

Sonoma County Community Development Committee



Human Services Dept. Representative: Oscar Chavez (Chair), Tenant Representatives: Stephanie Hiller, Jessica Vega  
1<sup>st</sup> Dist: Betzy Chavez (Vice Chair) 2<sup>nd</sup> Dist: Vacant 3<sup>rd</sup> Dist: Karin Davis 4<sup>th</sup> Dist: Willie Lamberson 5<sup>th</sup> Dist: Linda Garcia  
Executive Director: Margaret Van Vliet

**Regular Meeting and Public Hearing  
Wednesday, March 20, 2019**

**Minutes**

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Oscar Chavez called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. and roll was called.

CD Committee Members Present: Oscar Chavez, Betzy Chavez, Willie Lamberson, Linda Garcia, Stephanie Hiller, Jessica Vega

CD Committee Members Absent: Karin Davis

CDC Staff Present: Margaret Van Vliet, Executive Director; Geoffrey Ross, Assistant Executive Director; Angela Morgan, Affordable Housing Finance Associate; Darrin O’Hara, Administrative Aide; Felicity Gasser, Federal Funding Administrator; Maria Contreras, Affordable Housing Finance Specialist; Martha Cheever, Housing Authority Manager; Sonya Keller, Executive Assistant

**2. Public Comments for Items Not on the Agenda**

Victoria Yanez with Homeless Action! stated that one of her greatest concerns for helping homeless in Sonoma County is the way the General Assistance program works. She felt that the General Assistance was meant to provide for “those with no other means of support” and should be looked at as a source of funding for homeless services. She also expressed concern about the way the police in the City of Santa Rosa are treating homeless people by giving them tickets and expressed hope that the Community Development Committee would have influence.

**3. Approval of Minutes from February 20, 2019 Meeting**

Willie Lamberson expressed concern about the use of the word “resented” under item 5 in the minutes. He did not feel that it was a word he used and that “disappointed” or “concerned” would have been more reflective of the sentiments he was attempting to express.

Linda Garcia moved that the minutes be approved. Betzy Chavez seconded.

Ayes: Jessica Vega, Stephanie Hiller, Oscar Chavez, Willie Lamberson

Nays: None

Abstain: None

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Absent: Karin Davis

### **4. Equity in Access to Housing & Opportunity**

Margaret Van Vliet, Executive Director, gave a brief presentation on how all Commission work can further equity access to housing and opportunity for marginalized populations. She explained that the Commission's priorities over the next year will reflect a focus on social equity as a way to inform the Commissions work in a deeper way. The Commission will not only comply with the requirements under the law, but will go further—asking tough questions of itself and inviting meaningful conversations about how it can do its work or make changes in the administration of its programs to address structural inequities. She asked that the Commission bring this lens to its work in the coming months.

Oscar Chavez expressed gratitude that the topic was brought forward. He stated that addressing these issues requires a candid assessment of what is happening in our community and a humility on the part of those who hold positions of power. He expressed a hope that the Committee will create an environment that puts equity at the center and acknowledges a history of structural bias in the distribution of resources. Stephanie Hiller stated that she hoped the Committee and Commission would also address the larger economic structure in terms of who is buying and selling real estate. She felt that a lot depended on what CASA does in the coming year and upcoming legislation.

Margaret Van Vliet clarified that local government provides core safety net services (such as human services, public services, and housing vouchers) which developers cannot touch. She explained that, when the local government takes federal money, it must address inequities, and there are issues that the Community Development Commission has the power to address.

### **5. Action Item: Changes to Bylaws**

The Committee discussed how it can better clarify its scope and debated what type of tool could be used to better define the domain of the Committee. Willie Lamberson expressed concern over the Committee or the Commission changing practices in a way that is not consistent with the ordinance of 1984 and its subsequent amendments.

A motion was made by Oscar Chavez to form an ad hoc committee to review the Committee's bylaws. It was seconded by Linda Garcia. Jessica Vega requested that the Committee discuss the matter further at this time.

The Committee and staff of the Commission engaged in a discussion regarding which

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tool would be most appropriate to clarify the role and scope of the Committee's domain revised bylaws or a charter. As an example of what needs to be clarified for the Committee, Willie Lamberson brought up the nomination and appointment of new Committee members. The staff clarified that the September 19, 2018 memo from staff regarding committee bylaws—which requested changes to the way in which tenant representatives are nominated to align with the nomination process for other Committee members—was an attempt to avoid having a process that could potentially lead to inequity between members of the Committee.

The motion to create an ad hoc committee to review bylaws (brought by Oscar Chavez & seconded by Linda Garcia) was brought back to the floor.

