

## **Social Service Human Relations Board**

### **Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Social Service Human Relations Board, January 7, 2016**

#### **1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

President Biggs called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Present were Vice-President Williams, and members Hyman, Radding, Blake and Sorensen. Absent was member Davenport,

#### **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – NONE**

#### **3. AGENDA ITEMS**

##### **3. - A COMMENTS REGARDING THE NEEDS STATEMENT FOR THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PUBLIC SERVICES NON-HOUSING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016-17**

Claudia Young, Housing and Community Development Manager, Alameda Housing Authority (AHA), began her presentation by explaining that tonight the Board would hear public comment, review and assess community needs for the annual FY 16-17 Action Plan process, and develop a needs statement for presentation at the City Council meeting, scheduled for February 2, 2016. She shared that AHA / CDBG staff had conducted a Community Needs Survey in 2015, which received 62 responses, 56 from residents, three from non-profits, and three from businesses. Outreach was conducted through a press release to the media, posting the survey on the AHA and City website, outreach to non-profits, and making the survey available in the community. The majority of the responses were from seniors, who had taken the survey at Mastick Senior Center.

The five highest priority needs identified by the survey (Attachment A) were:

1. Increase the availability of affordable rental housing for extremely low-income (30% AMI), very low-income (50% AMI), and low-income (80% AMI) households.
2. Deliver flexible services to the homeless, to support stability and independence.
3. Ensure that people with disabilities, seniors, single parents, and culturally and linguistically isolated populations have awareness of and access to services.
4. Increase the capacity of local economic development agencies and other community-based initiatives.
5. Improve health and safety and reduce blight by removing hazardous structures.

Ms. Young requested that the Board undertake a survey, similar to the one it conducted in 2010-11, (published in 2012), that would provide data in time for the development of the next 5-Year Plan. The Board's 2012 Community Needs Survey received 1,913 responses, was published in English, Spanish, and Chinese, and was conducted both on-line and with hard-copy versions being available throughout the community.

President Biggs shared that the Board had conducted a Quality of Life Survey last year (at the Earth Day, Park Street, and Webster Jam events) and that data from that survey would be available in a few months.

Mayor Spencer, and representatives from non-profits attending the meeting, commented that data from the 2012 survey was helpful when applying for grants. Presentations of the data gathered from the survey were also made to the Commission on Disability Issues, and community groups.

Ms. Young went on to explain the CDBG process and FY 2016-17 timeline, and added that the Public Services funds available for distribution will be about the same as last year's amount, which was \$152,646. Last year's funding was limited to support of non-profits providing safety-net services.

#### Public Comment:

Cindy Houts, Executive Director, Alameda Food Bank (AFB) reported that the 5,100 Individuals the AFB serves are from 2,100 Alameda households, and make up 7% of Alameda's population. Families / individuals can access the AFB 6 times a month and, depending on the size of their family, can save between \$300 and \$550 a month. AFB has seen an increase in seniors and middle-class households accessing their programs, and expects some of the increase is due to rising rents. AFB data shows that 37% of its clients are under 18, 10% are seniors, and 40% have someone in their household with a disability. Donations from local grocery stores are a big help, and the CDBG funds they receive are primarily used to purchase fresh produce.

In response to questions, Ms. Houts shared that participants are required to be residents of Alameda, and that, while based on income, their guidelines are flexible, and few are turned away. Around 95% of AFB participants are low- or moderate-income.

Erin Scott, Executive Director, Family Violence Law Center (FVLC), stated that while FVLC serves the entire county and receives County funding, FVLC IS are able to have a stronger presence in the City of Alameda thanks to CDBG funding. FVLC is written into the protocol of the Alameda Police Department, and responds to each reported incident. CDBG funds FVLC legal services in the City of Alameda, and along with Legal Aid, they are the only two agencies providing these services in the County. FVLC's specialty is restraining orders, which cover a broad scope, including housing, property, pets, and custody and visitation. FVLC staffs a 24-hour crisis line, and as funds are available, provides short-term hotel stays. Ms. Scott shared that FVLC provides legal services to around twenty-five Alamedans annually, but provide other services to an additional 200+. She shared that they never turn anyone away, but, because of volume, are not always able to represent clients at court hearings, as much as they would like to. FVLC receives Federal, State, County, and CalWorks funds, in addition to funding from San Leandro, Hayward, Oakland, and one foundation.

Liz Varela, Executive Director, Building Futures with Women and Children (BFWC), said Midway, a 25-bed shelter for women and children, has been providing services in the City of Alameda thanks to the support of volunteers, local fundraising, and CDBG funding from the City of Alameda.

