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**HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**

**Thursday, June 11, 2015**

Community Meeting Room

Palo Alto Civic Center

250 Hamilton Avenue

7:00 PM

REGULAR MEETING

**ROLL CALL:**

**Commissioners Present:** Alhassani, Chen, Gordon Gray, O’Nan, Savage, Stone

**Absent:** Stinger

**Council Liaison:** Council Member Wolbach

**Staff:** Minka van der Zwaag, Mary Constantino

**ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Commissioner Savage made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 12, 2015 Human Relations Commission (HRC) meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stone

AYES: Unanimous. Commissioner Alhassani Abstained

**AGENDA CHANGES, REQUESTS, and DELETIONS:**

Item #2 was removed from the agenda and moved to July.

**BUSINESS**

**1. Welcome to the incoming Human Relations Commissioners – Chair O’Nan**

Chair O’Nan expressed that it is a pleasure to welcome new members to the HRC; Shelly Gordon Gray, and Valerie Stinger, who will be joining the HRC next month.

**2. Update from Project Sentinel on the Mandatory Response Program**

Removed from the agenda and moved to July

**3. Discussion on homelessness in Palo Alto with Dr. Donald Barr, Stanford School of Medicine**

Dr. Barr explained that during the El Niño of 1998 Palo Alto experienced tremendous flooding and the Red Cross building that housed Urban Ministry, who provided the only services for the homeless, was flooded with sewage. The repairs took six months and once the repairs were done, the drop-in center was not permitted to re-open. The issue came to the attention of a

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number of people who created an ad hoc working group which included city, county, Stanford University, business community, churches, synagogues, service providers and foundations. After 8 years the Community Working Group, Inc. was created and became a 501c3 and raised \$24 million while collaborating with the Santa Clara Housing Authority and the City of Palo Alto and in September 2006 The Working Group was able to establish a high-density facility called the Opportunity Center. The Opportunity Center provides 90 units of permanent supportive housing targeting chronically homeless adults, 72 units of housing for adults and 18 units for families. The center includes a drop-in service center open Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm offering food, showers, lockers, clothing, internet access, professional case workers and for the last 9 years an onsite state licensed medical care facility with behavioral health counseling.

On June 10, 2015 the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration shared the federal policy on homelessness *The Center for Integrated Health Solutions From Homeless to Healthy: How to Effectively Reach People who Experience Homelessness (and keep them engaged)*. Richard Cho, the Director of U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness which is the main federal task force that identifies and gathers data and creates federal homelessness policy, reported that the federal government supports, as the optimal approach to homelessness, permanent affordable housing and supportive services that helps people with special needs achieve stability and improved health outcomes.

Mr. Cho provided the data on what it costs communities per person per month to have a chronically homeless person on the streets and what it costs to put them in supportive housing and receive supportive services. To provide housing and services to the chronically homeless, communities pay typically less than half the costs than having the chronically homeless living on the streets.

Dr. Barr explained that one of the best studies was in 2009 in Seattle which focused on the chronically homeless with severe alcohol problems. The Housing First Association put 95 adults into housing with 39 waitlisted and the only requirement to remain in the units were personal safety, safety to others and not breaking the law. Drinking alcohol was not a disqualification. In the year before the study, Seattle incurred median costs of \$4066 per person per month to have the homeless on the street. After the study was instituted, the median monthly costs decreased to \$1492 and after the homeless were housed for 6 months, the monthly costs decreased to \$958. Dr. Barr added those who were housed had less involvement with jail days, jail bookings, shelter nights, hospitals, EMS system, paramedics, detox days, sobering days, and medical care. Seattle saved an average \$2449 per person per month after accounting the housing costs.

Dr. Barr stated that Commissioners may be familiar with the Santa Clara County (SCC) Economic Roundtable which asked how much does it cost to have homeless in Silicon Valley. SCC designates the persistent homeless as individuals who have been living on the streets for 12 months and usually suffer from mental illness. In Santa Clara County it is estimated that there are 2800 adults who are persistently homeless and it costs the county an average of \$83,000 per homeless adult per year. Averages are eschewed by the outliers of the high cost. The median is \$45,000 to \$50,000, due to the cost of drug and alcohol services, mental and physical health services, emergency rooms, hospitals, jails, and police. The Opportunity Center has been saving the city/county/state an average savings of \$2,000 per person per month or \$510 million

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conservatively. Dr. Barr explained that these services are paid through philanthropic donations, Community Working Group and InnVision Shelter Network. Maintaining these services has drained the endowment of the Community Working Group by \$2.5 million and with no changes in funding; the endowment will be exhausted in 10 years.