Ayes: Betzy Chavez, Jessica Vega, Stephanie Hiller, Willie Lamberson

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Karin Davis

Willie Lamberson volunteered to chair the ad hoc committee. Jessica Vega and Betzy Chavez volunteered to also sit on the ad hoc committee. The ad hoc committee will work with staff to set up a process and timeline and report back to the full committee.

### **6. Public Hearing: Public Housing Authority Draft Annual Plan**

#### **A. Open Public Hearing: Chair, Oscar Chavez, opened the public hearing at 10:51 a.m.**

Martha Cheever, Housing Authority Manager, presented a draft annual plan for public comment and Committee recommendation.

#### **B. Committee Discussion**

Stephanie Hiller expressed that communities could have concerns about the policy that individuals who are required to register as sex-offenders are subject to a lifetime ban from participation in the HCV program, but someone convicted of murder is not. While understanding that some minor crimes should be overlooked, she expressed worries about violent crimes, including domestic violence that may not show in a shortened background check that could impact the safety of the community.

Staff responded that the change in policy is to reduce the look-back period from five-years to three-years, given that the research has shown that if a person has gone three years without committing a crime, they are no more likely to be repeat offenders than someone with a 5 year lookback.

Jessica Vega expressed that the change in criminal background look-back period

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would help people overcome difficulties and obstacles that may have led to past criminal activity.

Linda Garcia expressed support of the Move-On program and felt that more education with community partners would make the program more successful

Oscar Chavez expressed support of the recommendations and noted that the Annual Plan is a positive step towards true program equity.

### **C. Public Comment**

Victoria Yanez with Homeless Action! said that, a month ago when she had received notification by phone from coordinated entry that she was going to receive a Section 8 voucher, they asked her two questions about whether she had a history with drugs or violence, but nothing more. She has since not heard anything.

An anonymous gentleman commented that the previous speaker had not indicated whether the questions she was asked addressed time limits on the questions about history with drugs or violence.

### **D. Recommendations for PHA Plan Approval**

Willie Lamberson moved to approve the Draft Annual Plan. Jessica Vega seconded.

Ayes: Betzy Chavez, Linda Garcia, Oscar Chavez, Stephanie Hiller

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Karin Davis

### **E. Close Public Hearing**

Chair Chavez closed the hearing from public comment at 11:09 a.m.

## **7. Fair Housing-Related Services Set-Aside**

### **A. Staff Presentation**

Felicity Gasser, Federal Funding Administrator, presented to the Committee the memorandum regarding Fair Housing-Related Services Staff Report so that the Committee could hear public comment, discuss, and provide feedback to staff on how to incorporate Fair Housing-related services into the Draft FY 2019-2020 Action Plan

Willie Lamberson asked staff about the proposed telephone hotline and asked whether there was a cost analysis. Felicity Gasser explained that one had not been

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done, but that the Committee could direct the staff to do an analysis. Geoffrey Ross, Assistant Executive Director, clarified that a coordinated hotline does not exist. While individual providers may have a phone number and be able to give out contact information for other services, there is no central, coordinated line.

Linda Garcia asked about where additional funds might come from if the \$175,000 set aside for Fair Housing-related Services was not sufficient to do all that is needed to meet Fair-housing Services requirements. Geoffrey Ross clarified that the staff are asking the committee to consider various funding sources. The plan is currently being brought in draft form in order to give the Committee opportunity and time to consider options. Betzy Chavez expressed gratitude for the transparency of the current level of communication from the staff regarding funding and expressed a desire to see more funds go to support mental health services.

### **B. Public Comment:**

Ronit Rubinoff from Legal Aid of Sonoma County stated that Legal Aid did not check the box in their application regarding providing a telephone hotline, because they do not provide coordination via their phone line. However, Legal Aid does have a phone line by which clients can reach staff who answer questions, provide screening, and set appointments to meet with people. She also stated that the money provided in the recommendations is \$80,000 short of what they need to continue their program. She expressed gratitude to the Committee for addressing issues of equity and stated that they see a disproportionate number of Spanish-speaking clients affected by fair-housing related issues.

Caroline Peattie from Fair Housing Advocates of Sonoma County commented on the question of providing a hotline. She stated that there is a difference between fair housing and tenant/landlord counseling. They do have a number that receives calls from the public. They will refer callers to services as needed, but they do not provide tenant/landlord counseling, as it would eat into time needed for fair housing work. She also expressed that the collaboration between Legal Aid of Sonoma County and Fair Housing that has happened in the past year has been very helpful to the work.

### **C. Committee Discussion:**

Geoffrey Ross, Commission Assistant Executive Director, clarified that the application question around a hotline had to do with a centralized hotline that coordinated efforts across all providers.

