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HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Thursday, June 12, 2014
Council Conference Room
Palo Alto Civic Center
250 Hamilton Avenue
7:00 PM
REGULAR MEETING

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: Bacchetti, Chen, Morin, O’Nan, Savage, Stone, Alhassani
Council Liaison: Mayor Shepherd, Absent
Staff: Minka van der Zwaag, Mary Constantino

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:

NONE

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

None

AGENDA CHANGES, REQUESTS, and DELETIONS:

None

BUSINESS

1. Housing Learning Series – (part 13) – Speaker: Raul Rojas, Palo Alto Housing

Corporation to discuss Alma Place and the Barker Hotel
Commissioner O’Nan announced the continuation of the Learning Series on Affordable Housing.
Commissioner O’Nan welcomed Raul Rojas from the Palo Alto Housing Corporation to discuss
Alma Place and the Barker Hotel. She wanted to learn more on how the case managers help
people stay in permanent supportive housing. Raul recognized the wonderful work the HRC
does. PA Housing owns 652 units in Palo Alto which includes studios and single room
occupancy (SRO), families and seniors. Palo Alto Housing has been around for 40 years. The
mission of the Palo Alto Housing Corporation is to ensure that there is housing for low income
families in Palo Alto. Alma Place, which consists of 106 units, is located at 753 Alma Street and
the Barker Hotel on Emerson Street has 25 units. Alma Place units are 238 square feet and they
include a microwave, single bed, counter, small refrigerator and table and chairs. There are no
cooking facilities in the unit but Alma Place has a community kitchen and they organize
community gatherings in the kitchen. The Barker Hotel is in the process of remodeling and is

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42 completely furnished. The fee for the one person unit is \$485. There is a maximum income
43 level of \$21,500 which is enough to pay for rent and basic needs.

44 Commissioner O’Nan asked, “Who do they serve?” In the Barker and Alma Place there are 133
45 residents. There is a very diverse community with different countries of origin; a microcosm of
46 Silicon Valley since the community has people from different cultures which give us the
47 opportunity to promote understanding and interaction from different countries. They have people
48 from different educational backgrounds; some residents have a college education to residents
49 who have little education as well as people who are retired. There are former social workers and
50 teachers who were not able to save up enough money for their retirement.

51 The income level and professional backgrounds are very diverse which makes the community
52 more interesting. People think that low income residents have no aspirations but many of the
53 residents have aspirations and goals. Alma Place has one child who lives with a single mom and
54 they want to move her to a family unit. O’Nan asked, “Why are the retired seniors at Barker or
55 Alma Place. Why are they not in Lytton Gardens or Stevenson House?” Some of the seniors do
56 not have enough income and resources to pay for the other services plus they have more
57 independency and freedom which is a very important factor. The residents like having people
58 around them as a community.

59 Commissioner Bacchetti asked, “Are the units Section 8 and does the Section 8 go with the
60 facility or the individual?” Section 8 goes with the individual so if they have the voucher they
61 come to Palo Alto Housing Corporation.. Not everyone has Section 8 and the Section 8 waiting
62 list is very long. If the resident does not have Section 8, they pay the \$500 rent which is
63 subsidized by the Housing Corporation. Commissioner Stoned asked, “Is the \$500 fee per unit
64 or resident?” There is only one resident per facility. Alma Place only has all studios. The Palo
65 Alto Housing Corporation owns other family properties.

66 The residents have a diverse level of life skills. There are some people who are going to school
67 and some who are struggling. There are highly functioning residents and there are people with
68 difficulties. Raul works in collaboration with a social worker and doctor to assist residents with
69 mental health issues. Raul makes sure the residents are taking their medication. He does
70 individual counseling. There are diverse needs for services. Raul helps the residents in applying
71 for Social Security, Medicare and Medical. He also provides job coaching, prevention and
72 mental health services. They help connect people with social services. The residents work for
73 employers such as Starbucks, CVS, Stanford University, Whole Foods, Walgreens, Safeway, and
74 restaurants. Some of the residents that have jobs have cars. Some jobs are in the downtown
75 area. In Alma Place there is parking but there is no parking at The Barker. There is a job coach
76 on site to help connect with jobs. Raul is the case manager. He refers people to the nonprofits
77 who work with the Alma and Barker. Raul is onsite all of the time. He forms personal
78 relationships and trust. When you refer the residents to your resources do they charge? They
79 look for free or low cost organizations. They look also for resources that they have formed
80 partnerships or collaborations with. It is very hard to form partnerships with local organizations
81 to provide the service low cost or free of charge. Commissioner Alhassani asked, “The people
82 who work are their jobs only in Palo Alto? Their jobs are also in Sunnyvale, Redwood City, but
83 mostly in Palo Alto. Raul’s job is trying to transition the homeless in housing and set goals. It
84 takes time and commitment building trust and relationships.

