

Minutes of the Santa Cruz Committee to End Homelessness

March 29, 2022, at 2pm

Members Present:

Cristina Benitez, ADOH

Paul David, Graham County Supervisor

Yara Castro and Stephanie Zepeda, Mariposa Community Clinics

Edna Olea, Pinal Hispanic Council

Helen Sanchez and Terrance Watkins, Community Partners Inc.

Rosa E. Lopez-Moreno and Kassandra Figueroa, HOPE, Inc.

Keith Dennis, SEAGO

The meeting began at 2:05pm. Keith Dennis announced that SEAGO is hiring a Community Coordinator whose duties will include supporting the C of Cs around the SEAGO region. He then congratulated the new Santa Cruz LCEH for their efforts on the recent PIT Count, which is significant as this is the first time that PIT Count data has been collected from Santa Cruz. Cristina Benitez then said a few words about how important the PIT count is, including how Arizona's C of C efforts are funded from HUD based on PIT count data.

Terrance Watkins then talked about how the Balance of State Governance Advisory Board has been trying to make a PIT count happen in Santa Cruz County for several years. He praised the efforts of the Santa Cruz LCEH, and his colleagues consider this a major milestone.

Keith then introduced Supervisor Paul David from Graham County, who was invited to observe the meeting as he is interested in addressing homelessness in Graham County. Supervisor David gave a brief description of ongoing efforts to address homelessness in his County, and his interest in fostering a C of C in Graham County. Dennis built off his comments, explaining how a new C of C in the last remaining gaps in the BOS CoC in Arizona could have a positive impact on efforts to end homelessness in the SEAGO region. Benitez linked these efforts to increased provisions for social, medical, housing and behavioral health services and integrating efforts across various sectors.

Dennis then moved on to the next agenda item, BNL/HMIS updates. Yara Castro mentioned discussions/negotiations between ADOH, Solari the company providing the HMIS software and Mariposa Clinics in order to obtain HMIS licensing for Mariposa. This will allow Mariposa to become a formal access point. Watkins mentioned HOPE Inc is exploring becoming an HMIS licensee and an access point as well. He asked Dennis whether SEAGO might be able to assist with licensing fees. Dennis indicated this is neither likely nor impossible. Benitez indicated she is working on getting licensing fees taken care of on behalf of Mariposa. Dennis then briefly explained how the HMIS/CE/BNL process works.

Yara asked whether Mariposa, HOPE and Pinal Hispanic would be the only access points in Santa Cruz. Community Health Associates might also become an access point. Benitez said CHA has one person entering all their clients from a place in Yuma. But the licenses were no longer active as of October 2021. Licenses paid by AZ Complete Health are no longer active. But new access points and licenses are possible (with training). Watkins: so neither CHA nor Pinal Hispanic have licenses currently. Benitez: correct.

Watkins and Benitez then had a discussion about the rules, procedures and allowances around existing and future access points including hypothetical points and explorations of how best to provide VISPDATs and referrals to match clients with housing. Benitez talked about how the Balance of State covers over 13,000 square miles yet works with a diminished amount of funding compared with larger urban areas. And that Balance of State is a very large and diverse area, and it depends on local volunteers, their advocacy, dedication and leadership to get the job done. Castro asked if the Nogales Housing Authority could become an access point, and Benitez said that would be their decision. Castro suggested approaching Nogales' PHA about this and explaining why, whereupon a brief discussion around this issue took place. Dennis asked Benitez if CoC contract funding amounts from ADOH are dependent on a demonstrated need, and a brief discussion around this took place.

Castro asked if there are additional funds available for housing in Santa Cruz County, and Watkins described how the new Santa Cruz LCEH means those resources can now be available for use in Santa Cruz through the auspices of the new LCEH. HMIS licensing is the only remaining task to be completed to become fully operational and begin to take advantage of these resources.

Benitez and Watkins talked about potential resources coming available for housing of various types.

Dennis then moved to the next agenda item, namely the Santa Cruz LCEH need to adopt a strategic action plan. He mentioned this will be taken care of in the coming months, but mentioned one potential goal of convening an affordable housing summit in Nogales. He mentioned not wanting to get bogged down in "meeting mongering" but said that planning and developing housing plans, units, and so on will require some planning and perhaps pulling potential funders and stakeholders into contact with each other. Dennis then went through some of the various potential strategic action plan goals the LCEH may want to consider. There was discussion about the local Nogales homeless shelter and how to bring them into the LCEH as a partner. Dennis stressed that the new action plan need not be all-inclusive and comprehensive at first. Instead, we need to just get started building the plan for the sake of building momentum, and it may be wise to simply take two of the provided template goals, or our own locally crafted goals, especially those that might be easily achievable, and try to make those a reality instead of creating a large, comprehensive plan. There was discussion about the various template-provided goals including bringing in faith-based participation in the LCEH.

Paul David then mentioned, regarding faith-based organizations participating in tackling homelessness, there is a need for coordination across various participating churches so that efforts are coordinated and not duplicated. He indicated a C of C/LCEH in Graham County could be the solution in this regard.

Keith asked the degree to which churches in Nogales are involved in their own efforts around homelessness. Stephanie Zepeda mentioned that at least a couple are involved, Edna indicated these churches could be recruited into the LCEH, especially if the LCEH can demonstrate that it is effective and making a difference already. Dennis then veered into yet another digression, this time about something called "stone soup."

Dennis then moved to the next item, around the mandate for equity and social justice policies in the LCEH policies and plans. He mentioned how the Cochise LCEH is working on this, and offered to share the results so far (a powerpoint with ideas for such policies presented to the Cochise LCEH recently). Dennis brought up the Cochise powerpoint with policy proposals and went through their ideas.

Dennis closed the meeting by announcing future meeting dates for the LCEH and By Name List meetings.

Benitez thanked the coalition for their efforts and progress. Edna said when should these policies and social justice goals need to be completed. Dennis gave the coalition "homework:" Pick one policy goal from the template provided, and think of something specific for Santa Cruz that is not on the list and bring them to the next meeting, and we will rank those choices and start a working draft of a strategic action plan. Yara mentioned she would like to see more participation from other stakeholders before formally adopting a plan that did not have their buy-in. Dennis agreed: if we can get a draft into place and keep it on the agenda for the next few months until we do get participation and feedback on the draft. The group agreed to this.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 3:38pm.

Next meeting: April 26th at 2pm.