

September 24, 2017

To: Fort Bragg City Council Members
C/O Marie Jones
Community Development Director

From: Lynelle Johnson

Re: **City Council meeting to consider appeal of Planning Commission's 18 New Special Use Permit Modifications for the Hospitality House**

City Council Members,

On behalf of the Mendocino Coast Hospitality Center (MCHC) Board and staff, we ask that you support and agree with the conditions of the Use Permit approved by the Planning Commission on August 23rd.

We also wish to thank you, the Planning Commission Members and City staff for the opportunity to work with you to address homeless issues and concerns in our community. People who are experiencing homelessness need a multitude of services. Currently, MCHC is the only nonprofit on the coast offering those services. We are hopeful that the newly formed "Homeless Action Planning Group" will begin to work towards solving some of the problems for people experiencing homelessness in our community.

First off, to dispel a bit of misinformation. MCHC has never operated a "Day Shelter". The last day shelter was operated by an Ukiah nonprofit and was closed on the coast over seven years ago. Our Hospitality House and our Hospitality Center on Franklin Street is "mission driven". Our goal is not simply to get people off the streets. Our facilities are not places to "just hang out"...it is to encourage our guests to move forward in a positive direction by offering a variety of classes, job training programs, and supportive services. Our MCHC success stories are families and people who are now living and working throughout our community.

We encourage those in the community who wish to see a Day Shelter established, to become involved in the "Homeless Action Planning Group" and get that issue on the agenda. A Day Shelter would require a well thought out program, with staffing, a facility and most significantly, funding. MCHC is working diligently to manage and fund our current programs and we cannot at this point commit to undertaking another program.

The other piece of misinformation is that our transitional housing on Harrison Street is "boarded up". On the contrary, MCHC currently has eleven clients living at our Harrison Street transitional housing facility and three out of five of our rooms are full at our 101 Franklin Street property for a total of seventeen guests at our two facilities.

MCHC has been proactive in making sure that the 18 Use Permit Conditions that were developed by City staff and approved by the Planning Commission are being taken seriously by our organization. We created a spreadsheet and the tasks that we needed to accomplish to comply with those conditions (see attached spreadsheet). As you will see, the majority of those tasks have already been completed.

One of the tasks was to cooperate more fully with the Fort Bragg Police Department. We are most grateful that the police department staff has been so willing to work with us. We met together on August 16th and developed strategies to better communicate and work more closely together to prevent and resolve any issues that may arise at Hospitality House. At our September Board meeting, we approved Hospitality House's revised Policies and Procedures Manual that provides the tools to enable us to work more collaboratively with the Fort Bragg Police Department staff.

One of the most difficult, but essential decisions our Board had to make was condition number 11 regarding the Extreme Weather Shelter (EWS). In March, the MCHC Board voted to no longer allow staging of the Extreme Weather Shelter at Hospitality House because of the demand on our staff and facility and the impact on our neighbors. The outcome of this decision will increase the EWS operating costs significantly; consequently a new EWS budget was provided to County staff with a request for additional funding. That funding decision is still pending. Without community involvement and sufficient funding, the Emergency Weather Shelter will not operate this winter on the coast.

On a positive note, in August the Board passed Policy language to allow formal "Open Board Meetings". On September 21st, we held our first official open board meeting; it was received positively by visitors attending the meeting and by our Board. We also obtained the names and addresses of our Hospitality House neighbors from the city and plan to meet and offer a tour of our Hospitality House facility in the very near future.

Early this year, the MCHC Board and staff made a decision to reorganize the Hospitality House and create a new position, Hospitality House Administrator. As you know, Hospitality House provides that first step in getting an individual off the street; providing them with food and shelter, and most importantly, the opportunity to address their needs so that they too can become productive members of our community. The vast majority of our Hospitality House clients have disabilities.

This requires a unique and qualified individual to manage the house. That person is responsible for daily oversight and management of the shelter and supervision of House Managers and Volunteer Interns. The Hospitality House Administrator recruits, schedules and trains all Hospitality House staff. We are thrilled to have hired that individual and proud to introduce our new Administrator Lara Anderson to you. She comes with the highest of credentials and has accomplished much in three short months.

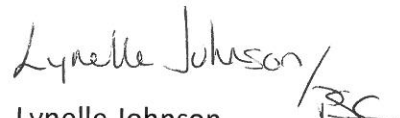
I leave with one request. For over thirty years, Hospitality House has been helping those most in need on the coast at our home on North McPherson Street. The community has supported us financially by generously donating almost 60% of our operating costs for all those years as well as donating food and clothing for our guests.

Over the years, MCHC is grateful to have received four separate CDBG grants from the City of Fort Bragg to convert our Hospitality House into a shelter that now has an ADA compliant bedroom and bathroom and solar panels on the roof. The city grants helped build showers, laundry and bathroom facilities for our outside guests. Grants remodeled our Gibson house at the back of the property, providing bedroom space for families and for those who have disabilities as well as an enclosed garden area for our guests.

Allow us the opportunity to continue to use this home that was gifted to us in so many ways by this community so that we can continue to do what we do best: "Shelter the homeless, feed the hungry, and provide a path to personal self-sufficiency".

Your vote in support of the Fort Bragg Planning Commission's 18 Use Permit Conditions will allow that to happen. Thank you in advance for your consideration to this request and for your service to this community.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynelle Johnson". To the right of the signature is a stylized monogram or set of initials, possibly "BC".

Lynelle Johnson
President, MCHC Board

Attachment: Spreadsheet for Hospitality House's 18 Use Permit Conditions
approved by Planning Commission August 23, 2017