

Community Coalition on Homelessness March 18, 2009 Meeting Minutes

March 18th marked the second meeting of the homeless task force. The purpose of this meeting was to focus in on a direction for the task force. The meeting began with a power point presentation that included: 1) what other cities around the nation are doing to address homelessness in their communities; 2) legal and illegal tent cities; 3) the elements of a ten year plan to end chronic homelessness; and 4) suggestions from the city's homeless population.

The Council Member then initiated a discussion with attendees to determine what should be the purpose of the Task Force. The following notes summarize the ideas discussed in the meeting. These ideas do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the City of Stockton or Councilmember Eggman, but rather represent the opinions expressed by the people in attendance at the task force meeting.

The creation of subcommittees based on population or interest groups was suggested by several attendees. Examples of subcommittees are: substance abuse; migrant workers; mental health; veterans; resource allocation; integration of faith based organizations.

The issue of provision of services and service provider agencies was discussed, with people voicing that: the services provided must be connected and that expanding services available next to St. Mary's would be difficult because it's located next to private businesses.

The creation of a tent City was discussed, with people stating that: from what's been portrayed in the media, creating a tent city should be easy; that some who live in tent cities choose that lifestyle; there could be different levels of tent cities, according to size and structure; a tent city is only a temporary solution and therefore not a good idea.

The matter of housing was discussed with people stating that: in general, the cost of housing is too high; in order for more housing to be available to the homeless population, housing must become much more affordable, property managers will need to lower their expectations regarding income level, past history of criminal conviction and/or eviction; the cost of housing will need to be subsidized.

The group discussed what the focus of the task force should be, with people asking questions, such as: What sector of the homeless population should the group focus on chronic/episodic/transitional?; Should the group focus on intensifying and/or expanding our existing services?; What does the group want to address: managing homelessness or ending homelessness?

The following are suggestions of what the task force group could do: hold weekly meetings of any committee or council formed, including representatives from all service sectors; try to reinstate detox services; address the episodically and chronically homeless persons who are costing the city the most money via utilization of emergency services, such as police and hospital; foster effective communication among service providers; begin outreach efforts at the grassroots level; find effective ways to bring business community stakeholders on board.

It was recognized by the group that addressing this issue is timely, given the economic climate, the high rates of foreclosure in Stockton, and the recent media coverage on Sacramento's homeless population. The group also recognized that addressing this issue is extremely challenging, given that there are scarce public resources and fierce competition for any state and/or federal dollars to address the problem. It was agreed that there is no one solution to the problem, but rather a comprehensive approach is necessary in moving ahead.

At the end of the meeting it was decided that the task force should be called the Community Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition's next meeting will be held on April 8, 2009, at 8:30 am at the Stribley Community Center, located at 1760 East Sonora Street.

For more information about the Coalition, including how you can become involved, please contact Connie Cochran, City of Stockton Public Information Officer, at (209) 937-8827.