Oscar Chavez expressed a desire to see a requirement that there be a system of

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coordination followed by discussion between the providers and the staff around what that looks like.

Chair Chavez called a lunch break at 11:49 p.m.

### **8. CDBG and HOME Capital Projects**

Chair Chavez resumed the meeting at 12:07 p.m.

#### **A. Staff Presentation**

Felicity Gasser gave a short presentation of the Draft Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Action Plan from the Community Development Commission.

#### **B. Public Comment:**

Ann Valentine, Lake Kowell, and Suzie Lindsay with Disability Services and Legal Center commented that the grant the organization received in 2016-2017 took time to spend down because they did not receive the funds until January 2018. They explained that the reasons for the delay in delivery of funds were personnel changes and process changes in CDBG. She explained that, historically, the organization has had problems with contractors, which slowed them down, and that the recent floods have slowed them down as well. She stated that the average cost has gone up to at least \$6,500 per case, which does not include environmental factors. She stated that the clients are predominantly seniors who are fragile and who need to stay in their homes. She stated, with the goal of keeping seniors in their homes as much as possible, they have done a lot of outreach in the past year and have a lot of mobile home providers to come give presentations.

#### **C. Committee Discussion:**

Willie Lamberson stated that the staff had reported that Disability Services had enough money to get through the next 18 months and asked whether Disability Services was saying that they had spent the money. They clarified that they are in the process of spending the funds.

Oscar Chavez asked for clarification from staff on options for addressing timeliness, including whether the funds could be awarded and then taken back if they were not spent down in time. Geoffrey Ross confirmed that the Commission could reprogram funds not spent in a timely manner.

#### **D. Public Comment:**

Frank Bell, General Manager and CEO of the Sea Ranch Association stated that the 45

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units, which were acquired by Burbank Housing Rehab Fund, are in serious need of rehabilitation, due to the impacts of the costal environment. He passed on a letter of support for the funding.

Mark Krug with Burbank Housing asked for a correction. He stated that page 30 of the agenda packet listed the sponsor of Caritas Homes as Catholic Charities, but that it is actually Burbank Housing. He clarified that Caritas Village is the overall project, for which Catholic Charities is the landowner and master planner, under which there are 3 elements—Caritas Center, Homes Phase 1, and Homes Phase 2. Homes phases 1 and 2 are in partnership with Catholic Charities and Burbank Housing with Burbank Housing taking the lead. Mark Krug confirmed that Burbank Housing expected to get No Place Like Home funding and possibly CDBG disaster money from the City of Santa Rosa in the next few months.

Ria Pacca, a member of the public, expressed gratitude for the opportunity for a public meeting. She said that she was not asking for money, but for an opportunity to form community among people who are homeless. She expressed concern for those on the street and the PTSD that they suffer from even one night out on the street. She expressed concern that police take away sleeping bags and that the community does not have the ability to help one another. She asked that the County find a legal way to use its County-owned land to provide a place for people without homes to settle. She stated that the situation is not one of “homelessness,” but is a refugee situation and that, with the resources at the disposal of the County, the county community should be able to provide a place for people to be safe and dry by providing tarps or homes.

Lloyd (no last name given) expressed concern that funds are being allocated to sidewalk repair that could be allocated to address the needs of the lowest population. He stated that he admired the effort of staff, but that the staff come at a costly history of education and training that others may not have. He expressed concern that the voices of those who do not have that education and training may not be heard.

### **E. Committee Discussion:**

Linda Garcia asked that the Committee be brought out to more site visits or that site visits be brought to them via presentation so that they can understand in real terms the communities and the people who are impacted by funding decisions.

The staff and the Committee clarified that homelessness services funding is now on a parallel track and is being considered at the March 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Home

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Sonoma County Leadership Council. The decisions of the Community Development Committee and the Home Sonoma County Leadership Counsel will both go into the finalized 2015 Consolidated Plan FY 2019-2020 One Year Action Plan for Use of Funds.

### 9. Discussion: Committee Calendar

The committee had a discussion about the future calendar, what they would like to see on agendas, and future meeting times and locations. Oscar Chavez asked that the committee look at varying location and times of the meeting so that members of the public from other areas and with other schedules could participate. Linda Garcia asked that, if a meeting were scheduled for the evening, it be done before the end of Daylight Savings so that people do not have to travel back and forth in the dark. The Committee also asked that, when field trips are arranged, they be done to varying types of locations, not just the best sites. Linda Garcia asked that **The Committee** be shown sites that were denied funding as well as those that have been funded.

### 10. Adjournment

Chair Chavez adjourned the meeting at 1 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Sonya Keller, Executive Assistant