Homeless Commission

ACTION CALENDAR
October 29, 2013

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Homeless Commission

Submitted by: Kenneth Peterson, Member and Carole Marasovic, Chair, Homeless Commission

Subject: Homeless Commission Site Visit Plan

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution allowing the Homeless Commission to conduct 18 visits to City-funded homeless services provider sites during calendar year 2014, in addition to the Commission's regular meetings, and pursuant to the site visit plan submitted as part of this report.

SUMMARY

The Homeless Commission is recommending that the Council approve a site visit plan that would allow site visits of all funded programs before each future funding application review period, to assist the Commission in preparation of funding and policy recommendations. The Commission sees such site visits as crucial to this recommendation process. All Commission members would be allowed to attend each site visit. City rules would be altered to allow Commission quorum site visit attendance without staff present. The site visits would be coordinated and overseen by a Commission officer or a commissioner designated by the Commission chairperson. City cost for this plan's implementation would be minimal.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Minimal costs.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Currently site visits involving the full Commission are not allowed by staff, as staff will not provide staffing for such site visits as required by City administrative rules. Therefore the Commission cannot conduct provider site visits allowing full Commission attendance, necessary for the development of funding and policy recommendations to the Council.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the homeless program site visits is two-fold: as a general learning tool, and to prepare for application review and scoring. Site visits serve not only as a source of valuable information for the RFP review process but also provide insights important to

the assessment of other issues on which the Commission is working. It is an opportunity for commissioners to see firsthand the programs being funded by the City as well as to speak directly with the participants of these programs. Without these visits the Commission cannot gain the insight necessary to make informed recommendations to the City and are therefore integral to the Commission's purpose. Thus it is important that site visits be included as a permanent and formal Commission activity, and that all commissioners attend each site visit as is possible. Breaking site visits up into subcommittees would detract from these goals and is not practical given the small number of commissioners.

The Commission's last site visits were held previous to the 2010–2011 provider funding application review period. The full Commission was allowed to attend each site visit and staff was present at each visit. No similar site visits were performed for the 2012–2013 application reviews as staff declined to give necessary staff support due to perceived staffing shortages. Staff has stated that full Commission site visits will not be allowed in the future for the same staffing reasons and because of concern for the visits' additional work load for the providers. Commissioners found the last site visits to be highly beneficial in the development of funding and policy recommendations. Providers were well-prepared to receive the Commission for these visits, and appeared to see them as valuable opportunities to demonstrate the value of their programs to the Commission.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Passage of this resolution will allow commissioners to perform site visits necessary for adequate development of knowledge and understanding of provider programs and the needs of the homeless in order to make funding and policy recommendations toward fulfilling these needs. With adoption of this plan by the City, site visit coordination and oversight will be performed by a Commission officer or a lead commissioner appointed by the Commission chairperson rather than City staff, therefore requiring minimal time and staffing costs to the City.

The entire proposed Commission site visit plan is as follows, as approved by unanimous Commission vote for recommendation to the Council (M/S/C: Becker/Della-Piana; Ayes: Becker, Chu, Della-Piana, Gresher, Nado, Panzer, Peterson; Noes: None; Abstentions: None; Absent: Davis, Marasovic):

Below are the proposed elements of the Commission site visit plan:

- Commission quorums are expected at each site visit but staff will not be required to attend. Site visit coordination and oversight will be performed by a Commission officer or a commissioner appointed by the Chairperson. A commissioner's absence from any site visit will not be counted as an attendance deficiency.
- All site visits will have an established time frame, and all commissioners must leave at the planned end time.

- The provider staff will be expected to present an overview of their program and presentations as appropriate by program staff that have direct client contact, lead a tour of the site, and provide commissioners with an opportunity to speak with participants if possible.
- Questions for the providers and clients shall be professionally posed, objective, and neutral. In order to maintain these standards commissioners' questions shall be monitored by the chairperson, vice chairperson, or if neither officer is in attendance a lead commissioner appointed by the chairperson.
- Site visit schedule: The site visit schedule will allow for visits covering all funded programs; this will require a maximum of 18 site visits for the next application review period, to be conducted on a calendar schedule determined by the Commission and staff. There will be only one site visit per day. This plan will be in force for future funding rounds unless altered or cancelled by the Council.
- Commission meeting agenda items will include discussion of the previous month's site visits and development of written questions to be asked of the previous month's providers that were visited; this correspondence to providers is to be approved by motion of the Commission.
- The City stipend policy shall not apply to Commission site visits.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

One alternative action considered was to revert back to the site visit policy used in the last funding round, where the full Commission was allowed to attend each site visit and staff was present at each visit. Another alternative considered was a recommendation by staff that would allow visits by a Commission subcommittee to avoid the need for staff presence under existing City rules, thus not allowing all Commissioners to visit each site, although all commissioners are involved in funding decisions for all agencies and development of all policy recommendations. Also, the staff plan requires that each visit be a maximum of one hour, and that three visits be completed back-to-back on each day of visits. This plan would be impracticable due to the extremely short time period and demanding schedule, and the blocking of a majority of commissioners from visiting each site.

CITY MANAGER

See City Manager companion report.

CONTACT PERSON

Andrew Wicker, Community Services Specialist II, HH&CS, (510) 981-5418

Attachment

1. Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

HOMELESS COMMISSION SITE VISIT PLAN

WHEREAS, on-site reviews of homeless program provider's services are crucial to the Commission's development of policy and funding recommendations to the Council; and

WHEREAS, presently there is no consistent, permanent program provider site visit plan.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the Homeless Commission is authorized to conduct 18 site visits to community agencies during calendar year 2014, in addition to the Commission's regular meetings, and pursuant to the description of the site visit plan as follows:

Homeless Commission site visit plan:

- Commission quorums are expected at each site visit but staff will not be required to attend. Site visit coordination and oversight will be performed by a Commission officer or a commissioner appointed by the Chairperson. A commissioner's absence from any site visit will not be counted as an attendance deficiency.
- All site visits will have an established time frame, and all commissioners must leave at the planned end time.
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