Dr. Barr asked who should pay for the ongoing provision of supportive services that enable the permanent supportive housing model to succeed at the Opportunity Center. He stated that the City of Palo Alto benefits substantially from the success of the Opportunity Center. He asked the city to take the time to regroup and form a new working group, with the city in the lead, to assess the long-term savings and costs of providing permanent, supportive housing on an on-going basis and to develop an on-going plan to provide stable funding to support these services.

Chair O’Nan thanked Dr. Barr for his presentation and asked the commissioners if they had any questions.

Commissioner Stone stated it seemed that the estimated savings in the Seattle study were mostly county services and if Dr. Barr had an estimate on how much the City of Palo Alto has saved over the 9 years during the operation of the Opportunity Center? Dr. Barr explained that the city and the county largely overlap in Seattle but Palo Alto is different. When someone is arrested in Palo Alto and is taken to the county courthouse who pays the jail costs while they are going through the court, for the Palo Alto police or paramedics transport to Stanford Hospital. The question is who benefits in Palo Alto and who should be taking responsibility? Commissioner Stone asked if Dr. Barr had an idea or ballpark estimate as to how much is saved. Dr. Barr estimated for every \$1 that the city spends the county spends \$2-3.

Commissioner Savage asked if the county had acknowledged that the Opportunity Center has saved them \$5-10 million over the 9 years. Has the county acknowledged this? Dr. Barr explained that Alex Sanchez, Santa Clara County Housing Authority Director and Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian had a public event at the Opportunity Center demonstrating to Santa Clara County why they should build more permanent supportive facilities like the Opportunity Center.

Commissioner Chen asked if the city or county government provided funding. Dr. Barr replied that city and county government helped with the cost of the construction of the building itself but not for the endowment. Commissioner Chen asked who is managing the endowment. Dr. Barr responded that there is an endowment committee who has a private consulting firm.

Commission Gordon Gray asked whether the new working group Dr. Barr mentioned will represent the entire county. Dr. Barr replied that because the Opportunity Center is in Palo Alto whose job is it? It needs an answer. The HRC and perhaps Council is a better place to find the answer whose job is it. Who has the responsibility of homelessness?

Commission Chen asked whether the Working Group actively fundraises. Dr. Barr stated that the Working Group, Downtown Streets Team, InnVision Shelter Network and Peninsula Healthcare Connection are all fundraising. The Working Group did raise funds to help Eden Housing build 801 Alma.

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Chair O’Nan asked whether the Community Working Group had identified a target dollar amount to create a self-sustaining endowment for the long term. Dr. Barr replied that the Community Working Group works very closely with InnVision Shelter Network to determine what it costs each year to provide the range of supportive services which keeps the housing permanent.

Chair O’Nan asked whether they were looking at hitting an endowment target that the principal would stay still and would generate a return on investment. Dr. Barr stated that if the county, city, philanthropic community, and faith community provided their share then the Community Working Group would provide their share and that way the city would not need an endowment, it would need a commitment. It would create a more stable environment less subject to the fluctuations because of the economy.

Commissioner Alhassani asked if there are any potential projects that the Community Working Group is looking at or any sites for permanent supportive housing for the homeless. Dr. Barr replied that the City of Santa Jose and the County of Santa Clara have acknowledged that they need more facilities like the Opportunity Center especially after “the jungle” was shut down. The Working Group would help find a location, go through the zoning process, find a service provider and develop the facility which is about a 6-year process.

Commissioner Stone asked (just to play “devil’s advocate) whether there is any support to the argument that communities become magnets for homeless individuals when you build services like the Opportunity Center. Dr. Barr replied that when the Community Working Group started the process they actually interviewed 145 homeless adults and 45 percent of the people they spoke to had grown up on the peninsula with an average length of time 20+ years. There were very few people who had lived here for less than two years. An interesting piece of data compared to the national data on chronically homeless adults is that the peninsula has the most highly educated homeless population in the country because it is one of the most highly educated communities. The data is not there to support that the better options you give the homeless that the homeless will migrate to the community.

