



POLICY AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

Special Meeting
November 15, 2011

Roll Call

Chairperson Price called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 250 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, California.

Present: Burt (arrived 7:15 pm), Holman, Klein, Price (Chair)

Absent:

Oral Communications

Aram James spoke regarding the resolution of social issues plaguing the community.

Erick Deizel spoke regarding work with the elderly and how they were affected by loss of income.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Status of Habitation in Vehicles Ordinance/Programs

Curtis Williams, Director of Planning and Community Environment gave an update on the status of the vehicle habitation issues. He noted there was no proposal presented because Staff was not asking for action to be taken. They were asking for the Policy & Services Committee input on the progress to date. Staff worked closely with the Community Cooperation Team, a group of homeless advocates. Together they formed working groups to discuss community concerns. Community forums were held where experiences and alternatives were discussed. Among the ideas shared was an Ordinance similar to one the State of Oregon implemented which allowed Churches, commercial

properties, and the City to provide areas for refuge. There would be certain limitations on the number of vehicles on the site, vehicle registration, and time limits. Participants also discussed a set of regulations for parking permits or restricted time limits in commercial areas. Also discussed was an Ordinance that would provide assistance to the Police Department in the event further activity was needed. He noted there had been a positive approach to the concerns throughout the community. They were working together to provide an alternative to criminalizing those who were not causing negative incident. More meetings were planned with the intent to offer proposal to the City Council in February 2012.

Council Member Holman asked if the proposal included a mechanism to deal with persons who park multiple vehicles in residential neighborhoods.

Mr. Williams stated it would depend on the type and height of vehicle, and whether there was a permit parking program in the area. He noted it would be more difficult to limit parking in a non-permitted residential zone.

Council Member Holman asked if there was any way to characterize the general situation that caused people to live in their vehicles.

Mr. Williams stated it would be difficult to generalize. There were scenarios where living in the vehicle was a more secure environment than being exposed to other outdoor hazards. There were situations where there were mental ailments or times when their vehicle was their only possession.

Council Member Holman asked if there was any thought that the Community Cooperation Team would continue. She cited the Downtown Streets Team as an example. They provided a network and a structure for people to belong to. The people needing the service became a part of the community.

Mr. Williams stated the Community Cooperation Team had come together in a unique way and the anticipation was they would remain in tact since this was a long term issue. He noted the process currently being addressed was not the wide range of issues he believed they would like to address in the future.

Council Member Holman asked if the Human Relations Commission (HRC) was involved.

Mr. Williams stated no, Minka Van der Zwaag from the Community Services Department had attended the meetings, was aware of the situation and the movement.

Council Member Holman asked if there was an understanding that most people that inhabited their vehicles did not cause a problem but there was none-the-less safety factor that some people expressed.

Mr. Williams stated that was understood by most of the community but there was a concern over how many incidents would be needed before an Ordinance was drafted for the safety and well-being of the community.

Council Member Burt stated he was surprised the HRC had not been formerly brought into the program. The purpose of the HRC was to advise the Council and their realm was Human Relations. He asked for more specifics on the Eugene program.

Mr. Williams said the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Coordinator had been researching the Eugene Program and the Santa Barbara County program as well. He noted the research found both programs had been successful but neither was able to fully meet housing needs in the available facilities. His understanding was there was a waiting list but he was uncertain where people went while on the waiting list.

Council Member Burt asked about the participant's perception of the programs. He also wanted to know what had happened to those who were placed on a waiting list.

Mr. Williams stated he was uncertain at the time but Staff would look into the deeper issues during the next phase. He mentioned there had been discussion at the HRC meeting on whether the matter should go to the full Council. The HRC decided the Policy & Services Committee needed to be involved first.

Chair Price asked if there was expressed interest from property owners, faith based groups, or commercial property owners to be involved in this type of program.

Mr. Williams stated the intent to involve faith organizations in the next meeting. The subject had not been formally discussed with commercial entities. There would need to be facilities for bathrooms, a clean-up area, and room for the vehicles, which could not be accommodated in the downtown area.

Chair Price asked if Staff had talked with service providers or networks of individuals who were currently providing services in the Eugene Program.

