



City of Fort Bragg

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Meeting Minutes Public Safety Committee

Wednesday, February 17, 2016

3:00 PM

Mendocino Coast Hospitality Center
101 North Franklin Street

SPECIAL MEETING

Please note special location for meeting

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Committee Member Peters called the meeting to order at 3:00p.m. He announced that the Committee would be reversing the order of the items on the agenda and discussing item 2 first and then taking the tour of the facility.

ROLL CALL

Present: 6 - Scott Deitz, Lindy Peters, Linda Ruffing, Fabian Lizarraga, Steve Orsi and Tom Varga

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of December 9, 2015 Meeting

A motion was made by Committee Member Deitz and seconded by Committee Member Peters, that the Committee Minutes of December 9, 2015 be approved. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

- Committee Member Peters announced that normally the Council Committees do not place a time limit on public comments on non-agenda items, but due to the number of people attending the meeting he would be giving each member of the public who wished to make comments, 3 minutes to speak. He mentioned that the item on today's agenda is an important public issue that many people feel very passionately about. He asked that people please try to remain civil and not have interruptions so that everyone can be heard.
- It was mentioned that the Director at the last meeting of the Hospitality Center had said that there were 140 people helped at the Extreme Weather Shelter a couple of years ago and that this year 800 people were helped. If that is factual information, it is very important. Lynelle Johnson, who is on the board of the Hospitality Center, explained that there are two very different types of counts, "bed nights" and "people". For example, if a person is staying at the Extreme Weather Shelter for 5 nights, that counts as 5 bed nights, but only 1 person. It was confirmed that there were approximately 134 people helped at the shelter this year compared to 85 the year before.
- A local resident Fort Bragg has become a dangerous place to live since the Ortnier Company has come to Fort Bragg. An Ortnier employee named Todd Arthur Harris, who is a doctor and a therapist is licensed to carry a hand gun and he owns three of them. He is able to carry his gun while on the job as his work is dangerous and the Hospitality Center is

his work place. It was asked if the insurance company is aware that this employee carries a gun. It was advised that an attorney be hired at the Hospitality Center's expense to provide advice on legal matters such as these.

- A local resident felt that cannabis should not be a schedule one drug and referred to himself as green and sober. Cannabis helps people end their dependence on alcohol, drugs and prescription medication. He has found that all of his formal complaints keep getting buried and that it is very difficult to navigate the system. He is going to keep fighting for patients' rights and disability rights. He asks people who would like to, to please help by becoming involved with Green and Sober, Inc., which helps people develop sober living environment using perma-culture, arts & crafts, peer group support and cannabis. Their web site is www.greenandsober.org.

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

2. Receive Oral Report and Discuss Extreme Weather Shelter and Other Opportunities to Assist Local Homeless Population and Homeless Service Providers

Public comment on this item was received from: Lynelle Johnson, Susan Holli, Paul Davis, Richard Mack, Lobo, Jay Rosenquist, Judy Valadao, Jim Britt, Mary Flannery, Douglas Chouteau, Rosalie Zaleski Taylor, Gary Johnson and Jerry Thompson.

The following was noted during discussion of this item:

- Peters mentioned that the intention of this meeting is education and to clear up misconceptions about who is really responsible for our Extreme Weather Shelter. The City does not have Social Services, and the County is responsible for Social Services in the City of Fort Bragg. This meeting was delayed so that the City Manager could be there to explain how this works, who is responsible, what buildings can and can't be used and what our role is as a City to provide emergency shelter for our needy, homeless and those who are out on the street at night.
- City Manager Ruffing recently had a conversation with Peters about homelessness and how our community addresses it. Homelessness is a very big issue that is a problem everywhere, with no easy solution. The homeless situations have been created by lack of affordable housing and jobs. Many of the homeless are veterans and for some, homeless it is a live style choice.
- Cities such as Eureka, Arcata, Ukiah, Santa Rosa, Counties and the State are always looking for solutions to this problem. There is no one way to address homelessness. Law enforcement has its role, but you can't arrest your way out of this problem. They help maintain our quality of life and enforce the laws, such as aggressive panhandling and illegal camping. Everyone agrees that law enforcement officers aren't the right people to be providing mental health services to our community.
- Affordable Housing and Jobs are definitely part of the solution and that is where the City has a role, responsibility and the opportunity to help. But the safety net, the social services that help homeless people, is not the City's responsibility. Fort Bragg is a small City, and is considered a non-entitlement jurisdiction, which means we do not receive funding directly from the Federal government through Housing and Urban Development to provide social services to help with homeless and mental health issues.
- The State and Federal government are responsible for providing the safety net for the homeless. Those funds go to the County through Health and Human Services. These funds get funneled out through contracts to various agencies and organizations such as, Ortnor,

