

LWVLA Observers Report: City Council Homelessness and Poverty Committee meeting
March 7, 2018 Submitted by Kitty Stokes

All committee members were in attendance: MarQueece Harris-Dawson, chair; Monica Rodriguez, Mike Bonin, Jose Huizar, Curren Price Jr. The meeting started ten minutes late. Members were courteous to each other and to the public. The Brown Act requirements were followed (agenda posted at least 72 hours before). The agenda clearly described what was to be discussed. The room was full, including staff and public speakers. Committee members rarely commented or asked questions, with the exception of Mike Bonin.

Regular Agenda Items:

- 1.) 17-0090-S3 Resolution (Harris-Dawson, Wesson, Huizar, et al) relative to a pledge of support for a minimum of 222 new units of supportive housing funded by Proposition HHH for the period of July 1, 2017 to July 1, 2020, for a total of 3,330 city-wide supportive housing units over the three year period.
APPROVED, with the addition of an annual report to be made, including the total units funded each year and overall.

- 2.) 15-1138-S30 Los Angeles Dept of Building and Safety Report relative to the proposed ordinance amending Section 91.8605 of Division 86, Article 1, Chapter IX of the Los Angeles Municipal Code to clarify the applicability of standards to include new and existing buildings or structures, and add provisions to facilitate the establishment of temporary emergency shelters with provisions to ensure safety of occupants.
Report from staff: The first step has commenced (updating shelter decoration and meeting safety standards.) Staff will seek permission from the state to continue current decoration this year while they update.
(APPROVED)

- 3.) 18-0044 Motion (Huizar, Bonin) relative to the use of Parking Lot 5 at El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument as emergency shelter, and Categorical Exemption from the CA Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Article 19, Sections 15301, Class 1, 15304 Class 4(a)(b)(e), and 15532 Class 32, detailed in the Notice of Exemptions reflected on the Feb. 28, 2018 Bureau of Engineering report, attached to the Council file.
(Scheduled pursuant to Council action as of Feb 13, 2018.)
Bonin – merchants were really upset because they hadn't been talked to. Suggested that they wait six months and then try again, visiting merchants individually. This shelter is intended to help merchants and tourists, as well as residents.
Committee chairman recommended transfer of money, as listed, to El Pueblo shelter.
(Motion amended and passed.)

- 4.) 15-1138-S32 Motion (Bonin-Harris-Dawson-Buscaino) relative to an update of Strategy 7A of the Comprehensive Homelessness Strategy that includes the number of beds, facilities, and percentage of the homeless being served, and a framework of an Emergency Response to Homelessness Plan, with steps and funding requirements for alternative encampments, that includes a comprehensive list of every public facility in the City eligible to be used as a shelter, temporary housing, or parking.
Bonin – if we had a large disaster we wouldn't be able to handle it. The system is broken, it doesn't make sense to people who voted for H. We have to have alternatives to get people off the sidewalks and into safe places. Asked for suggestions within next several weeks.
(APPROVED)

- 5.) Verbal report from the City Attorney relative to the programs of the Community Justice Initiative including Homeless Engagement and Response Team 9HEART), Los Angeles Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection (LA DOOR), and Administrative Citation Enforcement (ACE).

(APPROVED)

PUBLIC COMMENT

The police create warrants for arrests out of nothing or minor problems, urged committee to address this. A lot of homeless have very old traffic tickets that they can't pay because the fines have accumulated. Over 5,000 veterans sleep on the streets at night. 50% are ready to work today, but don't have credentials for well-paying jobs, although they can clean streets etc. They need jobs as well as shelter.

Committee response – these are not criminal citations being written. They are supposed to refer the recipient to social services. (long explanation of this.) The committee questioned the efficacy of police writing tickets for social services, and questioned how many people were actually served.

Additional public comments:

The City Attorney's Office has too many lawyers, budget needs to be cut. Some homeless persons have been arrested many times, they need medical care, not jail. Reported that Mayor Garcetti said that sweeps should be the last thing that we do; the speaker said the police are ignoring this.