

MEETING MINUTES

Our City, Our Home Oversight Committee
September 28, 2023
Hearing Room 416, City Hall
9:35 AM – 11:35 AM

Committee Members

Nina Catalano
Michelle Cunningham-Denning
Julia D'Antonio
Jennifer Friedenbach
Bonnie Preston
Scott Walton
Shanell Williams

Members of the Our City, Our Home Oversight Committee attended this meeting in-person. The agenda, video recording, audio recording, and caption notes are posted at:
https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=209.

Supporting materials including presentations and reports are posted at:
<https://sf.gov/meeting/september-28-2023/our-city-our-home-oversight-committee-regular-meeting>

1) **Call to Order**

Vice Chair D'Antonio called the meeting to order at 9:35 AM.

Roll Call:

Member Catalano: Absent (excused)
Member Cunningham-Denning: Present
Vice Chair D'Antonio: Present
Member Friedenbach: Present
Member Preston: Present
Member Walton: Absent (excused)
Chair Williams: Present

Quorum confirmed.

Land Acknowledgement:

We acknowledge that we are on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone, who are the original inhabitants of the San Francisco Peninsula. As the indigenous stewards of this land and in accordance with their traditions, the Ramaytush Ohlone have never ceded, lost nor forgotten their responsibilities as the caretakers of this place, as well as for all peoples who reside in their traditional territory. As guests, we recognize that we benefit from living and working on their traditional homeland. We wish to pay our respects by acknowledging the ancestors, elders, and relatives of the Ramaytush Community and by affirming their sovereign rights as First Peoples.

2) **Opportunity for the public to comment on any matters within the Committee's jurisdiction that are not on the agenda.**

3) Action Item

Approval, with possible modification, of the meeting minutes from August 24, 2023

Vice Chair D'Antonio made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from August 24, 2023 and Member Cunningham-Denning seconded the motion.

Roll Call:

Member Catalano: Absent
Member Cunningham-Denning: Yes
Vice Chair D'Antonio: Yes
Member Friedenbach: Yes
Member Preston: Yes
Member Walton: Absent
Chair Williams: Yes

The motion passed and meeting minutes from August 24, 2023 were approved.

4) Discussion/Possible Action Item

Presentations from local providers serving sub-populations experiencing homelessness, including families, youth, and domestic violence survivors.

Joi Jackson-Morgan from 3rd Street Youth Center & Clinic introduced staff from the Housing Leadership team to provide the presentation: Bernah Posadas, Director of Housing and Adriana Embriz, Residential Program Director at the TAY Navigation Center. Ms. Posadas and Ms. Embriz provided the [presentation linked here](#) with an overview of their services provided, characteristics of clients served, progress made for youth experiencing homelessness, and existing gaps in services.

Member Preston asked where most of the referrals come from. Ms. Posadas said that the referrals for the Lower Polk TAY Navigation Center are managed by the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) guest placement unit which manages referrals from all community providers. For youth access points, most clients are walk-ins or hear about the program through word of mouth. Sometimes they get referrals from places that are not a youth access, but most are from community-based organizations.

Member Cunningham-Denning asked if there are any other TAY LGBTQIA providers that 3rd Street Youth Center & Clinic works with aside from LYRIC. Noting the smaller numbers of LGBTQIA youth, Member Cunningham-Denning asked if there is a barrier for that demographic in receiving services.

Ms. Posadas stated that the Lower Polk Navigation Center has seen an increase in referrals from the SF LGBTQ Center. She added that their staff have also asked for additional trainings to better train the staff to support the youth. They are also partnering with Dimensions to have on-site therapy at the Lower Polk TAY Navigation Center, specifically for the LGBTQIA community.

Member Cunningham-Denning offered to connect outside of the meeting to collaborate on providing services to this sub-population.

Beverly Upton, Executive Director of the San Francisco Domestic Violence Consortium (SFDVC) and Orchid Pusey, Executive Director of the Asian Women's Shelter, provided the [presentation linked here](#). Ms. Upton also provided a calendar of local activities for October which is Domestic Violence Awareness Month in the [handout linked here](#).

Erica Kisch, Chief Executive Officer of Compass Family Services, provided the [presentation linked here](#).