Mr. Williams said there would be more detailed discussions with the service providers to see if there were more examples of other places they may be aware of. The Eugene Program was City based so Staff had focused their discussions with the City Staff.

Council Member Klein asked if Staff had coordinated with other cities in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties to learn from their experiences.

Mr. Williams stated the Police Department had discussions with surrounding cities and even though there were Ordinances in motion they were informed there were people living in their vehicles. If there were no issues being caused city officials did not act on the Ordinance. He noted members of the Community Cooperation Team had positive responses when speaking with faith based communities in Mountain View about their interest in participating in the program if it were to move forward.

Council Member Klein asked if neighboring cities were receiving complaints similar to those in Palo Alto with respect to the vehicle dwellers.

Mr. Williams said he was not familiar with any such complaints.

Council Member Klein asked if there was evidence of Palo Alto attracting vehicle dwellers because of the Ordinances in the other 14 cities within Santa Clara County.

Mr. Williams stated there was no evidence but the Police had come across a few persons who were from elsewhere.

Rick Tocker spoke regarding his discussions with the faith community, where a number of churches had expressed interest in getting involved if the City accepted a Eugene type plan.

Saint George said the main issue appeared to be poverty and Palo Alto was an affluent community and was not versed in handling such circumstances. The situation was ongoing and she felt it was a regional issue.

Chuck Degota said the word homeless was not accurately used, they had homes but they were mobile. The solution was engagement by instituting a program such as the City of Eugene who saved \$200,000 in staff time and expenses by no longer needing to respond to complaints. He noted the situations some were in were not decided lightly but mandated by their state of affairs.

Aram James spoke regarding the Policy & Services Committee members' involvement in the community working groups. Some had attended meetings and were involved while those who had not were invited to do so. He felt the arrests and ticketing of people staying in their vehicles would cause judicial costs to rise.

Bruce Kenyon read from an article he wrote. There was no stepladder to assist people to get back on their feet and become a productive part of society. The current system was broken and there needed to be a replacement program put into place.

Herb Borock said when the issue was raised there was a draft Ordinance already written. He felt the HRC should be involved and advise the Policy & Services Committee prior to the Committee recommending policy to the full Council.

Chris Sacre spoke regarding the proposed Ordinance and the working group. The vehicle habitation issue should not be treated as a criminal issue but rather a social issue. The group had been actively reaching out to the community to come up with a long term solution for those affected.

Erick Deisel said to pass an Ordinance that removed a person's vehicle when that vehicle was their home would prevent them from re-involving themselves back into society. He asked if there was a list of problems related to people residing in the vehicles.

Mr. Williams gave a brief list of issues associated with safety, security, sanitation, and health complaints believed to be connected with some vehicle dwellers.

Fred Smith spoke regarding the difficulties of getting back into the work force and how living in his vehicle was a detriment to the community. He requested the Policy & Services Committee pass regulations that did not hurt those who were already injured socially.

Tina Lovercheck recalled the sit-lie Ordinance discussion in consideration with the HRC who did not support the passing of the Ordinance because there was no documentation to support the need. She felt the vehicle habitation was a similar situation and that the HRC needed to be involved.

Council Member Burt asked how much engagement had taken place with businesses regarding use of their sites. In the Eugene Program there were instances when the vehicle dweller and the commercial site forged a relationship

where the vehicle dweller in effect provided around the clock security.

Mr. Williams stated Staff had not had any discussions with the commercial based participants in Eugene but he was also familiar with those comments.

Council Member Burt asked whether the community working groups had any engagement with the commercial base community.

Mr. Williams declared he did not believe so.

Council Member Burt stated there were responsible members of the community who were in a situation beyond their control. He asked to what degree Palo Alto had been able to distinguish the two groups; those in need of assistance and those with criminal intent. He felt there could be a shared interest between the vehicle dweller and the business owner.

Mr. Williams said the Police Department did not currently have a tracking system in place since there was not a Municipal Code that could be violated. He noted there were a couple of the Community Officers who indicated during prior meetings there may have been 15 to 20 issues over the past few years but acknowledged there were three times that amount without any incident.