the Mendocino Coast Hospitality Center, Coast Clinics and Coast District Hospital.

- The City's role in supporting the provision of homeless services has been through our Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. These funds go to the State and the City applies for grants through a competitive process. Those grants are restricted to projects that benefit low income people. Over the past 15 years that the City has had a Community Development Block Grant program, it has brought in tens of millions of dollars to support organizations in our community.
- It is the community organizations that have to fill in the gaps in the safety net. The City has used this grant to purchase the Project Sanctuary facility on Franklin Street, for the Food Bank additions to their facility and equipment, the kitchen at the Senior Center has been rebuilt and remodeling has been done, Parents & Friends has been helped in a number of ways, Coast Clinics new clinic was built with the help of block grant funds and Mendocino Coast Hospitality Center (MCHC) has been the recipient of numerous block grants over the years. The City has also provided funds for the purchase and rehab of the Harrison Street House, which provides transitional housing and is operated by the Hospitality Center. The City recently developed a pilot project called the Homeless Mental Health Intervention Project, working with the Hospitality Center, Coast Clinics and the Hospital. This project was funded for three years to provide intensive case management and counseling services for homeless, mentally ill individuals in our community. Most recently the Old Coast Hotel property was purchased with CDBG funds in order for the Mendocino Coast Hospitality Center to consolidate their homeless services and provide additional transitional housing in the community.
- Ruffing acknowledged the work of Jennifer Owen, Special Projects Manager for the City, because she is the person who has single handedly brought in tens of millions of dollars of CDBG funds to assist local organizations, which has been a huge help to the community. Ruffing acknowledged that the Old Coast Hotel purchase was tremendously controversial and there is still community opposition to it, but putting that aside and looking at the ways in which the City has been able to help the various non-profit service organizations in the community help those in need, the City can be very proud of what we have accomplished.
- Ruffing was not able to attend the February 8th City Council meeting, but she watched the video. She was impressed with the comprehensive and informative presentation and felt the questions and answers were interesting. She was disappointed and concerned at the tenor of the public comment that was received. The Hospitality Center has grown from a fragile, struggling organization to one that has taken on an important role in our community in helping to address the homeless issues. There are chronic funding shortages and low pay for incredibly challenging work. As a community non-profit, they are not obligated to provide these services and we are fortunate to have these services in our community. In Ukiah there are currently no homeless services. Ruffing asked our community to be kind to the Hospitality Center and help them provide assistance to those who need it. It is ok to be critical and to ask questions but she hopes that the community can help strengthen them and through various dialogues everyone can provide support and continue to provide good homeless services in our community.
- Peters had asked Ruffing about looking at the law that allows the City to declare a shelter crisis, which started the conversation on the subject. An extreme weather shelter is a great thing to have that is very necessary, but it is not mandated or funded. At the beginning of this season the Hospitality Center started out with \$10,000 from the county to provide these services and with the help of Supervisor Gjerde, they were able to receive another \$20,000. The Hospitality Center just included a solicitation for funds in the utility bills for City residents and hopefully additional funds will come in.
- The current model, which the Hospitality Center has been using for the last eight years, is

an incredibly cost effective way to provide an extreme weather shelter for those who need it.