Chair O’Nan shared that the HRC has met with Philip Dah and other representatives from InnVision Shelter Network, and they have indicated that it is very difficult for Palo Alto’s homeless to get to San Jose to access county services. Dr. Barr replied that is why the Community Working Group put a state licensed community primary medical facility on site, Peninsula Healthcare Connection, because to get to the county medical center it takes at least two buses, 2 hours and the wait time to be seen in the nonemergency clinics is 4-6 hours and to receive mental health services it is worse. The Opportunity Center has had the Stanford University Community Law Clinic supporting the clients with mental health disabilities apply for SSI aid. Many of the homeless have substance abuse and alcoholism and the state would turn them down because alcoholism disqualifies you for disability benefits, but the Law Clinic took them to the hearing office one by one stating that the alcoholism is a symptom of the mental illness. The Law Clinic has had 50-60 clients that have been approved for SSI benefits based on their mental health disability.

Council Member Wolbach thanked Dr. Barr for sharing the news that the federal government has endorsed Housing First. Council Member Wolbach asked why we need a Palo Alto Working

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Group when there is a Community Working Group. Would it be duplicative, would it be a replacement, would it have a different mission? Since there is a 501c3 why not renew the effort of the existing organization. Dr. Barr replied that when it incorporated, the Urban Ministry was on the rocks and InnVision was not yet around, and the merchant community, through the Chamber of Commerce, the city, and the faith community, said they needed to get these different interest groups together and form a Community Working Group. Now that there is InnVision Shelter Network, Community Working Group would be competing with them. They could formulate a plan and come to the City Council and ask for a line item in the budget but they believe that the first question from Council would be why the Community Working Group is not going to the county and the county would ask why we are not going to the city. Council Member Wolbach stated that there is already an organization formed by various parties in the community coming together so why create a duplicate? Dr. Barr replied that he would not call it a duplicate; he would call it a parallel organization as no one has asked the question as to how much the city and county have saved in costs because of the Community Working Group even though they have been pointing this out for 9 years. Council Member Wolbach stated that the HRC will contemplate that question, and he will take the question back to Council, but again why the need to create a new group, why not funnel to the existing organization? Dr. Barr responded that this would be is a completely viable and workable plan if the Community Working Group knew that the city, county, philanthropic and faith communities would be committed to its mission on the project for years to come but the Community Working Group has lost the sense that the City is “there for us.” The Community Working Group does not want to fight with InnVision Shelter Network, Downtown Streets Team and Peninsula Healthcare Connection on who needs the money. They want a comprehensive plan for how much it costs for all of these services on an ongoing basis.

Council Member Wolbach asked would the new Palo Alto Working Group go down the same path of becoming a 501C3 and institutionalizing parallel with the Community Working Group or would it disband at a certain point. Dr. Barr replied it would remain ad hoc and not form a 501C3 and end up as more of a regional advisory body on homeless services and act through Community Working Group, InnVision Shelter Network, Downtown Streets Team, and Peninsula Healthcare Connection. Council Wolbach added an opportunity to convene and provide conversation and leadership. Dr. Barr added in long term thinking.

Chair O’Nan stated that she is not an expert in the topic but she is aware having talked to service providers of an issue of cannibalization of funding. The agencies feel that they are forced to compete with each other and money one group had gets converted to another group and that group tries to “take it on the chin” and be fine with it but you can cripple yourself by underfunding one side of homeless services in order to fund another side. She thinks it would be beneficial to have one group that hovers over all homeless services as Professor Barr is suggesting and advocate in a more holistic way of funding instead of an unhealthy competition. Dr. Barr replied that we have a potential unhealthy situation developing in terms of this issue.

Council Member Wolbach asked what happens when a homeless person is in need of physical or mental medical services walks into Stanford, El Camino Hospital, or Palo Alto Medical Foundation and says, I am homeless and reside in Palo Alto and need help. Dr. Bar replied that the Palo Alto Medical Foundation will ask you for your insurance card or \$500.00 and if your condition does not appear to be life threatening we are not able to see you. It is their policy not

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to register a patient for care who does not have insurance or money. The Palo Alto Medical Foundation will call 911 if it is an emergency to stabilize. The Stanford emergency room is obligated under federal law to provide the services to everyone who walks into the emergency room then are given the phone number for Valley Medical or Peninsula Healthcare Connection.

Council Member Wolbach asked whether there are other sites Dr. Barr is looking at and could he give us a rough sense as to whether there is a need in Palo Alto for an additional facility to complement the existing Opportunity Center. Dr. Barr replied that the Community Working Group has projected a 10 to 15 percent vacancy rate, but we are at a 2 to 3 percent vacancy rate. The Community Working Group would love to work with ourselves or someone else to develop another Opportunity Centers to provide them with housing. There are nearly 2,800 chronically homeless adults in Santa Clara County so there are enough to build 27 additional Opportunity Centers. To meet federal goals we need 27 additional Opportunity Centers throughout the county and there are federal and state housing dollars to build the buildings but the challenges are finding the land, going through the permitting process, the neighborhood concerns and building the building.