Council Member Burt said the Downtown Streets Team was an innovative program initiated by Palo Alto residents and subsequently supported by the City. The program was a model being replicated elsewhere in the region. This was an example of Palo Alto using a model that helped people help themselves. He felt the Eugene model had a solid base to start a program in the City.

Council Member Klein asked about the overnight parking ban.

Mr. Williams stated it was a suggestion but there was not a limitation as of yet.

Council Member Klein said an element not frequently discussed was that while City government was not equipped to solve poverty, Palo Alto did have compassion. There were laws available to the police to protect the community against public nuisance. He disagreed the City government should be involved in a program such as the one in Eugene; he felt it would add a bureaucratic element which was not practical.

Council Member Holman thought it was important to consider an ongoing Community Cooperation Team potentially using the Downtown Streets Team model to locate work for those in need. Her concern was how the negative

actions of a few may impact the group as a whole in the form of an Ordinance. She felt the HRC should be involved, admitting it would slow the process although their role was to advise the Council on Human Relation matters. She understood the safety concerns of residents. She felt City facilities should not be involved.

Chair Price was concerned about the lack of hard data. With out this information it would be difficult to define the challenges. She was undecided whether or not City facilities should be considered. She appreciated the work that had been contributed to date. She recommended more detailed discussions with the service providers and more consideration for HRC involvement.

Council Member Holman asked if the focus of the Community Cooperation Team was to be a facilitating group or was it to develop solutions.

Mr. Williams clarified the group felt facilitating and reaching for solutions were a part of their purpose. He noted they were reviewing models elsewhere to bring forth suggestions to be considered.

Chair Price asked Staff to inform the audience how they could get involved.

Mr. Williams said interested parties could contact him or Consuelo Hernandez in the Planning Department at (650) 329-2404 and there was information on the Community Services Department web page:

www.cityofpaloalto.org/depts/csd/human_services/default.asp .

Council Member Burt asked the City's role in the forum versus various community organizations.

Mr. Williams stated Staff saw the role as collaboration between the City and the Community Cooperation Team but ultimately the team was providing input for Staff to bring to the Council as recommendations.

Council Member Burt asked how broadly the group was representing the community.

Mr. Williams stated the Community Cooperation Team worked with advocates and clergy while the Working Groups had neighborhood and business representatives.

NO ACTION REQUIRED

2. Magical Bridge Partnership Project Update

Director of Community Service Department, Greg Betts gave an update on the community partnership project that related to the Council Priority on youth wellbeing programs. There were currently two projects being presented Project Safety Net and the Magical Bridge. One of the reasons the Magical Bridge project was so important was it was not just building a playground but building a public awareness of persons with special needs in the community. He noted there were over 1,500 children and adults with special needs within Palo Alto. The Magical Bridge was a program that made a play area universally accessible where the children could play together or caregivers could play with children. In July of 2011, the Council approved a Letter of Intent (LOI) which outlined what the City was responsible for so the Friends of the Magical Bridge could focus on fundraising. The City had allocated \$300,000 in its Capital Improvement Project budget as seed monies. The funds were being used for the design, review, and permits. Some funds may also be used to build the bridge over Adobe Creek leading to the play area in the northern corner of Mitchell Park.

Landscape Architect/Park Planner, Peter Jennings said there were currently six proposals for review to select the consultant for the project. The consultant would be responsible for the design of the playground. Staff would present their findings for selection to the Council at the beginning of the 2012 year. The consultant would be responsible for development of the design, set the construction documentation, and then move into the construction phase of the project. He noted the design and construction documentation was anticipated to extend through 2012.

Olenka Villarreal, Friends of the Magical Bridge, said fundraising was at the top of their priority list. They were also working with Mr. Jennings to create the vision of the playground. She encouraged people who wished to participate, donate, or receive more information on the project to visit the web site at www.magicalbridge.org.

