

Social Service Human Relations Board

Minutes of the Special Meeting, Wednesday, December 3, 2008

1. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL: President Wasko called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m. Present were Members Nielsen, Villareal, Soglin, James and Biggs. Staff present were Wright and Jones.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes from June 26, 2008 were approved (M/S James, Soglin) and unanimous with Biggs abstained. The minutes for October 23, 2008 were edited and approved (M/S Villareal, Nielsen) and unanimous with Biggs abstained.

3-A. RESOLUTION HONORING STEWART CHEN FOR HIS SERVICE TO THE BOARD – President Wasko read the Resolution for Stewart even though he was unable to attend the meeting. (M/S James, Soglin) to accept the Resolution and unanimous. The Board welcomed Doug Biggs who provided a brief introduction.

3-B. COMMENTS REGARDING NEEDS RELATED TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PUBLIC SERVICES FUNDING AND FORMULATION OF FY2009-2010 PUBLIC SERVICES NEEDS STATEMENT - Staff Wright presented the Board with a PowerPoint overview of the CDBG Needs process, and then took questions.

Wasko – Is there funding left over to be reallocated or are we continuing grants that are already funded?

Wright – There are no extra funds available, all grant funds for this year have been allocated. We only have estimates for next year, and are anticipating similar grant levels for the 2nd year of funding. After reviewing first quarter performance reports, subgrantees are meeting performance goals. Although the newer programs have had somewhat of a slow start, we anticipate that all subgrantees will be eligible for funding next year. Monitoring visits were scheduled for January, but given the loss of Melissa, we will have to delay them until new staff is on board.

Wasko – Do we need to include language regarding what if there is not enough funding?

Wright – In the past nominal across the board cuts have been sufficient. While we are not anticipating a reduction in our entitlement, it may be prudent to acknowledge the economic crisis we are facing.. We'll have to look at what makes sense. The language regarding dollar amounts would be addressed during the allocation

Nielsen – What other data can be considered other than public input?

Wright – The needs assessment by this Board is a good example, and the homeless survey associated with the North Housing parcel is another example.

Villareal – Can you remind us of how program income is generated?

Wright –The Residential Rehabilitation program provide loans to low-income homeowners and homeowners wanting to provide residence to low-income tenants. The loans generate receivables. There are approximately \$3million in outstanding loans, but with the economy we have no way of knowing what will happen if repayments will diminish.

Biggs – The community development priorities are local and the consolidated priorities are broader?

Wright – That is correct.

Biggs – Are the individual number served provided duplicated at all?

Wright – There is a level of duplication in the total, two service providers may count the same individual, but these are low numbers.

Biggs – Can the language stating ‘strengthening safety-net services’ be changes to providers are trying to maintain the services they have, preserving or maintaining the safety-net?

James – How about ‘strengthening the current’ safety-net?

Wasko – Yes.

Public Comment – Speakers:

Jim Franz, Director, American Red Cross – Alameda Service Center: We have almost reached a time when we have to re-define the term “at risk”. Recently, he spoke with a single mother who last year was making a great wage and providing for her family and is now on unemployment and her mortgage is behind as she was asking for assistance. Last year at this time they had served 800 meals for Thanksgiving and thought it was extraordinary. This year it was 930. People asking for assistance from the utility program continues to grow. The PG&E program is almost out of funds. The same holds true for the rental assistance program. Shelters throughout the bay area are in trouble due to the emergency shelter budget (EHAP) being eliminated at the Federal level. We expect to see pockets of poverty to move to central Alameda as we hear landlords aren’t able to be as lenient as they used to be because they have to pay their mortgages. Food, rent and childcare are the basic needs this agency is battling.

Wasko – Thank you for all the work you do.

Laura Hurst, Family Violence Law Center (FVLC) – Here to ask for support to increase funding for domestic violence services. We are finding that victims are too scared to get a restraining order. They would like to house a domestic violence advocate in our police department as this would increase prevention in homicides and families from becoming homeless.

Wasko – Is the FVLC thinking about shifting their funding?

Hurst – No, there is a need for both and additional funding would augment legal services of other counseling and other services.

Wasko – Is there a waitlist? We are trying to assess needs.

Hurst – Not sure there is a waitlist, but they often find that departments are under reporting domestic violence.

Biggs – How many individuals have you served this quarter and how much is for advocate?

Hurst – FT is \$40k., PT advocate would be enough in Alameda. She doesn’t have the numbers from the past quarter.

Soglin – In places without an advocate, does training help?

Hurst – Yes. We’ve trained all Alameda Police officers, and also doing county-wide patrol officer training.

Soglin – What are the ways APD supports domestic violence and how are they organized?

Hurst – The violent crimes unit coordinates with us and because of staffing levels they prioritize felony cases.

