



Homeless Commission

ACTION CALENDAR
May 8, 2007

To: Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council

From: Homeless, Mental Health, and Human Welfare and Community Action
Commissions

Submitted by: Jennifer Vasquez, Secretary, Homeless Commission
Carol Patterson, Secretary, Mental Health Commission
Angellique Decoud, Secretary, Human Welfare and Community Action
Commission

Subject: Public Commons for Everyone Initiative – Commission Input

RECOMMENDATION

The Homeless, Mental Health, and Human Welfare and Community Action Commissions recommend the Mayor and City Council to not take any action on May 8, 2007 on any of the proposals and recommendations contained in the Public Commons for Everyone Initiative or the City Manager's workplan submitted to Council on March 27, 2007. Additionally, the Commissions recommend that:

- The Mayor and Council direct staff to provide additional information in order for the Commissions to properly advise the Mayor and Council. Without more detailed information, the Commissions believe they cannot support any elements of the proposal or workplan items.
- The Mayor and Council allocate more money to a variety of needed services.
- The Mayor, Council, and staff consult with the Commissions throughout the development of staff recommendations for implementation.
- The Mayor hold a joint meeting with the Homeless Commission, the Mental Health Commission, and the Human Welfare and Community Action Commission to discuss the PCEI and staff workplan, preferably prior to May 8, 2007 City Council meeting.

Additionally, the Human Welfare and Community Action Commission recommends:

- Encourage dialogue to find a humane and positive way to promote health, safety, and accessibility throughout Berkeley while protecting human rights.
- Receive additional proposals from those most effected.
- Provide information on proposed future meetings regarding the City Mangers' workplan.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Staff time to prepare proposals and consult with Commissions during the development of the recommendations.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The Commissions believe that any action taken on May 8, 2007 would be premature and would have detrimental impacts by further disenfranchising homeless and mentally ill individuals. The Commissions implore the Mayor, Council, and City staff to develop detailed proposals that can be discussed among key stakeholders, including relevant Commissions, before adopting any implementation strategies.

BACKGROUND

On March 13, 2007, the Mayor and Council directed the City Manager to have staff develop a comprehensive package of recommendations and return to Council on May 8, 2007. Included in the PCEI, was a recommendation to seek input from the Homeless, Mental Health, and Human Welfare and Community Action Commissions. Following scheduling procedures, the PCEI was included as an action item for the next possible Homeless Commission on April 11, 2007. In preparation for its April 11, 2007 meeting, Homeless Commissioners reviewed the PCEI, the City Manager's workplan submitted to Council on March 27, 2007, and articles in numerous publications regarding public opinion on the PCEI. At the meeting, they heard testimony from the public. After deliberating, the Homeless Commission came to a unanimous conclusion that they did not have enough information to properly advise the Mayor and Council on actions to adopt at the May 8, 2007 Council meeting. The Homeless Commission developed recommendations mentioned above as well as a list of key questions they would like answered to further assess PCEI and staff recommendations.

The Human Welfare and Community Action Commission met on April 18, 2007 and discussed the PCEI and the City Manager's workplan. Though mayoral staff answered many of the Commissioners' questions, Commissioners still felt that they needed more detail to adequately advise the Mayor and Council on how to fairly and humanely implement PCEI.

The Mental Health Commission held its annual retreat on April 12 in lieu of its regular meeting but did not agenda an action item on the Public Commons for Everyone Initiative. However, the Mental Health Commission discussed PCEI at some length, including the City Manager's workplan summary submitted to Council on March 27. The sense of the Commission was that there is serious concern with the implications of PCEI, including elements of the City Manager's workplan, for people with mental illnesses, and for people who are homeless and/or poor. Commissioners felt they needed more information before soliciting public comment on the PCEI and forming a position. The Mental Health Commission also wishes to be actively involved in the planning process for this initiative.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Homeless, Mental Health, and Human Welfare and Community Action Commissions believe that more detailed information is needed in order for them to provide a meaningful and thoughtful response to the proposal and workplan recommendations. The Commissions believe the answers to the below questions, as well as others, are needed in order for them to properly evaluate and provide meaningful input on this matter.

1. What will the process be for issuing citations and diverting individuals to services?
2. Will City staff be working with Traffic Court Commissioner Rantzman in developing the diversion to services process?
3. What types of diversion services will be available? Will this include increased access to affordable housing that meets diverse needs? (Commissioners believe that a variety of programs and services are needed not just Alcohol and other Drug programs.)
4. Why is a law on public urination and defecation needed? Will the City be exploring increasing the number of public restrooms and/or increasing the number of hours public restrooms are now available?
5. Why is there a need for laws to prohibit sitting and lying on City sidewalks?

CITY MANAGER

See companion report.

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