

BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE ON THE HOMELESS Minutes 5-9-2011

Attending: David Wright, Frank Ploof, Cynthia Hamilton, Vanessa Czopek, Steve Madison, Mike Moradian and Darryl Fair.

- 1) David Wright invited public comment. Robert Stanford spoke about his efforts to help the disadvantaged in the airport neighborhood. He expressed concern with eliminating feedings in the park. Columnist, Marjorie Brooks and her husband were present. She said she was interested in hearing about homeless issues.
- 2) Darryl Fair made a motion to approve the minutes from 4/18/2011. Motion was approved.
- 3) Sonia Hartfield, Director of Stanislaus County Environmental Resources spoke about her department's role in code enforcement and environmental health. One of her department's functions is the regulation of food facilities in both the city and unincorporated areas. (Non-profit organizations that hold less than three functions in a 90 day period are not required to obtain a permit.) Feeding of the public in the parks is a violation of the city ordinances. Her department would have to receive a complaint in order to generate an investigation. Concerned citizens can register a complaint at (209)5256500 or 1-877-2-ASSIST.
- 4) Steve Madison spoke to the Director of Parks & Recreation in Santa Maria about the changes they have made to improve their park systems. Previously they were outsourcing private security for the parks. They decided to use those funds along with facility fees to hire park services officers. These individuals are sworn peace officers that report to the Park Director, but do not carry weapons. They patrol the parks, enforce rules, detain problem individuals and are first responders to reports of problems in the park. They target areas with the most issues, check for vandalism, oversee community service programs and cost about half the cost of sworn police officers. As a result of this new program they have seen a reduction in incidents in the parks and an increased quality of life.
- 5) Stockton was mentioned as seeing an improvement in safety issues after security cameras were installed.
- 6) It was recommended that if park feedings were moved to just one site that Beard Brook Park be chosen for its central location and closeness to area shelters.
- 7) Frank Ploof investigated community outreach. He said research has shown that a better outcome will result if the priority in community outreach shifts to housing first. Then other services can be provided

- after they are in a home. Federal \$ can be used as a framework for funding.
- 8) The committee wants to see the following included in their recommendations to the city: 1) Recommendation of Park Safety officers similar to the program in Santa Maria. 2) Education of the public and non-profits about how not to contribute to problems being created by giving money to panhandlers and feedings in the park. 3) Switch community outreach to focus on housing first.
 - 9) The committee is going to poll a number of the homeless asking them questions to get a feel for what services they deem are most important and their thoughts about issues they face.
 - 10) Next meeting scheduled for Monday, June 6, 2011, at 5:30pm at 10th Street Place. Room to be determined.

Respectfully Submitted by Sarah Peña