

RENTAL HOUSING MEDIATION TASK FORCE
MINUTES
OCTOBER 6, 2011

DAVID GEBHARD PUBLIC MEETING ROOM
630 Garden Street
Santa Barbara, California, 93101
5:30PM

1. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL:

LEESA BECK	<u>X</u>	PARVANEH GIVI	<u>X</u>
DAVID BRAINARD	<u>E</u>	DAN HERLINGER	<u>X</u>
ROBERT BURKE	<u>X</u>	TRUDY PAUL	<u>X</u>
CHRIS CASEBEER	<u>X</u>	SCOTT WEXLER	<u>X</u>
SILVIO DILORETO	<u>E</u>	BRUCE WOLLENBERG	<u>X</u>
MARTI FURMAN	<u>X</u>	LYNN GOEBEL	<u>X</u>
JUSTIN DULLUM	<u>X</u>		

Officers: Chair Justin Dullum, Vice Chair Lynn Goebel, Secretary Scott Wexler
Staff Present: Andrea Bifano, Sr. Rental Housing Mediation Specialist; Deirdre Randolph, Community Development Program's Supervisor and Paul Casey, Assistant City Administrator.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

The Rental Housing Mediation Task Force (RHMTF) was conducted in compliance with the standards set by the Americans with Disability Act. The following members from the public attended the meeting: Mark Alvarado, Executive Director of Pueblo, spoke of his organization's support for the Task Force; Sharon Byrne expressed her interest to learn more about the Task Force; Gretchen Hayward from the League of Women Voters expressed her organization's interest in the Task Force; and David Mc Dermot shared that he would be applying to serve as a Task Force mediator

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion: To approve the Minutes of the September 1, 2011 meeting.

Action: Wollenberg/Casebeer, 11/0/0. (DiLorettoi/Brainard absent.) Motion carried.

4. Rental Housing Mediation Task Force Budget and Program Changes for FY 2012:

A. *Grant: Update and discussion: Based upon update, are they a sustainable funding source?*
Justin Dullum, Chair reported that the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara pledged a \$5,000 donation to the Task Force as recognition of the Task Force's good work. Silvio DiLoreto wrote an Open Letter to Members which was published in the Santa Barbara Rental Property Association's "Property News", without cost, as a courtesy of the Santa Barbara Rental Property Association. The letter helped to generate six donations. While a monetary donation was not approved by the board of the Santa Barbara Rental Property Association, they offered to continue to run advertisements for the RHMTF at no cost to the program. Robert Burke provided a grant contact list. He stated that two grant applications had been submitted; an Express grant for the Fund for Santa Barbara and an Express grant to the Santa Barbara Foundation. He advocated personal contact with local grantors. He added that contact had been made with the Hutton Group and that the grant writing committee would be contacted in late October to schedule an appointment.

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B. *Advocacy: Update:* Robert Burke summarized that the aim of the committee-to-create an advocacy video and/or presentation. He also reported that David Brainard was making contacts to assist with preparations to create a video. Leesa Beck stated that the committee had worked on a letter to be sent to those persons who had used the services of the Task Force in the past and to elicit support from them. Chris Casebeer reported that he was putting together a plan to make personal contact with Santa Barbara City Council members to gauge their support.

C. *Fee Recovery: Final discussion and vote. Development of formal position statement to be submitted to City Council on fee recovery option:* Justin Dillum, Chair reported that he didn't think it was worth the effort to collect fees from clients, as the sliding scale fee would be too small. He suggested that we let clients know that we do accept donations. Leesa Beck agreed that the fee amount may be too small to justify them, and it may discourage use of program services. On the other hand, she stated a fee structure may have some benefits as showing the value of the RHMTF services. Bruce Wollenberg stated that he did not want a sliding scale fee or a fee structure. He said we should be seen as a feather in the city's cap as a free service. Lynn Goebel thought a fee structure would be good for non-city clients. Andrea Bifano reported that the city's current resolution provides for a seventy five dollar maximum fee to be divided by all parties to a mediation conducted for residents living outside the City of Santa Barbara. She clarified that the contract with the various municipalities outside the City of Santa Barbara did not include face-to-face mediations, only staff conducted telephone mediations. Robert Burke stated that he thought fees would turn off the property owners participation with the Task Force and create confusion in the community. He added that staff was already over-worked, and that not enough money would be generated for the handling, collecting and accounting for it to be worthwhile.

Motion: No fee to be charged for residents of Santa Barbara City for face to face mediation services.

Action: Burke/Wollenberg, 9/0/2. (DiLoretoi/Brainard absent. Paul/Goebel abstained).
Motion carried

D. *Use of Volunteers: Update:* Leesa Beck reported that the mediators were willing to assist in the office by answering calls and to obtain mediation training and credit towards a mediation certificate. She added that due to their busy lives and schedules, they would only have limited time to assist in the office. She thought it was not realistic to supplant part-time staff with volunteers. She also expressed concern regarding the scheduling of mediators in the office. She did not want it to be a burden for Andrea Bifano. Trudy Paul also stated that the mediators' assistance in the office should not supplant staff. Dan Herlinger stated that the use and scheduling of the volunteers in the office should be at Andrea Bifano's discretion.