#### **4. Update on the Affordable Housing Subcommittee - Commissioner Chen**

Chair O’Nan reported that for over a year the HRC had an ongoing Learning Series on Affordable Housing issues. The HRC formed a subcommittee to take the information learned and advocate for more affordable housing in Palo Alto.

Commissioner Chen stated that a report was written but did not include any concrete suggestions so the HRC met with the Planning Director Hilary Gitelman. One of the topics of interest was senior house sharing such as a program in San Mateo County called HIP Housing which helps seniors search for house sharing. The second subject is the building of second units which is difficult because of the city’s restrictions. Commissioner Chen reported that Palo Alto has 17,670 single family homes but approximately 1,600 could legally build a secondary dwelling unit.

Council Member Wolbach shared that he proposed to Council that the city should ease the restrictions for adding second units. Council Member Wolbach explained that he has currently written a draft and there is a very good chance the item will be coming to Council in some form prior to the end of the calendar year. Council Member Wolbach is working with Council Member Scharff as well as staff to get the conversation moving about what the obstacles are to adding second units and ease the restrictions while preserving the neighborhood’s character and strengthen the social fabric for extended families, live-in caregivers or renters.

Chair O’Nan stated that the HRC might have a community engagement event and invite people to talk about how the restrictions have impacted them, have an informal focus group and pass on the information so they can get a sense of a voice. Council Member Wolbach added if there are recommendations the HRC can provide regarding secondary dwelling units or changes, Council would welcome the recommendations. Commissioner Savage expressed interest to join the housing subcommittee after September.

#### **5. Update on the Senior Services Subcommittee – Chair O’Nan**

Chair O’Nan stated that the HRC had a Senior Summit last January and received a lot of data

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about the need for senior services in Palo Alto and what we need to do now is to identify a handful of potential projects and go forward with the help of some of our local service providers. The service could be creating a new transportation program, creating fitness classes, special nutritional programs because some senior have better access than others and some seniors are falling through the cracks because of their lack of mobility. When the subcommittee assembles, it will identify some projects and establish funding options with a city/county partnership to fund some solutions.

## **6. Update on the Homeless Vets Subcommittee – Commissioners Alhassani and Stone**

Commissioner Alhassani reported that over the course of the past year the HRC has become aware that there are 800 homeless vets in Santa Clara County, which 40 are in Palo Alto. Santa Clara County has the highest percentage of unsheltered vets in America. The primary goal of the summit is to educate and activate community leaders, the public and private sectors. The summit agenda has changed and has been pushed to the fall. Commissioner Gordon Gray asked what the intended outcome of the conference is. Commissioner Alhassani replied that the hope is that civic leaders will be aware of the issue in Santa Clara County and be more engaged.

## **7. Discussion on the planning of a Civility Roundtable- Chair O’Nan**

Chair O’Nan stated that the Mountain View HRC has had very successful Civility Roundtables and would like to bring the concept to Palo Alto. The HRC tried to have one last fall but did not have enough lead time and support to get it off the ground. Commission Gordon Gray shared that she has a concern of the hidden issue of domestic violence. The topic does not receive much publicity because it is a hidden issue and people are under the impression that it does not exist with people who are highly educated and affluent. Chair O’Nan expressed that she would be willing to help organize the event. Domestic violence is a global problem, and we are very naive because we think it happens to just poor people. Domestic violence is not just a women’s problem but it is a family problem.

Chair O’Nan stated the event could be titled Domestic Violence it doesn’t happen here, right? Commissioner Savage added if we generalize to abuse to enlarge the category and get police officers that are trained to neutralize the situation. Ms. van der Zwaag added that the event might need to be an informational workshop although it is a very valid topic versus a civility roundtable that usually has an issue with opposing sides in the community with two varying strong opinions but it does not say the HRC cannot host a public forum on domestic violence. Chair O’Nan added that we could forgo the branding of a Civility Roundtable because the issue is not a contentious issue with opposing sides. The issue is more of raising awareness because in Palo Alto there is a lot of invisible stuff that has major impacts on people.

