

## JOINT MEETING

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE • HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE

• AD HOC COMMITTEE ON HOMELESSNESS ISSUES

APRIL 6, 2021

Topic: CB7 Plan of Action Re: Hotel Shelters along 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

### MINUTES

-----

- 1) Barbara Lee - Summary of March 24<sup>th</sup> "Vaccinations for Homeless Town Hall"
  - a) As of Mar 19, 2021, 4,917 individuals experiencing homelessness had been vaccinated mostly w J&J vaccine, Bellevue will also have Pfizer option.
  - b) Isolation hotels are available.
  - c) All would-be shelter residents undergo COVID assessment during intake process.
  - d) No vaccination plan yet for street homeless.
  - e) 50-60 clinics on site at hotels
  - f) Unanswered questions about handling of homeless who refuse vaccination, will they be isolated etc.
- 2) Discussion on Policing and Security
  - a) All agreed that the police should handle crime, especially violent crimes and felonies. The 72<sup>nd</sup> precinct has been attentive to issues.
    - i) Yuri Sanchez DHS - "It is mandated that shelter management be made aware if a client is arrested. Clients engaging in criminal behavior are transferred out."
  - b) There was a long discussion regarding the handling of quality-of-life offenses.
    - i) Should these be handled by social workers or police? No consensus. Probably should be a joint effort.
    - ii) Summonses should be issued for minor offenses (panhandling, drinking in public etc.) in compliance with existing laws. Community service is recommended in lieu of fines if people are unable to pay fines for minor offenses.
    - iii) It is recommended that site providers be contacted directly with issues that arise. We will request contact info be posted on exterior of the hotel shelters.
    - iv) Yuri DHS - Let DHS know if management is not enforcing the "Good Neighbor Policy".
    - v) It is recommended that neighborhood residents document all incidences and 311 or 911 calls. Take pictures, dated if possible. Keep CB7 and Councilman updated.
    - vi) To address excessive hanging out in children's playgrounds, we will request signs saying, "You must have a child to enter playground."
    - vii) To address excessive hanging out on streets we will ask if benches can be installed in front of shelters or the immediate surrounding area (unused driveways etc.) so shelter residents have a place to congregate outside especially in warm weather.

- viii) To address clusters of street homelessness, DHS recommends that we call 311 and reach out to "Breaking Ground" directly.
- c) Jeremy brokered a meeting with hotel management and the block association. The meeting was productive, and communication will be on-going.
  - d) Yuri Sanchez of DHS said that there are examples of areas where there is a collaborative effort with shelter security at neighboring sites. We will request a group meeting with all seven shelter managers to arrange a collaborative expansion/integrating of the area of security rounds so that the entire area is checked.
- 3) Establishing Goals for Closing De-density Hotels
- a) Yuri DHS - We still don't know when de-density shelters will close, waiting on guidance from CDC and state.
  - b) Yuri DHS - DHS has vaccines available for homeless and staff, can't force people to be vaccinated.
- 4) Discussion about Social Services
- a) Noting that all shelter residents have 24-hour access to restrooms, inappropriate urination and defecation is a sign of medical or mental illness. Ditto for public nudity. These behaviors cannot be tolerated!
  - b) We will request that health, mental health, addiction, re-entry, and job training services be provided on site at the hotel shelters; Or within this immediate area, at a site that would be available to all shelter residents (or anyone for that matter) to accommodate additional need.
  - c) Silvia Agosto recommended that hotel residents be encouraged to engage in volunteer work. This may help them integrate more with the community.
- 5) Community outrage over shelters
- a) Numerous community members expressed fear, rage and frustration regarding the shelters throughout CD7.
  - b) There has been an increase in reports of loitering, panhandling, public urination and defecation, nudity, littering, public drinking and marijuana smoking, shoplifting, package theft, car break-ins and harassment.
  - c) Our neighbors do not feel safe. They no longer feel their children are safe.
- 6) Wrap-Up
- a) We will follow up regarding the fair share provision in city charter with the boro pres office.
  - b) We will ask Comptroller to check if hotels are meeting standards.
  - c) We will send letters to electeds and candidates. This should be a campaign issue!
  - d) Yuri Sanchez is waiting to find out if we can share incidence reports with public.