- The faith based community plays a big role in this model. Local churches sign up for a week block that they agree to provide shelter services. The services rotate from church to church. The Intake is done at the Hospitality House on McPherson Street. The homeless are offered a shower, dry clothes and a meal. Then they are transported to the church that is offering shelter services for that week. They are supervised, spend the night on cots and in the morning are transported back to the Hospitality House. There have been no complaints received from any citizens about this operation of the extreme weather shelter. The City has not required a use permit.
- There are thresholds for when they are open and when they are not. Because the weather is unpredictable, there may be a night when it rains and the shelter is not open.
- It has been suggested that the Hospitality Center facility be used as an extreme weather shelter, which Ruffing thinks is a very bad idea. Not only is it not compliant with the zoning and would create many other issues, it is not really necessary. The model that is currently being used for the extreme weather shelter may be under funded, but it is not broken.
- Lynelle Johnson wanted to thank Susan Holli of Love in Action for all of her behind the scene work with the extreme weather shelter for years. The extreme weather shelter requires a huge amount of work and Lynelle invited anyone who wants to, to come down and see what is done on a daily basis to keep the shelter up and running every day starting at 6:00-7:00 a.m. when phone calls are made to determine what the weather will be like that day. If any other organization would like to take on the responsibility of the shelter, the Hospitality Center would be happy to pass the baton. It is a tough job to keep the shelter going and Lynelle wanted to commend the helpful, caring staff that does that job every day.
- MCHC works with twenty-two local churches to provide the shelter services to the community. Amazingly, every week is taken care of up until April 15th when the shelter closes, except for three weeks. The three weeks that still need a shelter location are March 7-13, 14-20 and 28-April 9. They are grateful to the faith based community who is also struggling with funding and would like to use their facilities for other things, but they have made a commitment to help with the homeless.
- This year, just in December and January, the extreme weather shelter has been open every night except three. That means the MCHC has more salaries to pay, transportation to take care of and food to provide. Up until this year, the only funding received was from the community through donations, church donations and the City's mayor's fund. In past years the shelter averaged 4-5 people in the shelter per night. This year the average was 12-14 people per night, which is a huge difference. They are hoping to be able to stretch the \$30,000 they received this year to cover the shelter until April when it closes. Lynelle thanked the staff and the community for the success of the shelter.
- Peters suggested that the Committee be allowed to ask questions of the City Manager and Lynelle before turning it over to the public for questions.
- It was reported to Peters that there seems to be a lack of notice as to when the shelter will be open and when it will not. Lynelle answered that there is a dedicated phone line just for the extreme weather shelter (356-8163) that anyone can call to hear the current message concerning the shelter as of 9:00a.m. each day. The message does not say where the shelter will be that night because it is important for the management of the program that the person checks in at the Hospitality House prior to being transported to the church that will be providing shelter for that night.
- The Police Department puts a sign on their front door and City Hall puts a notice in the glass case outside letting the public know if the shelter will be open or not that evening. There are about thirty locations in the area that post an informational notice about the

shelter every day.