## **8. Discussion on Countywide HRC Breakfast – Chair O’Nan**

Chair O’Nan reported that Palo Alto is hosting the Regional HRC Countywide Breakfast. Mayor Karen Holman and Vice Mayor Greg Schmid will be attending and Council Member Marc Berman is going to stop by. The event will have a speaker Clarissa Moore of the Santa Clara County HRC. The breakfast is on Wednesday, June 17 at 8:00 a.m. The Mayor and Vice Mayor will be making opening remarks. Clarissa Moore will be speaking about upcoming events that the county is hosting. It is a great chance to meet our colleagues.

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## 9. Discussion on the annual HRC Retreat – Chair O’Nan

Chair O’Nan reported that typically the HRC meets 11 months out of the year with August off for a retreat. The Commission needs to select a date and time. Staff will Doodle the Commissioners for a time and date the week of August 17. The HRC sets priorities for the year, identifies subcommittees, plans events and maps out what has been achieved and what it wants to achieve.

## 10. Selection of Human Relations Chair and Vice-Chair – Chair O’Nan – Action

Chair O’Nan stated that normally the Chair would hand off the leadership to the Vice Chair but currently the HRC does not have a Vice Chair. Chair O’Nan added that she has served as Chair for two terms but is willing to serve another year unless Commissioner Stone or Commissioner Chen is interested in serving. Chair and Vice Chair meet once a month to plan agendas to figure what topics for the agenda and collaborate with staff. Chair O’Nan asked if there is anyone interested in the position of Chair.

Ask for nominations.

**Commissioner Savage nominated Chair O’Nan and Chair O’Nan accepted her nomination. Chair O’Nan asked to close the floor to nominations, which was seconded by Commissioner Stone. All in favor with Chair O’Nan remaining as Chair. AYES Unanimous.**

Chair O’Nan stated that the Vice Chair collaborates with the Chair and attends meetings with staff. If the Chair is unable to attend a HRC meeting, the Vice Chair runs the meeting. Chair O’Nan asked if someone wants to nominate their fellow commissioners. Chair O’Nan nominated Commissioner Stone. Commissioner Stone accepted. Chair O’Nan stated that Commissioner Stone has consistently displayed maturity that transcends great aspects to the HRC. Commissioner Chen stated that she has been on the HRC for two years and is very interested in the work of the Vice Chair and has enthusiastically worked with the Chinese community who has a very large impact in the community.

Chair O’Nan closed the floor for the vote for Commissioner Stone or Commissioner Chen for Vice Chair.

Ms van der Zwaag reported that Commissioner Stone received the majority of the votes so Commissioner Stone is the new Vice Chair. Commissioner Stone thanked everyone for their vote. He stated that it is an honor to be Ray Bacchetti’s successor, and he is looking forward to honor his service and leadership.

## REPORTS FROM OFFICIALS:

### A. Commissioner Report

1. Commissioner Chen reported that she went to a Santa Clara County Housing Trust event on affordable housing on May 19 and viewed the housing development in Mountain View called Studio 819 which was developed by Eden Housing. Commissioner Chen stated that the development was a green building and very impressive. The affordable housing development consists of studio apartments for single people or couples without children.



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2. Commissioner Chen reported that she went to an emergency service workshop for seniors and people with disabilities at Avenidas. The North County City Emergency Operations Plan was discussed at the workshop.
3. Commissioner Alhassani reported that he attended the Comprehensive Plan Summit which was very successful. There were over 300 Palo Altans and a lot of interesting ideas were discussed.
4. Commissioner Savage reported that she attended a Healthy Community Healthy City workshop on how to make this community healthier both mental health and physical health what is needed and what we can do next.
5. Chair O’Nan shared that she was a judge for Digital Leaders, a program by Palo Alto Housing that is funded through HSRAP. Chair O’Nan stated that the films were very interesting and the \$1,000 grand prize film was about suicide and she would like to screen the film for the HRC.

## **B. Council Liaison Report**

1. Council will be on vacation starting July to the middle of August.

## **C. Staff Liaison Report**

1. Ms. van der Zwaag reported that HSRAP will be going to the full Council. Once the budget is passed Ms. van der Zwaag will let the HRC know if there are any changes.

## **CALL FOR AGENDA ITEMS (July 9, 2015)**

1. Update from Project Sentinel on the Mandatory Response Program
2. Update on Civility Roundtable
3. Update from Palo Alto Police Chief regarding police matters
4. Ana Angel, Palo Alto Housing Corporation on Stepping Stones for Success film screening
5. Update on subcommittees

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.