

Social Service Human Relations Board
Minutes of the Regular Meeting, Thursday, April 28, 2011

1. **CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL** President Wasko called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. Present were: Dailey, James, Biggs, Nielsen, Holder Absent was: Vice-President Villareal Staff: Franz

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting March 24, 2011 were approved as presented.
M/S Wasko/Biggs Unanimous

3. **AGENDA ITEMS**

3-A. **REVIEW OF FY 2011-12 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PUBLIC SERVICE FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Member Biggs recused himself for this Agenda item.

A presentation was made by Ron Babiera, Community Development Program Manager – City of Alameda regarding a reduction of 16.4% in available CDBG funds for FY 2011/12 and the need to reduce Public Services grants by \$34,500. At our January 27, 2011 meeting, the Board directed staff to return to discuss the Public Services funding for the second year in the event that the anticipated cuts exceed 10 percent of last year's CDBG funding level. Since the \$34,500 reduction exceeded 10%, Mr. Babiera presented two funding options for us to consider; the first, a 14% across the board cut to all Public Services grants, and the second, the equivalent of an 11% reduction, which was attained by decreasing ECHO's Landlord / Tenant Counseling grant by 56% and using CDBG Planning and Administration Funds to increase their Fair Housing Grant to give ECHO a net 11% reduction. (Copies of Staff report attached).

Speakers:

Neil J. Rubenstein – Board Chair – Alameda Food Bank

Mr. Rubenstein introduced Hank Leeper, the new Executive Director of the AFB. is Retired from the Coast Guard and has been a volunteer with the Food Bank for 6 months.

Mr. Leeper went on to say that after reviewing the staff report, he supported the 11% cut to all agencies receiving Public Service funding. AFB will be able to draw from their reserves to make up for the reduction in funds, and will not need to reduce the number served or the amount of food provided as a result of this grant. They will appeal to the community to help replace the loss of funds. Staff noted that AFB and BFWC would also be experiencing a reduction in FEMA 2011 funding. He then explained that the AFB has experienced an 11% increase in customers this year, which is less than the previous two years, and the increase has yet to plateau.

Tina Fleeton – Staff – Bananas

Bananas serves all of Alameda County, providing child-care subsidies, referrals and other resources. Ms. Fleeton thanked the board and City of Alameda for their ongoing support, and explained that the CDBG funds help Bananas assist low-income working families by providing them with a \$250 per month stipend (per child) for twelve months. She voiced support for the across the board funding reduction plan, and explained that, while Bananas will not need to remove anyone now participating in the program, they will not be able to serve as many families moving forward. (A \$5,300 cut equates to almost two childcare slots) No families now being served will be at risk of losing their jobs as a result of this cut, but the opportunity provided by this program will not be available to as many families next year. However, Bananas expects to transfer more families to their fully subsidized program, which will help lessen the impact of the cut in funding. This program funds a portion of Ms. Fleeton's salary, but this cut should have no immediate impact on her position.

Liz Varela – Executive Director - BFWC

Ms. Varela explained that, by themselves, the relatively small cuts in BFWC's funding for their San Leandro and City of Alameda programs are not that significant. But, added to the across the board cuts over the past two years, and the expectation of additional cuts that will impact this year's budget, the cumulative reduction is devastating. With Shelter's being the types of programs with mostly fixed costs, at some point, continued cuts will result in the need to close the doors. BFWC operates three shelters, and all are impacted by the cuts. Staff meetings now focus on what measures might need to be taken; which shelter will we need to close, if this continues. One possibility to forestall this action would be to eliminate daytime staff and make the women and children leave the shelter, and be on their own during the day, and return to the shelter in the evening.

These extreme measures will not happen now, but we are reaching the "tipping point". Continued cuts will shred our safety net of services, when families fall through the cracks, there will be no one to catch them. This is a time when we must together say, "This must stop", and convince those in power that the cuts, if needed, must come from someplace else. Otherwise, when the services we provide are most needed, we will not be there. She thanked the Board for being a voice in the community to help in this effort.

Doug Biggs – Executive Director – APC

Mr. Biggs said he was glad that he had recused himself and added that "He was appalled at the complacency of the agency representatives coming up saying 'Yeah, we'll get by'. These cuts have come to the point that we can't sustain them" He added that because of these cuts: someone will go hungry, a family getting out of poverty will not be able to get childcare, someone will have to stay in a domestic violence situation longer than they should because they can't get into a shelter, a youth won't be able to get into a Boys and Girls Club program, and someone who has been denied housing won't have the resources to fight for themselves. He hoped that agencies affected by these cuts would bring those clients / customers back here next year. These cuts don't even take into account the effect of the Census, and the national climate that makes it easier to cut services for those who have no voice. "It's going to be a whole lot worse next year." The time for complacency is past, and we need to start bringing those people into the council chambers to tell their story and to help us mobilize.

The system is broke and we need to start bringing a much larger voice to this problem.