Motion: Volunteers have the option to work in the office as they are available and per the schedule set-up by Andrea Bifano. They will obtain mediation training and credit towards a certificate for their time. Their service would not supplant part-time staff.

Action: Beck/Burke, 11/0/0. (DiLoretoi/Brainard absent.) Motion carried.

Motion: Staff is directed to inform the City Council that the volunteer program to supplant part-time staff hours was thoroughly investigated and was determined to be not feasible at this time.

Action: Wexler/Furman, 11/0/0. (DiLoretoi/Brainard absent.) Motion carried.

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Paul Casey acknowledged the Task Force's hard work. He shared that City Council was brainstorming when it came up with some of the suggestions that the Task Force had been acting on. He emphasized the importance of the Task Force to show their efforts on seeking answers to the various issues presented to them by City Council. He suggested that it would be good to have written material for the Council to read to show their work and to have some personal contact with Council Members.

E. Training: Final discussion and vote. Development of formal position statement to be submitted to City Council on mediators providing training: The idea of the mediation training committee was to see how mediators could take over some of the training programs to relieve staff. Justin Dullum, Chair stated that he thought the assistance that the mediation training committee was currently providing was working out. Leesa Beck and Lynn Goebel reported that they were happy to help in the training process and presentations at the RHMTF meetings. Leesa stated that she thought the Task Force had the knowledge to assist with training, and that it was good to have the mediators involved in training, however, they could not supplant staff. She stated that Andrea Bifano's experience and resources were too vast and deep to not utilize.

Motion: In order to mitigate program costs, with the idea not to supplant staff, mediators would collaborate with staff to present and create training materials.

Action: Goebel/Furman, 10/0/1. (DiLoretoi/Brainard absent. Burke abstained.) Motion carried.

F. By-laws: Discussion of development of formal position statement to be submitted to City Council on which by-laws want/need to be changed:

Motion: Table this item.

Action: Casebeer/Beck, 11/0/0. (DiLoretoi/Brainard absent.) Motion carried.

Leesa Beck removed herself from By-Law Committee. Dan Heringer volunteered to be added to committee.

G. 501 (c)3: Final Discussion and vote. Development of formal position statement to be submitted to City Council on transitioning RHMTF to 501(c)3: Much discussion ensued regarding the topic. Dan Herlinger stated that the program wouldn't financially work as a 501(c)3. He posed the question as to how the program could get enough grants to sustain the necessary program funding. Leesa Beck agreed and noted that non-profits spend a lot of time applying for grants and fund-raising. She stated that the program would need additional staff as a non-profit and would spend more on fund raising than providing mediation services. Chris Casebeer noted that grantors generally do not fund public agencies or services. Deirdre Randolph asked if there were any 501 (c)3 non-profit groups that could incorporate the Task Force into their programs. Chris Casebeer questioned the issue of maintaining the programs neutrality if it were to be incorporated by a non-profit. Trudy Paul thought Conflict Solutions should be explored as a possibility. Andrea Bifano noted they were struggling for funds themselves. Robert Burke said he was against the idea of the program becoming a 501 (c) 3. He stated the program as a city agency gave the Task Force neutrality, credibility and trust with clients. Dan Herlinger noted that

while it was ok to have a 501 (c) 3, 2nd Story Associates, as a pass through for grants and donations, it was not a good idea to become a non-profit. Scott Wexler questioned why grantors would want to fund the Task Force if the city did not deem it valuable enough to have it continue as a city agency versus a non-profit.

Motion: Task Force does not support becoming a 501 (c)3.

Action: Chris/ Motion carried, 11/0/0. (DiLoretoi/Brainard absent.) Motion carried.

H. *Report to City Council: December 6, 2011: discussion.* The Task Force presentation to the Santa Barbara City Council would be made before Council by Brian Bosse, Housing and Redevelopment Manager on December 6, 2011. Justin Dullum, Chair asked Deirdre Randolph if Andrea Bifano would be allowed to be present. She replied that she thought it was ok for staff to be present. Deirdre Randolph clarified that the Task Force would be able to present to Council following Brian Bosse's presentation, and that they would be given adequate time to state their case. Deirdre Randolph stated that a letter regarding the Task Force's efforts into looking at various program cost saving efforts would need to be presented to Brian Bosse by November 18th in order to be attached to the City Council Agenda Packet.

5. ADVISORY GROUP ANNUAL RECRUITMENT:

There are four vacancies on the Rental Housing Mediation Task Force. Two in the Landlord category, one in the Tenant category and one in the Homeowner category. Applications must be received in the City Clerk's Office by 5:30pm on Monday, October 17, 2011.

6. NEW BUSINESS:

None

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

None

8. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: To adjourn meeting.

Action: Goebel/Wollenberg, 11/0/0. (DiLoretoi/Brainard absent.) Motion carried.