Task Force on Homelessness & Mental Health Services
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Councilmember Joe Felt then said he would like to conclude the presentation, but Councilmember Quirk-Silva pointed out that no one had yet seen it. Felt explained that they would work with existing groups. He said there was consensus among “those in the original discussion” that the task force would be charged with identifying practices and steps to build upon services, host forums, and make recommendations to the council. He then called upon Rusty Kennedy to speak.

Rusty Kennedy of the Orange County Human Relations Commission started by saying that he “was overwhelmed by Thomas’s loved ones.” He said that police training was a primary task of resolving this issue as well as the ongoing criminal and internal investigation and independent review of the Fullerton PD. His vision was to pull together people from shelters, those who provide services, and county planners working on a homeless services plan. He recommended open meetings to allow everyone who expressed an interest during comment periods to be involved in the process. Every first and third Thursday, beginning in October, people could start bringing recommendations for improvements in mental health care.

Mayor Jones followed Mr. Kennedy’s comments by stating that there were many people from which the council could pick and choose for the task force. Councilmember Quirk-Silva said that when she requested the item, it was to duplicate existing services in Fullerton, such as FIES and WTLTC. She also noted that the Fullerton Collaborative had already formed three years ago. But she also recognized the opportunity to take something tragic and to lead those who want to do something. She admitted that every action is valuable, even protest. But she recommended that everyone who expressed interest in helping should be contacted at her city email if someone wanted to know about volunteering to set up and take down cots at the Armory, driving for Meals on Wheels, or helping at FIES during their annual holiday distribution.

Councilmember Bankhead expressed his support for Rusty Kennedy heading the task force.

Councilmember Whitaker suggested ordering the points outlined in the presentation starting with public input, then assessment, followed by best practices, etc. He recommended against a “top down approach” and to not “shut out existing enthusiasm within the community.”

Quirk-Silva made a motion, inline with Whitaker’s comments, to start with a public forum that would be as inclusive as possible.

But before a second to her motion could be offered, former police chief and councilmember McKinley recommended only including those people on the list proposed by Mr. Kennedy and the city manager, starting at the top and ending just after Theresa Harvey, the Executive Director of the Fullerton Chamber of Commerce. This selection excluded Janice Dr. of, Kitty Jaramillo, and Ron Thomas, who were at the bottom of the list after the Chamber. He wanted to leave it to the task force to add whomever they determined would help.

Mr. Whitaker protested McKinley’s plan as “the epitome of a top down organization” that would not “bring new energy and new ideas.” Mr. McKinley countered with his opinion that allowing a bottom to top organization would be very difficult and the “findings and conclusions would be too long a process.” Bankhead supported McKinley stating the importance of starting this way is to “give access to funds to these people for programs.”

The item was approved as proposed by McKinley with opposition from both Whitaker and Quirk-Silva.

Barry Levinson asked that the 2010 expenditures of $6.1 million be broken down by department as the same were “out of line with state and fees.” He asked how much would be lost to the general fund if the redevelopment expansion would not add to the existing fund if the redevelopment expansion would not add taxes to the existing fund. Mr. Whitaker who runs the news site says, “I was never a writer at the OC Register or the New York Times. I was a freelance photographer for both, and did very little for the Register. The vast majority of my freelance newspaper work was for the Los Angeles Times and the San Francisco Chronicle. The error doesn’t bother me much, but some folks at either paper might say, “Hey, wait a minute, I’ve never worked with that guy...” We are sorry for the error.

If you see items that need correction please alert us - thank you!