

Minutes--AGENDA- WHWCNC HOMELESSNESS COMMITTEE
MEETING

Tuesday, August 11, 2020, 6:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting by Teleconference

Virtual Meeting by Teleconferencing and Phone number for Public Participation

Committee Members: Ray Cole, Gina Thornburg, Aaron Quantz, Komalpreet Bath, John Sandy Campbell: All committee members were present; members of the public in attendance were Tadeh Kennedy

Call to Order at approximately 6:35 p.m.

- Roll Call
- General Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items
- Possible Approval of New Committee Members: A request to approve Tadeh Kennedy as a new stakeholder member of the committee was sent to the Executive Committee of the board.

Item no. 1 Increased Public Involvement and Homelessness Information for Stakeholders

Discussion and possible action:

Creation of content for the website, stakeholder email blasts, and more public involvement-updates from Committee Members.

[The ensuing discussion was out of order. We came back to No. 1 after we discussed No. 3.] John Sandy proposed ways to make social media content interesting and attractive to better inform the public. She suggests pushing content onto Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Ray suggests partnering this information with an advertiser and to share it with the Public Safety Committee. He stated, “We get a lot of questions. People want to know what’s going on in our community.” John Sandy can continue to work with Tadeh to produce three pieces. A discussion was had about how often to send them out. Biweekly via Constant Contact seemed to achieve a

consensus on the committee. Gina expressed uncertainty as to whether one committee could communicate on behalf of the whole board. Ray replied that these communication pieces would have to go the Outreach Committee. John Sandy stated that she had been in communication with EmpowerLA and they supported her idea to create content and get stakeholders involved to let them know what the city is doing. Gina cautioned that since the information is coming just from one committee it should be informational only with no positions taken. Ray said he would present this idea to the Outreach Committee. Gina said we need someone on the Homelessness Committee to verify the information before it goes to Outreach.

Increase public involvement. Gina suggests recruiting one committed stakeholder per committee member. Ray, great suggestion. Gina and Aaron looking into creating PDFs. Ray and Gina looking into an email blast. Ray looked at our Constant Contact, which has about 40 emails of stakeholders who came to previous meetings. We can start doing email blasts. John Sandy was tasked with creating information for the websites and social media. Aaron and Gina will continue working on the list of homeless-services providers in our district, along with volunteer opportunities. Ray suggests doing a drive for providers to help fulfill their needs. Ray will assist Komalpreet in participating in increasing community involvement on the committee. Gina suggests partnering with Komalpreet to help homeless students at Pierce College.

Item no. 2 Apartment Vacancies and Homelessness

Discussion and possible action:

Discussion of vacancies in Woodland Hills and our attempt to utilize these to house unhoused individuals.

Minutes: Gina read her motion.

Woodland Hills–Warner Center Neighborhood Council

Motion

Draft, Not Yet Approved

Re: Incentives to Place Unhoused People in Vacant Apartments

WHEREAS, neither the Warner Center 2035 Specific Plan (the Specific Plan) nor the Southwest Valley Community Plans have an affordable-housing requirement, which has spurred developers of residential units to offer only market-rate or luxury dwellings; and

WHEREAS, an affordable residence is by federal definition one that costs a household no more than 30% of annual, gross household income, and typical rents for newly built studio apartments in Woodland Hills cost \$2,000 or more a month, according to Zillow, meaning that a household would have to earn at least \$72,000 a year to afford such studio apartments, with one- and two-bedroom apartments at much higher price points; and

WHEREAS, a late-2018 report by the Center for Economic Research & Forecasting of California Lutheran University noted that the middle class of the San Fernando Valley is leaving, with households earning between \$15,000 and \$100,000 a year on the decline and the rising cost of housing posing a risk to the Valley's economy as a whole; and

WHEREAS, the 2020 Homeless Count conducted by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority estimates there are 704 unhoused people living in Council District 3, 104 of which belong to homeless families; and

WHEREAS, Zillow identifies hundreds of vacant apartment units throughout Woodland Hills, including Warner Center, showing at least 608 vacancies as of August 8, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy predicts in a recent report that pandemic-induced economic problems will produce between 36,000 and 120,000 evictions in Los Angeles, likely resulting in many more thousands of homeless people; and

WHEREAS, a more than 30-yearslong mismatch between rent levels and wages and salaries have made market-rate rents out of reach for many Americans and in fact, rents increased 33% between 2013 and 2018 in Warner Center alone; and

