



HOMELESS TASK FORCE Committee Meeting Notes

Wednesday, September 9, 2015
5:00 PM
2000 Main Street
Lower Level Meeting Room B-8

In Attendance

City Staff: Kellee Fritzal, Teri Baker, Stephanie Beverage, Captain David Bunetta, Lt. Kelly Rodriguez, Simone Slifman; Muriel Ullman, Consultant; Bill Nelson, Consultant

Task Force Members: Vicki Boatman, Vice-Chair Ralph Bauer, Dave Moses, Ron Kupferstein, Joseph Sullivan, Chair Hector Valdez

1. Public Comments (Limited to 3 minutes/person):

Amory Hansen said the group he started, Orange County Association for Victims of Homeless People, had a successful first meeting on August 31st. Another meeting is scheduled for September 30th.

Ross Dohrmann stated that is a monthly volunteer with the Coast to Coast Foundation. He said he doesn't believe that this is enough to address the issue and that Huntington Beach should form their own organization or look at the expertise available through the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). He said he would also be willing to give up his other volunteer efforts in order to provide assistance to the proposed organization. He also thanked Lt. Rodriguez for her efforts.

2. Approval of Minutes from the Meeting of August 12, 2015

Vice-Chair Bauer made a motion, seconded by Member Sullivan to approve the minutes of the August 12th meeting, and Chair Valdez, Members Boatman, Kupferstein, and Sullivan voted in favor of approval.

3. Presentation by Officer Domino Scott-Jackson of the Pasadena Police Department Homeless Outreach Psychiatric Evaluation Team (HOPE) Regarding Programs and Efforts Made by Pasadena to Address Homelessness

Officer Scott-Jackson presented the history and activities of the HOPE Team's efforts to address homelessness in Pasadena. She also brought her partner, Guillermo Vasquez, of the LA County Department of Mental Health and discussed the collaborative efforts made by Pasadena PD and DMH. The HOPE team is a first responder, and undergoes extensive and ongoing training in

order to effectively link individuals to the right services with a goal of securing a long-term solution. They work with Union Station as their main connection to services. Officer Scott-Jackson stated that there has been a significant increase in their homeless population due to factors that include the opening of the Metro Gold Line, and AB 109 and Proposition 47, which put more people on the streets who would otherwise be incarcerated.

When the unit began, their role was crisis reaction only. They have since shifted their focus to enforcement and efforts to build rapport with the homeless at the same time. Encampments are posted with 72 hour notice for removal. Pasadena uses their illegal camping/lodging ordinance and California Penal Code 647(e) to enforce, but gives as many warnings and alternatives before getting to that point, unless the individuals are service-resistant. They also cite for littering on, or obstructing, and violation of shopping cart laws. They regularly collaborate with the Pasadena City Prosecutor and try to link to mental health services through the court system.

Member Sullivan asked how they deal with quick releases from hospitalization. Officer Scott-Jackson indicated that PD has the ability to put people into hospitals other than their one local hospital, and which are better suited to meet their particular needs. Their local hospital does not serve these needs and quickly turn away people without insurance.

Councilmember O'Connell asked whether Pasadena has defined the cost of homelessness and where do they put people if they have nowhere to go. Officer Scott-Jackson said that the Pasadena Housing Authority has the information on the cost of housing. She said that they have to handle crimes accordingly, whether people are homeless or not. They can further investigate a 5150 (72 hour hold for being a danger to oneself or to others) if need be, and that sometimes it is easier to do a 5150 without deciding what could be a better next step for them. Realistically, however, there are a lot of people with nowhere to go. They can accommodate about 200 at Union Station, but the population is much larger.

Member Boatman asked what percentage of the population is service-resistant. Officer Scott-Jackson said a generous figure is about 40-50%. Boatman also asked whether the same officers are dealing with the same people all the time. The Officer stated that many people do know the entire outreach team, but there are regular shifts so they often know when particular people are working, and having familiar faces builds rapport among the homeless.

