

Advisory Council on Aging (ACOA) Housing Workgroup

Meeting Minutes – June 15, 2020

Present: Gerry Richards (Chair; ACOA), Annette Balter (Co-Chair; Covia), Lisa Hicks (Independent Living Resources), Taylor Kimber (Office of Congressman DeSaulnier), Caitlin Sly (Meals on Wheels Diablo Region), Gabriela Perez (Home Match), Victoria Snyder (Contra Costa Senior Legal Services), Nhang Luong (Staff Support; Area Agency on Aging), Mariana Moore (Ensuring Opportunity), Hector Malvido (Ensuring Opportunity), and Cindy Smith (Volunteer & Emergency Services)

Minutes and Agenda - Minutes approved

Sales Tax Initiative Presentation - Mariana Moore, Ensuring Opportunity

- Other jurisdiction passed housing bonds in 2016. Contra Costa did not have political will at the time.
- 2018 and 2019 – Broad conversations with Supervisor Gioia about how to better fund safety net programs. Budget Justice Coalition was involved. Realization that Contra Costa County lack unrestricted/general funds.
- Fall of last year – Board of Supervisors (BOS) Finance Director and staff did analysis and found that sales tax most likely to pass and generate most revenue.
- General tax requires 50% of votes to pass. Tax would generate unrestricted general fund, which is useful for addressing emergent needs. Potential downside - BOS priorities might not align with community needs/wishes.
- Supervisors Gioia and Mitchoff led ad hoc committee to work through details of potential measure.
- Ad hoc committee appointed working group. Meetings complied with Brown Act, and composition of work group left open.
- Mariana Moore and Central Labor Council co-chaired the ad hoc committee.
- Charge was to create needs assessment. Early education/learning, housing, health, and safety net explored in needs assessment.
- Poll conducted by firm asked residents about priorities and needs.
- Top three needs: housing, food insecurity, and employment. (Poll conducted first week of shelter-at-home.)
- Not detailed out but spending on housing would likely be for housing production and tenant protection.
- Next steps –Mariana Moore and Central Labor Council will present to BOS and present new poll results. New poll will be of 600 frequent voters to gauge support in midst of pandemic.
- Key step – Sponsor by Senator Bill Glazer, SB 1349 authorizes Contra Costa County, if approved by voters, to impose tax rate no more than .5%.
- BOS – By Aug 7, need to vote on whether or not to support putting tax measure on the ballot.
- Supervisor Gioia is supportive; other Supervisors might be on the fence. Supervisor Mitchoff seen as key vote.

Information Sharing: Victoria Snyder – Landlords are taking matters in their own hands, evicting tenants by changing locks, etc. Tenants can call local law enforcement to help get back in. Refer tenants to Contra Costa Senior Legal Services for help.

Season of Sharing (SOS) Presentation: Cindy Smith, Program Coordinator, Volunteer and Emergency Services

- SOS has been around for about 40 years. Chronicle Season of Sharing raises \$9 million annually for the nine Bay Area Counties.
- It is primarily a rental assistance/crisis based program. Help if there is an eviction, disaster or other situations that is no fault of client or is beyond their control.
- Program helps prevent homelessness.
- Addresses critical family needs – one time help purchasing furniture, medical equipment (wheelchairs, medical bed).
- The assistance can be life changing for people who have lost home/jobs, especially now.
- SOS program in Contra Costa has 11 partner agencies that help process intake/applications for SOS assistance. Workers from CalWorks (county's welfare-to-work program) also assist with intake/applications.
- Last quarter, \$150,000 of aid was issue. Due to the pandemic, this quarter SOS granted over \$400,000 of aid to Contra Costa residents. There is an increase of Spanish speakers seeking help. (Due to immigration status, some cannot access unemployment benefits or other government assistance.) SOS can help pay rent up to 2 months.
- To qualify, must be 55 years old, disabled (includes temporarily disabled), veteran, emancipated youth, families with small children in the home, or victim of domestic violence (last 6 months).
- Mostly families applying right now but prior to pandemic, mostly seniors and disabled adults needed help.
- What qualifies as an emergency? Car repairs and funeral expenses, lost or stolen money does not qualify.
- There has only been a slight delay (maybe couple of days) to process applications due to pandemic. Some processes have been more efficient. Applicants currently not required to submit applications or documentations in-person.
- Requirements waived during pandemic that SOS only pay rents in the rears. Sustainability temporarily waived too. Opening up rent assistance for room rentals.
- Assistance is limited to once every 5 years. Have not relaxed this requirement during pandemic. Most people applying now are first-time applicants.
- Normally, SOS provides under a \$ 1 million of aid to Contra Costa residents annually. With Covid-19, SOS spent \$500,000 in just the last three months. They have not had to ask for more money.
- Checks are disburse weekly.
- What documentations are required? Signed lease agreement with terms and contact information. Copies of SSN cards or Driver's License (no SSN card is fine), proof of income, and proof of crisis (back rent). Assistance does not cover voluntary moving.
- Must have lease agreement. Would a receipt work? No. Cindy agreed to bring up with Season of Sharing Foundation because tenants do not always have lease agreements. SOS is willing to review on case-by-case basis.
- Home Match helps their clients put together lease agreements. Gabriela Perez from Home Match offer to assist if SOS clients need help.
- SOS verifies home ownership with Assessor's office to make sure rent checks are going to the right person.
- Individual lives in car and it breaks down, can SOS assist? If need car repair to go to work, that is a possibility. Generally, SOS does not pay for car repairs or assist with rents if tenant fall behind due to car repair.

- Clients with disabilities – need help with completing applications or extra support can contact Meals on Wheels Diablo Region or Independent Living Resources
- 925-521-5065 - Season of Sharing Hotline number

Information sharing:

- Housing Work Group is schedule to present at ACOA August meeting.
- There is an initiative on ballot to modify Proposition 13 that makes distinction between commercial and residential in order to bring up tax rates for commercial properties.

Next Meeting: Monday, July 20, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.