Wasko – Does the City still have a domestic violence task force?

Wright – No, but staff has been trying to work with FVLC to coordinate with APD and we are considering reconvening the domestic violence task force.

James – What are the other needs of people being victimized?

Hurst – Housing, job training and sustainability, and financial resources.

Wasko – Thank you and maybe we can engage volunteers to recreate the domestic violence task force.

Julia Brown, Women's Initiative for Self Employment (WISE) and Deepa Patel – They are currently receiving funding from Alameda's CDBG program and these funds are help with their pre-training, and expect to start full course work in January. There is a need to support social enterprise because they of the possibility of job loss. The funding of micro enterprise is one of the only areas where there is job growth.

Patel – Started her business with \$150.00 after losing a job during the dot.com bust. She was without family support and no where to go, but knew she wanted to help others. She worked with a law firm on a project and it was suggested she becoming a consultant. WISE has helped her tremendously to grow her business, get a car and has been in business for 5 years, she has one contract employee and is looking for another. Without WISE support, her business would have folded last year.

Wasko – Congratulations on your business success and thank you for sharing your experience.

Liz Varela, Executive Director, Building Futures with Women and Children (BFWC) – She would like to piggyback on what Mr. Franz said on maintaining the safety net services. BFWC truly works well with other safety net providers. The women who come to Midway are in many times in grave danger if they were unable to get shelter.. Midway is a great place to help people rebuild their lives. Varela handed out a story about women from their website. She supports the idea of starting the domestic violence task force again. Where there are funds lacking we should make up for in relationships.

Wasko – Thank you Liz, and to all the speakers.

Biggs – Given the shift in Federal administration, what does the future entail?

Wright – HUD just lost their Regional Director. It's hard to know with the economy.

Wasko – Pete Stark holds community meetings, CDBG people could talk to him about the formula. Spark is very responsive.

Wright – it would be great to remove CDBG public service cap in times of extreme hardships.

Wasko – Our next task is to rewrite the letter particularly with focus areas.

Villareal – Let's not remove the "strengthening," perhaps something like – to continue to ensure they're doing all they can to better serve clients, or – strengthening and preserving would be a good way to, or – to strengthen...

Biggs – Perhaps make reference to the unprecedented strain.

Nielsen – Broaden definition of 'at risk', people who have never before needed services until now?

Soglin – Separate safety net paragraph and say primary emphasis in on safety net.

Wasko – Do we currently fund collaboration?

Jones – Red Cross is funded for the Services Collaborative.

James – At the last meeting there was an emphasis on 'collaborative'.

Wasko – Soglin was suggesting collaboration in his comments.

Soglin – Prioritizing safety nets, then other issues.

Biggs – Can we be creative about technical assistance funding to grant writing?

Wright – Previously we've been creative, but according to recent interpretation from HUD there needs to be economic development / neighborhood development, and it cannot be planning and administrative costs. There is a need for a strong training component.

Wasko – The Finance Project Program does substantial trainings that work with agencies to put together business plans to look for funding. Put a package together collaboratively.

James – When I first got involved with the Koshland grant they were able to bring all these things together and it was much more vibrant.

Wright – We have stricter parameters now but we will work on being creative.

Biggs – If we will encourage collaboration, then we should have a way to support that.

Villareal – The last bullet addresses the need for collaboration, on the other hand if we look at other paragraph – that paragraph could address the emphasis on collaboration.

Nielsen – The need she is trying to address is hard to gather data on, but still important. Is there a way to emphasize that its really bad and emphasize the need to think creatively?

Villareal – It is this further collaboration effort that we can build better collaborations.

Motion – Wasko and Villareal will draft the needs statement including the discussed changes and review each others edits. M/S Soglin, Nielsen and unanimous. Staff provided a deadline.

President Wasko will attend the Council meeting on January 6, 2009 for the public hearing.

3-C. WORKGROUP STATUS REPORTS: Item held to an upcoming meeting.

4. BOARD / STAFF COMMUNICATIONS: Member James had the opportunity to attend joint meeting of the ACCYF and the Alameda Services Collaborative luncheon. He stated this was a good opportunity to see agencies and is interested in seeing different sites and programs.

Member Biggs visited the Food Bank during their turkey handout. They had 50% increase in people getting turkeys this year, and there were many first timers.

President Wasko stated she attended the Hospital Faire and all the gifts from China were present.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS: Jim Franz wanted to remind the Board of the Shelter in Place, Emergency Preparedness training happening Saturday, December 6th at Immanuel Lutheran Church.

6. ADJOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn at 7:53 p.m. M/S Villareal, Soglin and unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Terri Wright
Acting Secretary, Social Services Human Relations Board

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APPROVED

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