85 Raul helps monitor the residents on their mental health. Raul is there is listen. Raul has a
86 background in counseling. Commissioner Bacchetti asked, “When someone needs primary care,
87 do they send them to Mayview Health Center or Peninsula Healthcare Connection in the

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88 Opportunity Center?” Raul stated that he refers them to the nonprofits. He works with
89 Momentum for Mental Health. Momentum is a wonderful program. He makes sure they are
90 doing well. They bill Medical or Medicare. Mayview does not deny service but they have a
91 sliding scale for service. Commissioner O’Nan asked, “If a resident has a mental health episode
92 because they are not taking their medicine or decompensating for some reason what do you do?
93 How do you manage?” Immediately he contacts a social worker. He communicates that he
94 needs assistance. They have formed a great team work and have developed a strategy. Next
95 they try to convince the resident that they must go by the rules and if there is no change they
96 have to call the police a 51/50 where they are put on a three-day hold. A 51/50 is if someone is a
97 danger to themselves and unable to take care of themselves. Their goal is they don’t want to get
98 to that point. They try to convince the person to take their medication. Most of the staff’s time
99 is preventing something like that to happen. Commissioner O’Nan asked, “With the HIPPA
100 requirements (which is the confidentiality between the doctor and patient) being so strict, do your
101 residents sign a waiver so you can know about their medical history? They ask the residents if it
102 is okay to contact a social worker or medical doctor.

103 They have a partnership with Palo Alto University where the students teach a stress management
104 class. Also Stanford University holds a meditation class for residents at no cost and YMCA
105 teaches drug prevention classes. Their goal is to connect with services so they can provide
106 services on site at low cost and free of charge. The partnership with the City of Palo Alto
107 Microenterprise Program helps them empower their skills to own business and succeed. The
108 City is being wonderful. The City is our partner in working with Consuelo Hernandez and
109 Steven Turner. It is a wonderful model.

110 Educational workshops are provided such as health education, financial management, and job
111 coaching. The residents need basic financial management skills. The residents attend Job Train
112 in Menlo Park. Commissioner asked, “Do you find that 12-step programs are helpful?” AA
113 works for some people but not everyone. He has residents who have been in AA for 20 years
114 and are sober. Some who will not participate and struggle. The AA meetings do not meet at
115 their residences.

116 One of the greatest needs and challenges is finding low cost accessible, community based
117 wellness programs, counseling, psychotherapy and early mental health prevention. Raul stated
118 that they are observing now that before a mental health issue has escalated to a 51/50, while
119 protecting the rights of the patient, it is difficult to get the patient help. We find it is difficult to
120 really get a patient into treatment because they don’t want to because they don’t feel they need it.
121 The police department works alongside them with the mental health issues but many residents
122 refuse care.

123 Commissioner Bacchetti asked, “How do people get into Alma Place and The Barker? Are they
124 screened?” There is a huge need for housing. It takes 3-5 years for people to get into the
125 properties. Hundreds of people are on the waiting list. Each property keeps its own waiting list.
126 Commissioner Stone asked, “How long do they stay in the properties?” Some have been in the
127 facility for 15 years from the beginning of the program. Average time is 5-7 years. We see it as
128 temporary to regroup and regain new skills and move up in a career and obtain new jobs.
129 Success is when they move to a more stable or better facility. Commissioner Bacchetti asked,
130 “Do you not have a limit on their stay? They can stay as long as they want. “What if they start
131 making \$40,000 a year?” If they exceed income limits, they would need to move. The
132 maximum income to live in the facilities is \$21,546.00. Commissioner Stone asked, “What
133 happens if they become more impoverished.” Raul stated that they guide the resident to find

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134 another place to live. Every year the residents must show their income tax for verification. They
135 have to do a recertification of income every year.

136 Commissioner O’Nan asked, “What types of mental health issues do you see?” It is the whole
137 spectrum; anxiety, schizophrenia, depression, loss, moods, social issues and skills, stress.
138 Commissioner Bacchetti asked, “Do you have any comments about the nonprofit community and
139 the extent that they are helpful to you? What the Human Relations Commission does is help the
140 City Council figure out where to allocate the HSRAP money where about \$1.2 is distributed
141 every year. One thing we need to know is if there are gaps in the support network? Are there
142 non-profit agencies that are useful, are they adequate and are there enough of them? What do
143 you think the landscape in Palo Alto looks like in terms of the support network that you have?
144 What can you tell us to help us for the future? Access for food, for example, food pantries, La
145 Comida, but it is still a need for more food for the low income residents? Do they participate in
146 the Brown Bag program?” Commissioner O’Nan asked, “Is the issue that they don’t have
147 kitchens in Alma Place or they don’t have money for food?” They are forced to eat out because
148 they don’t have kitchens. They are spending their own money on food. Commissioner O’Nan
149 asked, “If they had been benefiting with the Breaking Bread program? Have they been impacted
150 by the cut back of the program? Do your senior residents go to La Comida?” Yes they go the
151 La Comida. They are planning field trips to La Comida so they develop a habit of attending La
152 Comida. Building more connections with existing programs to see where are the gaps. Enhance
153 existing programs which applies to food, counseling, and job training. Some of the programs
154 are out of reach for the residents. We need community based programs that are designed with
155 low income families in mind. How do we develop programs that are targeted with this
156 population that is low income friendly? Counseling mental health is a social stigma and is
157 expensive; one session could cost \$75.00. Commissioner O’Nan asked, “How much are your
158 residents impacted with transportation problems?” Some of the residents have cars but some
159 need to go to Santa Clara County Medical Center and it takes them a couple of hours. It is
160 important to have some kind of transportation. We have a great transportation system but some
161 parts of the county are difficult to access. Raul provides transportation at times but doesn’t want
162 to create a dependency.