- Committee Member Deitz thanked Lynelle for all the work she does. If reference to the increase in usage of the shelter over previous years, Deitz asked if that was indicative of the homeless population and if the numbers are in from the homeless count for last year and this year. Also, he asked if Lynelle believes that the coast is dealing with more homeless people due to the closure of so many services that had been offered in Ukiah. Lynelle mentioned that the increase in rain is definitely a factor for this year and that whatever happens in Ukiah always affects the services on the coast.
- Peters asked about alcohol use at the shelter. Use of the shelter is behavior based and alcohol use or intoxication is not allowed and is managed by the staff. Many people who use the shelter are trying to improve themselves and the rules and regulations for its use assist them in doing that.
- Dogs are welcome at the shelter and crates are provided.
- Peters asked if there was anyone in attendance who has stayed at the extreme weather shelter that would like to share their experience.
- A citizen who said he ran the shelter from 2013-2014 said it ran well while he was there but he believes the statistics for the number of people using the shelter are incorrect.
- A local homeless man, "Lobo", stated that the shelter was warm, comfortable, humane and helpful. He mentioned that the others at the shelter all had similar stories to his and that the shelter gives people the opportunity to bond with others who are in the same situation they are. It was mentioned that his comments were testimony what the shelter is doing works.
- Some homeless people do not have phones and can't call the shelter number every day to see if it will be open. It was also mentioned that some locations that display the shelter signs are not receiving calls informing them if it is open or closed each day. It was suggested that perhaps this information could be posted on Facebook. Because of the number of people that have to be notified each day, MCHC decided that calling was not the best process for notification. Now notification is done by e-mail and the business or individual is always encouraged to call if they have not received notification. It was suggested that perhaps someone could volunteer to make those calls.
- It was asked what the weather criteria is for opening the shelter for the evening. The criteria used to be 30 degrees or lower with a 50% chance of rain, but the board (with input from the community) changed it to 40 degrees or lower with a 20% chance of rain. Paul Davis makes a weather determination by 9:00a.m. each day so the open or closed information can be put on the phone message.
- Chief Lizarraga mentioned that if Police Officers come in contact with someone on the streets that needs shelter but it is after hours, they are allowed to deliver them to the extreme weather shelter and they will be accepted. This was worked out with Anna Shaw and has been working well.
- Some citizens believe there has been a substantial increase in crime as the increase in homeless people in our City grows. They feel the City should not encourage the homeless to come to Fort Bragg by offering many benefits. They suggested helping those who are here now and possibly starting a work program where the homeless can provide labor for the services they receive. Peters mentioned that there are Cities that have their Public Works Department provide work for the homeless.
- Lynelle mentioned that MCHC clients are required to give back to the community by doing work such as community clean up and serving breakfast at St. Anthony's.
- A citizen mentioned that she thought the discussion by the Committee today was going to be about what to do when there is a shelter crisis declared as per Health and Safety Code 8698. She mentioned that the community's faith based organizations are wonderful, but she questioned the zoning for the churches as far as providing overnight shelter for citizens.

She questioned the fact that one person (Paul Davis) makes the decision if Lobo or other homeless people get to sleep indoors or not, by deciding if the shelter will be open or closed. What might be considered extreme weather by that person may not be considered extreme to Lobo or other elderly homeless people. She also suggested that the statistics concerning people vs bed nights is very confusing.

- Ruffing stated that legislation is not necessary to run a shelter successfully and that the faith based community is doing an excellent job of providing shelter. Everyone who shows up at the shelter is served and transportation is provided.
- A citizen suggested that the community focus on helping the children in the community so they don't grow up to be homeless. Life skills, such as banking, should be taught to our children.
- It was suggested that any complaints or concerns about the extreme weather shelter be brought to the MCHC Board and not directly to the staff.
- A citizen asked if the web site for the MCHC could be updated with current information so that they could be better supported by the community.
- It was asked how the \$30,000 received by the MCHC this year is being spent. Jerry Thompson, the treasurer for MCHC, provided a handout concerning their budget and reviewed it with the Committee. The costs included transportation to the shelter, labor to help clean up the shelter and salary for an attendant that remains at the shelter to supervise from 4:00p.m. to 8:00a.m., which involves regular and overtime pay. If there are over 12 men in the shelter, a second attendant is required. Women are housed at the Hospitality House and if they are full, they are housed at a hotel. Two meals are provided for each person, which are not included on the budget document. Health Insurance for the employees, which they receive after three months of employment, is also not included on the budget document.
- Susan Holli mentioned that the shelter is provided to anyone who needs it and input from everyone in the community is encouraged. The current program works very well. MCHC hires people instead of working with volunteers. The employees are responsible and dependable and can be held accountable. Everyone shows respect for one another. There will be a meeting on February 25th at the library to discuss housing resources in the City.

Peters stated that there had been a great deal of information provided at today's meeting and invited the community to attend the Mendocino Coast Hospitality Center board meetings to make their comments heard. He asked citizens to e-mail him at Lpeters2@fortbragg.com <<mailto:Lpeters2@fortbragg.com>> for more information. This was an informational meeting only and no action will be taken by the Committee.

1. Receive Tour of Mendocino Coast Hospitality Center's 101 North Franklin Street Facility

After the discussion of Item 2, those who wished to participate were taken on a tour of the facility.

MATTERS FROM COMMITTEE / STAFF

None Received

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30p.m. by Committee Member Peters and those who wished to, participated in the tour of the Mendocino Coast Hospitality Center facility.