Ross Dohrmann asked whether they use volunteers with psychiatric experience. Mr. Vasquez of DMH replied that they use actual clinicians like himself. He has more than 20 years of experience, and right now they do not have volunteers involved in the program. Mr. Dohrmann also asked about the homeless court, and the Officer explained the process, but when warrants are issued, they will go into the court system, and provided an example to illustrate that there is a cost of going through that process.

Muriel Ullman asked how they decide what to deal with and how to enforce it. The Officer said there really isn't a right answer to this question. They do the best they can to try and use resources and services that are available, but some people just don't want services at all.

4. Presentation by Officer Randy Houston of the Orange Police Department Regarding Programs and Efforts Made by the Orange HEART Team to Address Homelessness

Officer Randy Houston and Officer Ignacio Maciel of the Orange Police Department presented on Public Safety and the Mentally Ill and an overview of the Homeless Engagement Assistance and Resource (HEART) Team operated by their department. The Team was established in 2003 is comprised of two officers and one mental health clinician from the Orange County Centralized Assessment Team (CAT). They respond to all homeless and mental-health related calls for service as a first responder and then conduct after-action follow up and monitoring with CAT personnel.

About 50-60% of all calls to patrol officers in Orange are homeless-related. They provided statistics demonstrating the number of patrol hours that were saved by having this program in place.

They focus on trying to develop relationships with the homeless who are mentally ill in the community and provide linkages to service with an effort of finding a long-term solution. The Team carries resource packets with them in the field so that information can be distributed to those who are not service-resistant and who may want assistance. The HEART Team has also partnered with many organizations, including St. Josephs, to develop and provide officer training to their Department, as well as Santa Ana and Buena Park Police Departments. They utilize a library of training videos and information on issues that officers will face when dealing with the homeless, including hoarding, autism, schizophrenia, and close encounters with the mentally ill homeless. They do riverbed sweeps on a regular basis, and utilize empathetic abatement and property storage procedures by helping to prepare those in advance who are affected and don't want to lose important personal property.

Member Moses asked how the HEART Team obtained the assistance of the CAT Team. Officer Houston said that their department formed a partnership with the County and that HB would likely be able to do the same thing.

Councilmember Delgleize asked how long they had been working with the County in this specific partnership. The Officers said that prior to 2013 they were working with another member of the County's mental health team, and that was the primary focus for that individual, and he rode with everyone in the Department, not just the HEART Team. Laurie, who is their current CAT Team member, is qualified to do 5150 calls, and, although she is involved with all mental health calls for the Department, she primarily works mostly with Officers Houston and Maciel on the HEART Team.

Lt. Rodriguez asked how difficult it is for their team to successfully achieve connections to the various resources. HBPD spends a lot of time mining resources to little or no avail because either the resources are difficult to access or by the time it is accessed, the person in need is no longer interested or available, and asked for the Officers' opinion as to whether we are taking the correct approach. Officer Houston replied that some of the resources can be challenging to access and that they utilize their Chaplain Program to help access resources. He also mentioned that there are facilities for those who are committed to coming out of homelessness that can be accessed, and provided an example of the Village of Hope, which is a 2-year program for those who are willing to work and commit to the entire two years. They have several locations but stringent requirements, and create savings accounts for some of the money earned by their clients during the program so by the time they finish the program they have funds available to go into the world and hopefully not back into homelessness.

Officer Maciel said that Orange PD also sees trouble accessing resources on occasion for various reasons, which include that a bed isn't available when it is needed; the person has disappeared during the window of opportunity; or they have a special need – like substance abuse or a pet – which cannot be addressed or welcomed where a bed might be available.

Lt. Rodriguez asked whether Orange PD raises funds for Coast to Coast. Officer Maciel said that they don't currently have a direct link with Coast to Coast, but that they need to find funds so that they can connect with them and access their services.