Volunteers bring dinner to Midway's residents 365 days a year, saving them thousands of dollars each year. Midway has won awards for placing a higher percentage of their residents in permanent housing than any other shelter in the County.

In response to questions, Ms. Varela stated that Midway serves 125 to 150 residents each year, and, because it is increasingly difficult to identify permanent, affordable housing, resident's shelter stays are longer than in past years. Some families are staying more than six months, and this makes less space available for those seeking shelter. If a family stays in the shelter, leaves, and wants to return at a later date, they must wait the length of their original stay, before returning. BFWC staffs a 24-hour shelter line, and now holds available beds for residents of Alameda waiting for shelter space.

Midway has been housed in trailers, provided by the Alameda Homeless Network, for more than 20 years. Ms. Varela shared that it is time to start planning for a new shelter, most likely at a new site. She is in conversation with AHA staff regarding identifying land on which to build a new shelter, possibly having the shelter on the first floor, and housing on the upper floor(s). Hopefully, the new shelter would be able to accommodate intact families, including couples, and those with boys over 13. Even if building a new shelter is possible, this undertaking could be a 5-year process.

The second service BFWC provides with CDBG funding is coordination of the City of Alameda Domestic Violence Task Force (DMTV). Taskforce members include the Alameda Police Department, Alameda Hospital, the City of Alameda, Family Violence Law Center, Alameda Family Services, Alameda Point Collaborative, Alameda's Social Service Human Relations Board, Girls Incorporated of the Island City, and the Alameda Boys & Girls Club. Leveraging the energy of the taskforce members, the taskforce holds events, creates and distributes DV educational materials, and supports Teen Dating Violence Awareness (TDVAM) in partnership with the AUSD Tri-Hi Health Centers.

BFWC also provides short-term rental assistance with a combination of HOME and CDBG funds, and has \$80,000 for direct services, but still needs funds for administration. BFWC is currently working with families facing eviction from 470 Central Ave., and has just been informed that the landlord will let the families stay until June. So far, three families have signed up with them, and they are expecting a total of twelve.

Board members expressed the need for housing for the chronically homeless, living on the streets of Alameda. After conducting two Homeless Counts, they feel that the number of chronically homeless Alamedans, willing and suitable for permanent housing, is probably a very small number (+/- 12), and that the community should work together to find a solution for them.

Ms. Varela suggested that there may be funding mechanisms in the future to provide housing for this population in Alameda, and member Williams added that there are now some similar programs in place in San Francisco.

Board discussion regarding the input from service providers, data from surveys, and personal experience in the community resulted in the conclusion that safety-net services continue to be the primary need in our community. While the needs, particularly those related to housing, increase, the resources to meet them stay the same, or decrease.

A motion was made to craft a needs statement that restated the need for safety-net services, such as food, shelter, domestic violence services, and services for seniors, and that also took into consideration the importance of working to house, and in other ways meet the needs of, Alameda's chronically homeless, living on the streets. Furthermore, it was moved that members Blake and

Williams draft the letter, and President Biggs present it to Council at its meeting of February 2, 2016.

M/S Hyman/Williams Unanimous

**President Biggs took Agenda Item 5., Oral Communications, out of order.**

#### **4. BOARD/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS, NON-AGENDA**

Member Williams stated that the Alamedans Together Against Hate (ATAH) Workgroup had been dormant for the past three years, and that she shared with President Biggs that she would like to have it begin meeting again. She was a member of the group when it was chaired by Henry Villareal, past Board Vice President. Member Williams has agreed to chair, and will ask members Sorensen and Blake to join her on the workgroup. She plans to call a meeting of ATAH before the Board's February meeting

#### **5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

Michael Williams, shared that he is a member of First Congregational Church Alameda (FCCA) Justice Workgroup. He announced that on Sunday, February 28, there will be a concert at FCCA, celebrating the spirit of Everyone Belongs Here, and in support of the Islamic Community. He attended the Hate Crime Forum, led by Imam Musa, of the Islamic Center of Alameda, at the Elks Lodge on Sunday, December 27. He stated that the Imam said that he thought the window shattering incident at Santa Clara and 9<sup>th</sup> should be investigated as a hate crime. The Imam also shared that hateful telephone calls had been received at the Mosque, and that comments had been directed to members of the mosque. Mr. Williams said that the forum raised some tough questions, and he hoped that meetings that bring together Alameda's diverse community, continue.

President Biggs thanked Mr. Williams for coming to speak.

#### **6. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM. M/S Sorensen Radding Unanimous

Respectfully submitted by:  
Jim Franz, Secretary

