

Ventura Social Services Task Force - Meeting Minutes September 7, 2011

Based on attending 3 of the last 5 regular meetings the following 23 members (Jerry Breiner, Cathy Brudnicki, Cindy Cante, David Deutsch, Pat Esseff, Bill Finley, Todd L. Goehner, Mary Haffner, Tim Hawkins, Keri Jaeger, John Jones, Amy Luoma, Donna Mason Luttrull, Eileen McCarthy, Loretta Merewether, Mike Merewether, Kate Mills, Rob Orth, Amanda Pyper, Clyde Reynolds, Mary Stewart, Beth Sutherland, Kristen Tippelt) are eligible to vote:

I.A) Introductions

II. Subcommittee and other Reports

Bill Finley – Peter Brown is in San Diego for business development purposes. The following are items he would report:

- 1) The trash clean up in the river bottom resulted in 11.5 tons of trash being hauled away. This was facilitated by CLU students and it addressed a significant environmental issue.
- 2) This is the biggest river clean up in Ventura County and it is only done on city owned property.
- 3) This was a good experience for the CLU students who participated in the project.
- 4) There were no major problems and river bottom residents were notified about the clean up in advance.
- 5) Some residents helped with the clean up and when it was done many of them went back to their camps.

A. Faith Community Sub Committee – Bill Finley

- 1) The One City One Meal event will be held Thanksgiving Day at the VC Fairgrounds.
- 2) Pastors in Ventura are reaching out to other pastors as money becomes tighter and staffing at churches has been cut as well.
- 3) The Candidates Forum scheduled for Thursday September 22nd at the Church of Christ on the corner of Bryn Mawr & Telegraph is being heavily advertised and we need to maximize attendance at this event.

B. Homeless Prevention Sub Committee – Cindy Cante

- 1) In August there were 3 households and 6 people served; to date 192 households have been served.
- 2) Catholic Charities has the fund for September.
- 3) The Unitarian Universalist Church donated all August offerings for the Prevention Fund, a total of \$4,184.20. "Cassie" spoke as a recipient to the Unitarian Church and gave a testimonial; she was referred by Keri Jaeger.

C. Housing Options Sub Committee – John Jones reports no activity.

D. Gateway Group Sub Committee – no report

E. Basic Human Rights Sub Committee – Kate Mills

- 1) The first meeting was held last week and the committee reviewed Ventura County Together Basic Needs information: a) Food; b) Shelter and Housing; c) Healthcare; and d) Transportation.
- 2) The next meeting will be on September 21st from 3:30 to 4:30 at Ventura County Public Health.

F. Steering Committee – John Jones

- 1) The committee sent invitations for the Candidates Forum.

III. Business

A. "One Stop" Status – Kate Mills

The person who sent the email to the mayor needing \$6,000 is in need of resource education.

B. 1) Cindy Cante – HPRP received 1,350 requests in August. It appears HPRP funds will run out in 2012 at the latest.

2) Bill Finley – Neil Andrews and Bill Finley did a Rotary presentation and the Rotary leadership identified funds of \$20,000 for homeless prevention separate from other Rotary funds. The money will be distributed in agency rotation similar to how the Homeless Prevention Fund now works. The checks cannot be put with the Homeless Prevention Fund for tax reasons and for reasons related to maintaining control of the funds. Eventually other Rotary Clubs will be encouraged to participate in contributions.

IV. Networking

- A. Networking for sponsorships for the Black and White Dinner Dance is taking place.
- B. For the Candidates Forum, questions will be asked of each candidate and each one will be able to answer and rebut other candidate's answers. Questions will not be "pre-prepared."
- C. Bill Finley was recognized by the Pacific Business Times in their "40 Under 40" selection. This is an annual report which recognizes young, entrepreneurial leaders in the Tri-Counties (Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Louis Obispo) area businessmen and businesswomen who are starting companies, closing big deals, innovating products, working their way up in management, ruining a non-profit, taking a lead in the family business or making a difference in their community. Mike Merewether had made the nomination.

Mike Merewether

- 1) One of the big drawbacks to renting downtown is the vagrancy issue.
- 2) The park is a big issue – people sleeping, abandoned sleeping bags, clothes, etc. There is a strong desire to address concerns and there is a mission to have a clean, safe downtown corridor.
- 3) When the economy is tough there is a downward spiral and the impact is felt at many levels.
- 4) It is a challenge to deal with people in the park and downtown even as our hearts go out to them (Mike's wife).
- 5) Project Understanding and Salvation Army offer case management to homeless persons. Public intoxication, prostitution, shopping carts, etc. create problems. Leaving mattresses, cooking utensils, etc around the area encourages people to stay in a state of homelessness.
- 6) Jerry Breiner – Case management services like those proposed for the Gateway will be the best way to help with the above listed challenges. The "Clean and Safe" people are helping – safety is a key issue. The Gateway is our best hope to positively impact the overall situation.
- 7) Mike Merewether – The problem is complex and there is no easy solution.
- 8) John Jones – The best way for people to help is to contribute money to providers, not directly to homeless persons.

- 9) Kate Mills – Basic needs (i.e., bathrooms, shelter, etc.) must be provided if we expect people to change their behavioral patterns.
- 10) Amanda Pyper – The program in Los Angeles that placed the most at risk 50 people in housing without requiring participation in services has been a resounding success.
- 11) Bill Finley – When people are housed they begin to deal with their issues but most people will then be receiving services for the rest of their life. Some business owners are compassionate, others are not.
- 12) Pat Esseff – It costs more to not deal with the challenges of homelessness than it does to deal with the issue.
- 13) Cathy Brudnicki – A survey showed 60% of the homeless are permanently disabled and could only afford to pay \$300/month for rent. It may not be viable for persons with mental illness who need more services to live independently but we need programs that would support the concept of inexpensive housing. (see <http://vsstf.org/misc-docs/misc-docs.htm> for link to report)
- 14) Clyde Reynolds – There is a group looking for housing to be purchased with the idea that people would have their own rooms for \$300/month. General Relief can support that effort. The Homeless 2 Home positions with agencies collaborating is just the beginning of what is needed.
- 15) Amanda Pyper – Training for case managers may be offered by VCBH to work with homeless, mentally ill clients.
- 16) Kristen Tippelt – Santa Barbara County is training volunteers to work with the homeless population. They will provide case management and life skills training for people.
- 17) Bill Finley – Business owners and social service providers usually have a disconnect and trying to bridge that gap is important.