Chair Williams thanked the presenters and opened the floor for Committee discussion and questions. Vice Chair D'Antonio asked Ms. Upton and Ms. Pusey how many people are turned away from the domestic violence shelter system either monthly or annually.

Ms. Upton stated that there have been studies that have found that as many as 75% of people that are trying to get into a San Francisco domestic violence shelter are not able to get in the day that they call. She added that they have roughly 77 beds between the three domestic violence shelters in the city and that most of these people come in with families, leaving capacity for about 25 to 35 households at any given time. Ms. Pusey added that the crisis line they run never has a day of inactivity.

Vice Chair D'Antonio asked what types of housing exits are most successful.

Ms. Pusey explained that most of their clients can't get into permanent supportive housing. Most of the successful situations are through rapid rehousing but only when ongoing effort is put in to get extensions to two years to allow individuals to do educational programs, job training, English as a second language (ESL) training, workshops, etc. The goal is to have the client be able to show credit, rental, and paystub history to keep their apartment without a full-time advocate.

Member Cunningham-Denning asked whether presenters serve asylum-seeking individuals who come to sanctuary cities like San Francisco.

Ms. Pusey said that they are serving people seeking asylum and that Covid has made these situations worse due to delays in hearings. She added that these populations are especially at a disadvantage due to being often 'un-hirable' with no means of safely finding a source of income. She also added that these populations are rarely captured in data collected due to their asylum-seeking status.

Member Cunningham-Denning agreed that these situations are exacerbated because it can take years for these population to get their asylum status. During this time, they are relying on social services that are already being spread thin. Member Cunningham-Denning asked if there was any plan in place to address this challenge such as reaching out to Immigration Services.

Ms. Pusey explained that her organization has a support group for individuals seeking asylum for their Queer identities since there are very few resources but that there is no financial plan to address this.

Vice Chair D'Antonio asked if, before Coordinated Entry, exits out of transitional housing were different since individuals were no longer counted as unsheltered and therefore not receive priority to exit out of transitional housing.

Ms. Kisch said that many current transitional housing programs are modeled after Compass's program, Clara House, which opened in 1995 and focused on workforce so that families could go to school or training programs while children were in school or in on-site care.

Ms. Kisch stated that Compass is doing the best they can to preserve the positive things that their transitional housing model includes but that it is tricky because Coordinated Entry defines transitional housing as shelter. Compass has found that for families reuniting with their children, recovering from violence, or recovering from addiction, the program is a great way for the family to receive the intensive support they need while they work towards a living wage career.

Vice Chair D-Antonio asked if there should be more transitional housing for families as it exists currently or only if there was a change to distinguish shelter from transitional housing within Coordinated Entry.

Ms. Kisch said that there is a place for more transitional housing. She said that the system doesn't have enough varied options since rapid rehousing does not work for every family.

Ms. Pusey agreed that transitional housing was once used a lot and that there is still a need for diverse transitional housing options. Diversity is needed for unique families seeking unique services.

Ms. Posadas added that, as a Youth Access Point that does Coordinated Entry assessments, they are not able to make very many referrals to transitional housing, only about two to four a year out of hundreds of assessments. According to Ms. Posadas, Coordinated Entry slots are divided up in a way that larger organizations have more and the smaller organizations that have less. She stated that this puts smaller organizations in a position where they must create these slots internally. Ms. Posadas added that this scarcity of transitional housing slots can make Navigation Centers look like transitional housing while the need for more slots remains high.

Chair Williams thanked the presenters for their presentations and discussions. Chair Williams opened public comment.

There were no public comments in person or over the phone.

5) Discussion/Possible Action Item

Overview and discussion of unprogrammed TAY and family funds.

Gigi Whitley, Chief Deputy of Finance and Administrations at the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) provided the [presentation linked here](#) with a brief overview of options for unprogrammed funds in the OCOH youth housing and family housing categories.

Member Friedenbach thanked Deputy Director Whitley for the presentation and shared that she has been engaged in many conversations around possible uses of these funds over the past month. Additionally, the Coalition of Homelessness hosted a housing justice workgroup with parents and providers. Member Friedenbach shared that there was also a Housing Liaison meeting ([meeting notes are linked here](#)) and shared the proposal for using family and TAY funds in the [handout linked here](#).