Member Moses asked whether the funding for their program is a direct result of the patrol hours saved. Officer Houston replied that, no, the decision to fund the program is from their Captain. Moses also asked whether the CAT Team member has a desk at the OPD and Officer Maciel said that she has a County office and primarily works in the field from a laptop that can access the County's system, but can meet with clients anywhere.

Officer Domino Scott-Jackson asked whether they consider their team to be first responders or whether they are primarily case management. Officers Houston and Maciel replied that they are first responders for homeless-specific mental health calls, and will respond to other cases as needed for the CAT team.

Councilmember O'Connell said that he believes the benefits of the team outweigh the resources and asked whether the statistics the officers provided are duplicated or unduplicated. He also asked whether they could assign a cost to the services they provide, what percentage of substance abusers are served by their program, and whether the training videos that the HEART Team utilizes are available to nonprofits.

Officer Houston stated that the statistics are unduplicated and that the cost information is not something he has readily available. He also said that many of the people they work with suffer from multiple problems, including substance abuse, and that nonprofits can contact the Orange Police Department to inquire about utilizing any of the training videos.

5. Homeless Task Force Discussion Regarding the Following:

a. What topics and speakers do you want to hear from to gather required information to make future recommendations regarding homelessness?

b. What should the goals and objectives be for the Task Force?

Member Kupferstein said he believes that cause and effect is very important. He believes a better understanding of who is being served is needed along with information as to who and what the resources are, how to best access and utilize them, how they are funded, what their average cost is per client and specific information as to how many HB residents are being served by each provider. It is important to know this information as it relates to HB in order to determine how best to apply the needed resources. He also said he would like to know what the costs to the public agencies are. Kupferstein suggested that the Task Force consider centralizing how the service are provided, with the calls taken in a triage center style of service, in which all the providers can participate in on a rotating basis. He would call this the Homeless Alliance League and the center would act as a one-stop for accessing the types of needed services.

Vice Chair Bauer said that providing housing will reduce the costs of serving the homeless and that he will find the studies to substantiate his belief. He also said that there is a program in Salt Lake City considered very successful at serving their population and a speaker from that organization, William Pendleton, will be speaking at the OC Rescue Mission on September 18th. He would like to learn how other cities have reduced homelessness and what techniques the social workers use in working with the homeless. Vice-Chair Bauer distributed a document he prepared, entitled "Goals and Objectives for the Homeless Task Force – Response to Item 5b – 9/9/15" to which the questions he previously distributed at the July 8th meeting were also attached.

Councilmember Delgleize said she had visited one of the facilities operated by the Illumination Foundation, who spoke at the August meeting and that she believes they have made real progress in the 8 years in which they have been in existence. She said that Stanton has experienced a significant reduction in homelessness since they arrived in the city. Delgleize said that that because of the location of BCIS there is now a big homeless problem in Central Park so would like to know who is running the BCIS facility.

Member Boatman said she would like to know what it would take to coordinate services as suggested by Member Kupferstein and that she doesn't know the answers to solving the problems but that we should step up and try to accomplish what we can.

Member Sullivan said he would like to know what kind of State laws influence housing and create obstacles beyond that of the attitude of the community, as well as any existing or proposed laws that tie the hands of public agencies, such as legislative action designed to

prevent sleeping in cars, etc. He said it is expensive to have law enforcement dealing with the homeless, and that working toward a centralized place in which mental services can be provided is something that the city needs to work towards.

Member Moses said he believes any suggestions he would make have already been addressed by other members' comments.

Chair Valdez said that residents need to be educated about this issue and it needs to be determined how best to do that. He said he feels the other members' comments touched on the areas in which he would also have commented.

6. Task Force Member Comments

Member Kupferstein asked about how to follow up on the questionnaire and suggested it be put together and brought back to the next meeting.

7. Adjourn to October 14, 2015 at 5:00 P.M.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:01 PM.