Council Member Burt acknowledged it was an important program for the community. He recognized there were few communities with such accessible playgrounds and he was glad to have Palo Alto lead the way. He said the wellbeing of the youth of Palo Alto was intertwined with the wellbeing of the community and both needed to be solid to support the other. He was not under the impression the allocations from the Capital Improvement would go towards the repair or replacement of the Adobe Creek Bridge; he was aware the bridge was in need of repair but the funds to do so should be part of the infrastructure

not any special project.

Mr. Betts clarified part of the design funding would assist in addressing the uniqueness of the bridge, the hydraulic study and the accessibility to the other pathways in the park. Because the City would be dealing with the Santa Clara Valley Water District, the permitting for the bridge was going to be managed by the City.

Council Member Burt asked if Staff had reviewed the Water District Funds for assistance through their grant programs.

Mr. Betts stated yes and Staff would aggressively apply for those funds. Staff had previously received indication that CDBG funds would be available since the bridge was being retrofitted.

Chair Price asked whether Staff had approached philanthropic groups for funding assistance.

Ms. Villarreal stated yes, those groups had been approached. The groups had pledged a significant amount of money and time but were waiting for the when the project was ready for their contributions.

Chair Price asked if small family foundations had been contacted as well.

Ms. Villarreal stated the Friends had received funds from a few small family foundations. However because of Palo Alto's affluent status grant assistance was not an option.

Council Member Holman felt the project was a terrific idea and appreciated the creativity, innovation, and the initiative taken to get it started.

NO ACTION REQUIRED

3. Project Safety Net Update

Recreation Manager, Rob De Geus provided background on the Community Coalition which began to take shape in summer of 2009. The group was formed in response to five teen suicides within an eight month period. He presented the Project Safety Net Report which defined 22 strategies in three categories; intervention, prevention, and education. The report was reviewed by the Policy & Services Committee who determined there were specific policy implications for the City. The City had taken action on most of the items listed in the report and

adopted a Developmental Assets Policy, a Suicide Prevention Policy, support for the track watch year round, elevating the youth voice, and administrative capacity for Project Safety Net. The Council and Staff had negotiated monies to support the position although it had not yet been filled.

Supervisor of Recreation Programs, Minka Van der Zwaag discussed the structure of Project Safety Net and explained it was broken out into three capacities, 1) the steering community who opened, coordinated, and advised, 2) the community collaboration teams which were groupings of individuals and organizations to further the strategies of Project Safety Net, and 3) gatekeeper training which was a group trained in recognizing a youth in suicidal trouble. Staff had enlisted the assistance of a group named QPR to train all of the Community Services Department (CSD) Staff who deal with youth and the first and secondary level of staff at the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD). The Developmental Assets group had given numerous presentations to community groups explaining the concept of Developmental Assets, developed the implementation of the Developmental Assts Survey for PAUSD which covered over 4,000 students, and in an effort to publicize Developmental Assets the overpasses were adorned with banners denoting the "asset of the month". She noted youth would prefer to talk amongst themselves rather to an adult and as the QPR training was geared more towards the adult the Gunn High students began a peer support group called Sources of Strength. She noted there was a monthly meeting held at the Lucy Stern Community Center to discuss implementations, make decisions, networking, and each month there was a major topic of discussion. There were partner organizations and each one determined which strategy they would implement based on their strengths. Each organization signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) annually to solidify their commitment to the project.

Mr. De Geus said the next milestone in the program was the hiring of an administrative support person. Staff was aware the funds had been set aside for the support person but was in a holding account and they needed to request a Budget Amendment Ordinance to move them. Project Safety Net was attempting to build the relationship between the City and PAUSD. The schools tended to keep the inner workings of the students' issues on campus.

Chair Price asked if the Human Relations Commission (HRC) had an MOU related to Project Safety Net.

Ms. Van der Zwaag stated they did.

Mr. De Geus noted the Parks & Recreation Commission (PARC) had also signed

an MOU.

Council Member Burt said given the School Board and School Administration levels had committed and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) had been very active he asked whether they had an MOU as well.

Mr. De Guess stated they did.

Council Member Burt discussed the struggle with school participation even though the Board and Administration were participating. He asked if Staff knew why the Board or Administration did not take ownership in building the bridge between the schools and the Project Safety Net.