Angie Watson-Hajjem – ECHO

Ms. Watson was invited up to speak regarding the impact of cuts on ECHO's programs. She stated that, while she was not involved in the contract negotiations between City Staff and ECHO regarding this formula, she was concerned that the shift of funds from Landlord-Tenant Counseling (L-TC) to Fair Housing services would reduce the number of clients that would be assisted with L-TC.

Mr. Babiera responded to questions from the Board, stating that his understanding was that the shifting of ECHO's funds would not impact their capacity to provide L-TC anymore than it would be by an 11% reduction in funding.

The Board discussed the two funding options presented by staff, and all agreed that the lower 11% across the board cut was preferable, as long as it did not disproportionately affect provision of L-TC services.

A motion was made to recommend staff Funding Option 2 for an 11.1% across the board reduction of funds, with the understanding and condition that this option will not reduce services in the area of ECHO's Housing Counseling (beyond the 11 percent).

M/S Dailey/Nielsen Unanimous. President Wasko will work with staff to assure that the Board's understanding regarding ECHO's services is correct. She will also attend the May 3rd Council meeting representing the Board. When reprogrammed funds are available, staff will work to assure that the board has the opportunity to provide input as to their allocation.

3-B. PRESENTATION ON ALAMEDA FAMILY SERVICES AGENCY AND PROGRAMS

Irene Kudarauskas – Executive Director made a presentation regarding the broad range of services provided in our community by Alameda Family Services (AFS). She explained that AFS does not receive CDBG or other funding by or through the City of Alameda, that the Head Start programs are Federally funded, and that their other programs and services are administered with County, State, and Federal funding.

AFS was originally named Xanthos and they changed their name in 2004. They have 12 sites, all but 1 of which is in Alameda. Their services include programs for pregnant moms and newborn to seniors. Head Start and Early Head Start are their 2 largest programs, utilizing half of their \$5,000,000 budget. The programs serve 222 families at 6 sites including APC, COA, AUDS, and churches. They are happy to announce that their ARRA funded Early Head Start program has been funded through September 2012. The Head Start programs serve both the children and their families, with a focus on parent involvement. A number of their staff are former Head Start participants.

Their 3 School Based Health Centers (Formerly Tri-High) provide free medical and mental health services to students at their 3 sites and with visits to Charter Schools.

Many know them best for their counseling services, which are mainly provided at their Clement Street Main Office, but also at APC, School Based Health Centers and other school sites. They are a clinical training site and usually have 15 interns as part of their counseling staff.

Their focus is on families, but they also see a large number of individuals including referrals from the Probation Department. The AFS Alcohol and Drug Treatment programs focus on rehabilitation and preventing relapses. They also have a growing Anger Management program component. Dream Catcher, is their one site outside of Alameda (Oakland) and is the only shelter

for runaway / throwaway youth in the county. It is a day- time drop-in center for youth in addition to being an 8-bed shelter. (The AFS Brochure describing the services they provide is attached.)

3-C. **WORKGROUP PROGRESS REPORTS**

Alamedans Together Against Hate Workgroup

President Wasko reported that, in response to an inappropriate statement attributed to an APD officer during an investigation of a theft at Christ Episcopal Church (CEC), a meeting was called by Chief Noonan, and held at the Police Department. The statement characterized the Churches Food Pantry customers as part of a “Pool of suspects”. Joining the Chief at the meeting were 3 police officers, the rector of CEC, a representative from the Food bank, Rev. Roger Bauer – APD Chaplain, President Wasko, and staff. The conversation resulted in an agreement to have a letter to editor, co-authored by Rev. Crary, Rector at CEC and Chief Noonan. The letter would acknowledge the inappropriateness of the remark and include other statements agreeable to both authors of the letter. The letter was published in the Sun, and APD and CEC continue to build bridges.

Assessment and Awareness Workgroup

President Wasko reported on the March meeting Work-session at Mastick Senior Center. While many assessment model options were discussed, there was no consensus reached as to the best one to pursue. It was agreed that staff and President Wasko would speak with Debbie Potter for direction and clarification as to what the City would like to see included in the Assessment. President Wasko has identified David Pontecorvo, currently coordinator of the East Bay Community Foundation’s assessment process. Staff spoke with Mr. Pontecorvo, and he is willing to personally work with us to develop the methodology for the assessment, or put us in contact with someone qualified to assist us. Conversations with Debbie Potter have let us know that, with limited demographic data available at this time, and with the budget driven changes in departments, the City is fine with waiting for some months before we embark on the assessment process.

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

Staff distributed a report on an Agenda Item for the May 3rd City Council meeting dealing with changes in size and meeting frequency of Boards and Commissions. As long as the mission related Work-product can be accomplished, our Board may be requested to or have the option to reduce their meetings to 6 per year. The Council will make a determination on this staff report and staff will put the topic on next month’s agenda as an Action Item.

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:40

Respectfully submitted by:
Jim Franz

Secretary