WHEREAS, the City of Denver, Colorado, devised an innovative program to subsidize market-rate rents for two years for low- to middle-income individuals and families called the Low Income Voucher Equity Program (see <https://www.wsj.com/articles/denver-has-a-plan-for-its-many-luxury-apartments-housing-subsidies-1515412800>); THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED that the Homelessness Committee of the Woodland Hills–Warner Center Neighborhood Council advises the Office of Council District 3 to urgently and immediately craft

a motion to adapt Denver’s Low Income Voucher Equity Progr to fit the income levels of not only the homeless population in Council District 3 but also the income levels of the service- and hospitality-sector employees, which have been hit especially hard by the Safer at Home restrictions, such that the voucher program would last two years as the City of Los Angeles copes with and emerges from the affordable-housing crisis exacerbated by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

Discussion: Gina and John Sandy discussed whether and how this motion differs from the one before the City Council regarding a voucher program for homeless people. Gina explained that this motion has to do with long-term structural changes in offering market-rate units to households that would otherwise not be able to afford them. It is not only for currently unhoused people but aims to prevent homelessness by making market-rate units affordable through private-public partnerships to create new funding-support programs. Ray suggests contacting HCID to get some feedback and opines that utilizing existing units would be better than relying on newly constructed units.

The committee agreed to continue discussing LIVEDenver’s model for making apartments more affordable. We intend to do so at future meetings of the committee.

Item no. 3 Community Impact Statements

Discussion and possible action:

- Council File 20-1047: Coronavirus Strain / Potential Outbreak /Los Angeles County Health Department Motion

Council File 20-0643: Scattered Site Homeless Housing Program / Homeless Re-Housing /COVID-19 Pandemic / Unused and Underused / Single and Multifamily Housing / Privately Owned Motion

Minutes: CF 20-1047. The committee does not agree with continuing LA Sanitation clean-ups of homeless encampments that displace and disperse people into the surrounding communities during the pandemic. These clean-ups are cruel and also contravene guidelines from the CDC. Gina and John Sandy are to partner on a Community Impact Statement regarding this motion. Tadeh says these sweeps are inhumane. Homeless people lose crucial documents and things that might be needed to find housing.

Minutes: CF 20-0643. Discussion about partnering with private entities to launch a voucher program to subsidize housing homeless people in rooms scattered throughout the City and County of LA. This housing model is called “scattered sites.” Gina asked whether it was up to the recipient of the voucher to find the unit, and Ray stated that in his experience there is usually an organization that provides a case manager to the homeless person. That case manager assists in finding a room to rent. Ray states that the council file is looking at the feasibility of adopting this model in Los Angeles; it’s being done by other housing authorities, for example, in Burbank and Long Beach. There are many underutilized individual rooms that could be included in this voucher program.

Item No. 4 Woodland Hills Homelessness General Matters

Ray: The Homelessness BobCAT in the councilmember’s office has been hard at work behind the scenes to identify lots and buildings for homeless shelters. The councilmember wants to shelter 100% of his district’s homeless people. The next meeting of the nonpublic BobCAT is on the 19th and is for BobCAT members only. Ray states that he will bring information to the Homelessness Committee about the sites being considered and hotel-motel conversions for homeless housing. Gina asked why these Community Action Teams are not subject to the Brown Act. Ray did not know.

John Sandy proposes that every committee on the WHWCNC publish a 10-page community annual report at the end of every fiscal year. Ray said this was something to be discussed in the Outreach Committee.

Item No. 5. Access Center in Woodland Hills and discussion on pallet shelters.

Ray looked at the pallet shelters, and it looks like something we could do in the community. There was a discussion on the absence of an access center in Woodland Hills for homeless people. Ray said that no sites have been identified. Gina noted that she had learned from Debbie Decker that one case manager would cost \$70,000, and even though the West Valley Food Pantry does extraordinary work helping many disadvantaged members of the community, there is no money to hire a case manager to triage homeless people to the services they need on a long-term basis.

Item No. 6 Woodland Hills Homelessness Volunteer Opportunities

There was discussion about creating a rough draft of a running calendar for volunteer opportunities. Ray mentioned that the Homelessness Committee could partner with the Public Safety Committee in doing a food drive, and emergency kits could be given to the first 100 people who donate. Ray mentioned that we could partner with a nonprofit for efforts like Stamp Out Hunger.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.