Mr. De Geus stated there were 13 schools within the PAUSD and despite the name they were not necessarily unified and there was a lot of bureaucracy within the District. He noted in 2012 there would be two meetings on each High School campus after school hours so students could participate.

Council Member Burt asked if the PTA offered insight into why there were remaining barriers or provided suggestions on how to break them down.

Mr. De Geus believed the disconnect was more one of history and the culture of the school; although because of the PTA involvement there had been more progress made recently than in the past years.

Council Member Burt said school principals had a high commitment to a broad definition of youth wellbeing, measurements of success, and engagement as defined in the Developmental Assets. He was aware the Principals at both High Schools were part of the reason the value structure was being transformed in a positive manner and that was reassuring to him.

Council Member Holman said as liaison to the PARC she had been exposed to the work Public Safety Net was accomplishing. She believed the Project was an enormous undertaking for the City and Staff and she thanked them for their commitment.

Mr. De Geus stated he was surrounded by a great Staff and an amazing community who were very supportive of the wellbeing of all youth.

Council Member Holman left the meeting at 9:30 PM

Council Member Klein asked how other communities might view the work being

done by Project Safety Net. He asked if there had been thought to having an outside evaluator review the Project to see if there were areas in need of improvement.

Mr. De Geus stated the County of Santa Clara reviewed Project Safety Net. They reported that the uniqueness of the program inspired them to invest \$30,000 in a strategic plan to share the program with the rest of the county. Council Member Klein noted the educational field frequently utilized outside evaluators and he recommended if the Project could fund such a resource it would be a benefit.

Mr. De Geus stated if an outside evaluator could provide input so Project Safety Net would be more effective he was in support of the recommendation.

Council Member Klein asked how the youth was able to add input. It was difficult to receive input from them and they did not necessarily have a breadth of understanding of the situation.

Mr. De Geus said not having input from the youth would be disastrous. There were surveys completed by the youth asking how they viewed the value of the community and the school climate. There were teen forums where the youth discussed topics like stress and suicide.

Council Member Klein asked if the surveys had been done before.

Mr. De Geus acknowledged the County of Santa Clara had performed similar surveys and Palo Alto had up until October 2011 declined to participate. The county also had a California Healthy Kid Survey released every two years and the Palo Alto Reality Check (PARC) Survey was performed. In addition to the surveys there were a variety of teen groups that met regularly; the Palo Alto Youth Council, the Teen Advisory Board, the Teen Arts Council from the Children's Theatre, the Library has a Teen Advisory Group, and the Mid Peninsula Media Center has a Teen Advisory Group that the Project Safety Net Staff visits to hear their input.

Council Member Klein hoped there was close to no overlap between the teen advisory groups.

Mr. De Geus explained some of the groups had leadership overlap because of the school connection but they were of very diverse groups.

Ms. Van der Zwaag said the Developmental Assets subcommittee should talk to

the youth about the survey.

Council Member Klein asked why the teen groups involved in sports were not mentioned in the overview of involved groups.

Mr. De Geus had realized the lack of sport oriented teen groups so there had been two forums held on sports; one included a speaker from the Stanford Sports Department.

Council Member Klein asked if there was a way to cross reference the surveys; he was aware they were anonymous but they could be grouped by activity.

Mr. De Geus did not believe the surveys allowed that much detail.

Council Member Burt said the importance of the Development Assets Survey and its data was the benchmarking that the City did not previously have. He noted achieving the cooperation of the school to complete the Survey was because of the Project Safety Net initiative.

Council Member Klein asked if private schools participated.

Mr. De Geus stated Castilleja School was participating and regularly attending the meetings. He agreed it was an area where there could be more outreach.

Chair Price recommended Staff seek ways to share the results of the Surveys with other cities. She asked what the relationship was with Stanford research efforts in terms of Stanford Graduate students working with the Project.

Mr. De Geus said the Project had a close relationship with Stanford and the Lucille Packard Children's Hospital; both entities sat on the steering committee. He did not believe there was any student involvement although the journalism department had attended meetings and wrote on the matter.

NO ACTION REQUIRED

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.