163 The Commission thanked Raul for his informative presentation.

2. Update on Council discussion in regards to additional HSRAP funding FY2015.

164 Commissioner O’Nan presented the following: HSRAP has two different funding cycles: one
165 cycle is 6-years for PACCC and Avenidas and a two-year cycle with the smaller agencies.
166 Recently council decided to remove PACCC and Avenidas from the HSRAP program which was
167 against the HRC’s recommendation. Normally we wouldn’t be looking at an increase until the
168 next funding cycle but through some various lobbying Council added some additional funding to
169 the second year. At the last Council meeting they did something a little bit unprecedented.
170 About \$100,000 was allocated for FY15 with about \$31,000 of the total which will be allocated
171 on a prorated basis across all of the agencies and the Council included PACCC and Avenidas
172 even though Council removed them. The Council also awarded \$68,000. The allocation of this
173 amount is up to the discretion of the HRC to allocate to any of the agencies, including PACCC
174 and Avenidas. There will be an application process to be considered for funding. It puts an onus
175 on the Commission on how to figure out how to allocate the funds. Commissioners Bacchetti,
176 O’Nan and Staff van der Zwaag have meet to discuss an abbreviated Request for Proposal
177 Process. We want to let the agencies know that the money is available. Council wants to target
178 two areas: 1. New and emerging needs and 2. Council is fine with the money to shore up
179 baselines, but they want to have the money quantified. The process must be above board and
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181 transparent. It will be a short one page application. What can be done with this money? A
182 Subcommittee up to three Commissioners must be formed to review the applications with City
183 Staff. The Subcommittee will bring back their recommendations to the full HRC and then the
184 full HRC must approve, adjust and modify the recommendation, and then the recommendations
185 will be presented to the Finance Committee. This has impacted the upcoming meeting since we
186 normally don't meet in August but this year we have some work to do, the subcommittee will
187 work in July and come back in August where we will need to go through the recommendations.
188 Commissioners O'Nan and Bacchetti and Staff van der Zwaag will be meeting to develop the
189 application. Commissioner Bacchetti cannot be included in the Subcommittee since he has a
190 relationship with one of the grantees unless that grantee does not apply. Commissioners Morin
191 and Alhassani volunteered to be on the Subcommittee with Commissioner O'Nan. The next
192 HRC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 14 from 7-9 p.m.

193
194 Staff van der Zwaag presented the following: The HRC Retreat will be scheduled in September
195 and the Study Session with Council is in October.

196
197 Council has also put \$50,000 in a reserve for future years if the City is going through a downturn
198 and HSRAP allocation are needed to be cut.

3. Reports from Officials – O'Nan – (10min)

A. Commissioner Reports

201 Commissioner Chen had coffee twice with Claudia Keith the City of Palo Alto
202 Communication Officer. Claudia wanted to connect with an administrator from the
203 community-based Chinese School which is an afterschool program. Commissioner Chen and
204 Claudia will be reconnecting so they can meet with another person from the Chinese
205 community.
206

207 Last Wednesday Commissioner Chen spoke at the Senior Friendship Day about the Medicare
208 and Medical programs.

209 Commissioner Bacchetti commented on the meetings taking place about Our Palo Alto. The
210 last meeting was about Scoping; the range of things the City's wants input on the future of
211 Palo Alto. The last of the three meetings is going to be at the Elks Lodge at on June 24 at
212 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. which is on Alternative Futures. The topics of the meetings have
213 substantially been about density; where are we going to put all of these people? The turnout
214 has been disappointing.

B. Council Liaison Report

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216 None
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C. Staff Liaison Report

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219 Minka van der Zwaag announced Community Law Night which is on June 26. The event is
220 put on by the Palo Alto Bar Association. She also announced that June 23 at 12 p.m. the
221 groundbreaking ceremony of the Magical Bridge.
222

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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225 Commissioner O'Nan announced the Fourth of July Chili Cookoff at Mitchell Park and
226 announced the upcoming Our Palo Alto Meeting on Tuesday, June 24 at 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.
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228 **CALL FOR AGENDA ITEMS**

- 229 • The Planning Department will discuss the future of the Pilot Microenterprise
230 Assistance Program (MAP)
- 231 • Next Meeting is scheduled on August 14
- 232 • At the September retreat the following subcommittees will report: O’Nan will submit status on
233 Report of Supplemental Needs Assessment. Commissioners Bacchetti and Chen will submit
234 report on affordable housing. Commission Savage will report on the development HRC
235 brochure.

236

237 **ADJOURNMENT 8:50 p.m.**

238