Member Friedenbach explained that the one-time funds cannot be used on anything that requires ongoing operating costs. The funds can instead be used for things such as acquiring a building if alternative sources are found for operating costs, as well as short-term subsidies.

Member Friedenbach added that the Coalition on Homelessness has received a lot of feedback from families with lived experience of homelessness. She said that many families are saying that short-term subsidies are not working and that they would like to see longer-term subsidies. Member Friedenbach stated that especially in San Francisco with its incredibly high rents, longer-term subsidies are much more necessary for these families who are working towards increasing their income to a living wage.

Member Friedenbach stated that her proposal includes family acquisition funds of \$1 million which would help with purchasing a new building. The proposal also includes a five-year subsidy budgeted at \$40,000 per household per year for five years which would include support services and rental services. With \$25 million available in this category, about 125 families could be served.

Member Friedenbach noted that her proposal is part of an effort to ensure that this money is programmed for TAY and families so that it's not pulled for alternative uses or populations. While not as solidified as the family housing category proposal, the proposal for youth has more flexibility since that category includes ongoing unallocated funds. One provider had proposed an idea for acquiring a building with 33 units. The rapid rehousing proposal is for three-year subsidies for TAY and TAY impacted by interpersonal violence and also includes funding for ongoing flexible housing subsidy pool slots.

Chair Williams opened public comment.

Hope Kramer from Compass Family Services provided public comment affirming that Compass has been in conversation with the Coalition on Homelessness and other HESPA leaders and feels like this proposal would really meet a big unmet need that they're facing. Ms. Kamer added the caveat that they cannot take on 50 more subsidies without additional funding for staffing and physical space, but that they are working on this.

A speaker named Odina Hernandez gave public comment in Spanish and Juana Ramos offered to translate for her. Odina explained that she is from Honduras and that she has two children, a 5-year-old daughter and a 2-year-old daughter. She said that she is currently living in a shelter with her two children and that due to domestic violence, she was separated from her two kids. Ms. Hernandez explained that she received help from the Homeless Prenatal Program who helped her to be housed again and reconnect with her kids. Ms. Hernandez really appreciated the program and the effort that they have put in. She said it's very difficult to be separated from your children while staying in a shelter and all the help she has had is from these programs. Ms. Hernandez emphasized that everyone should have the right to be housed and to not be separated from their kids.

Chair Williams noted that she may need to limit public comment on this item as the Committee was about to lose quorum and a motion on the item had not yet been made. Secretary Huwald confirmed that the Committee is required to hear all in person public comments before any voting takes place. After this statement, there was no further in person public comment.

A speaker named Francisco D'Acosta provided public comment over the phone. He said that he was watching a program on television and that it was disrupted by the current meeting. He stated that he feels that this is utter nonsense and that there needs to be a task force for women and for children because no woman should be sleeping with their children in navigation centers.

Member Friedenbach made a motion recommending that the City urgently use \$1 million in unallocated family housing dollars for family housing acquisition and \$25 million in unallocated, one-time family housing funds to fund 125 five-year housing subsidies with support services for homeless families.

Member Cunningham-Denning seconded the motion. The Committee took a vote on the motion.

Roll Call:

Member Catalano: Absent
Member Cunnigham-Denning: Yes
Vice Chair D'Antonio: Yes
Member Friedenbach: Yes
Member Preston: Yes
Member Walton: Absent

Chair Williams: Yes

The motion passed.

6) Discussion/Possible Action Item

Future agenda items, with possible action by the Committee in response to this item.

Chair Williams tabled this agenda item.

7) Adjourn

Chair Williams requested a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Vice Chair D'Antonio moved to adjourn the meeting. Member Preston seconded the motion to adjourn.

Roll Call:

Member Catalano: Absent

Member Cunnigham-Denning: Yes

Vice Chair D'Antonio: Yes

Member Friedenbach: Yes

Member Preston: Yes

Member Walton: Absent

Chair Williams: Yes

The meeting adjourned at 11:35AM.

Committee staff and members can be reached at OCOH.CON@sfgov.org