the expectations of the community and businesses. He commented that he helped craft the initial rights-based methodology on homelessness, however it is not working.

Director Schroeder thanked Councilmember Heilman for bringing up the Homelessness Initiative passed by the City Council in 2016 which is the foundational document that the work of Human Services operates from. Mr. Schroeder proposed revisiting the current policy which focuses on the rights of the unhoused individual at a future City Council meeting for further discussion.

Vice Mayor Byers commented on creating more visibility that the City understands these issues with community meal distributions or showers offered on the street. She shared Assemblymember Rick Zbur has regular homelessness round table meetings, and she believes that community education and discussion is valuable. Lastly, she asked if the street outreach offered in the staff report meets Councilmember Heilman's request.

Councilmember Heilman expressed his desire to move forward with the committee street walk and the next step will be coordinating committee schedules with HealthCare in Action. He further commented on the Governor cracking down on encampments which we do not have in West Hollywood.

Vice Mayor Byers asked about people living in their cars and if coordination with Parking Enforcement happens in these situations. Strategic Initiatives Supervisor Diane Kahn-Epstein responded that there is coordination happening where Parking calls Human Services, and the individual is directed to a safe place to park their cars.

Human Services Manager Wendy Barreno addressed the understood frustration and pain that comes from seeing community members experiencing chronic homelessness. She acknowledged that the complexity lies in not only the individual factors, but also systemic issues with limited infrastructure over decades with the Supreme Court weighing in on homelessness issues nationwide. The shortage of housing is only the tip of the iceberg. Forcible removal in the form of incarceration or institutionalization since the 1960s has proven ineffective, as well as having a high cost to municipalities. The safety and well-being of all community members with a focus on the historically disenfranchised has been West Hollywood's approach, and the Human Services Division will continue with creative pro-active collaboration with the City's partners in the short, medium, and long term.

ACTION: Receive and discuss.

4. NEW BUSINESS: None.

5. ITEMS FROM SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Vice Mayor Byers explained the need for more education in light of the Supreme Court decision and actions of the Governor, whether that be a Town Hall, an event with our partners, with the State, or holding a City event. She recognized the Block by Block offering of walking along with residents through community and reminded the committee of that service.

Councilmember Heilman thanked Social Services staff for their compassionate and holistic approach and thanked the Public Safety staff in the meeting as well.

6. ITEMS FROM STAFF:

Facilities and Field Services Division Manager Helen Collins provided an update on the Holloway Project. November/December is the targeted completion date with the roof of the structure going up soon. The project is on schedule and within budget.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT:

RAMESSES SETEPENRE, WEST HOLLYWOOD, spoke about his experience as a gay, unhoused member of the community for one year and the bureaucratic roadblocks to accessing housing and homophobia he has encountered. He suggested paying landlords directly for housing.

8. ADJOURNMENT: The City Council Subcommittee on Homelessness adjourned at 9:13 A.M. to its next meeting which will be held on Thursday, October 3, 2024 at 8:30 A.M. in the Community Conference Room, City Hall, 8300 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood CA 90069.



Alyssa T. Poblador, Recording Secretary

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