

WEST HOLLYWOOD HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES – JUNE 15, 1999
HALL A, PLUMMER PARK

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. CALL TO ORDER

The West Hollywood Human Services Commission was called to order by Chairperson Steven Davis at 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, June 15, 1999, in Hall A at Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Boulevard, West Hollywood.

B. ROLL CALL

Present: Norman Chramoff, Ruth Cislowski, John D’Amico, Steven Davis, Teresa DeCrescenzo, Bob Graney, Shirley Roberts
Excused: none
Absent: none

A quorum was present at all times. Staff present included Lloyd Long, Director of Human Services; Daphne Dennis, Social Services Administrator; Tom West, Diane Kahn-Epstein, and Jeff Book. Council Deputy Howard Jacobs was also present.

C. POSTING OF AGENDA

The Secretary reported that notices for the meeting had been posted as required.

D. PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Persons desiring to address the meeting were asked to complete a request form.

II. MINUTES

Under Item IV-A of the June 9, 1999, minutes, Commissioner Graney said that he had also asked for meeting availabilities for August, in addition to June and July. With this addition, the minutes of the June 9, 1999, meeting were approved on a motion by Commissioner Cislowski, seconded by Commissioner Graney.

III. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. CONDOM DISTRIBUTION / AIDS EDUCATION

Commissioner Davis set out basic ground rules for discussion, asking participants to remain focused on the topic at hand, and saying that the public, as provided on the agenda, would have the opportunity to speak on the scheduled item, and again toward the end of the meeting, under “Items from the Public.”

Daphne Dennis reviewed the Commission’s June 9 meeting and presented three recommendations prepared by staff in response to the Commission’s request: (1) allocation of \$47,640 to West Hollywood Cares, for distribution of 1,000 condom packets per month to nine establishments; (2) allocation of \$1,000 to each of eight organizations plus Foundation House/PATH, for distribution of condoms through their programs; and (3) allocation of \$70,790 for increased AIDS education, or a 2.5% cost-of-living adjustment for social services programs.

Daphne Dennis also discussed the possibility of two Human Services Commissioners working with the Business License Commission to come up with an assessment district for condom distribution; of developing signs for establishments which serve alcoholic beverages; and of labeling for jars of condoms to discourage them from being taken for purposes other than risk reduction. If the Commission opted to increase funding for AIDS education, she said, this could be done through current providers, or by inviting bids. She noted that the recommendations assume voluntary cooperation from businesses.

Commissioner Graney asked who was familiar with the recommendations, and Ms. Dennis said they had been discussed with Mayor Pro Tempore Prang’s office, and that a few agencies had requested copies. Once the recommendations are completed and distributed to the Commission in their packets, they are a public document.

Commissioner Graney asked whether Council has indicated that it will look favorably on a 4.5% cost-of-living adjustment for social services programs, and Lloyd Long said that they had, in light of the agencies not receiving such an increase for some years.

Commissioner Graney asked about targeting distribution to youth, and Daphne Dennis said that particular sites with young clientele could be targeted, such as coffeehouses, schools, and drop-in programs.

Commissioner Davis opened the floor to public comment.

Michaeljohn Horne of West Hollywood supported recommendations to increase condom distribution and prevention education, urged the Commission to avoid politicizing the matter, and opposed making condom distribution mandatory for local businesses.

Colleen Johnson of Los Angeles, local government affairs director at APLA, supported increased distribution of condoms, particularly to high-risk communities, and as part of an overall continuum of HIV/AIDS services.

Joshua Wells of West Hollywood, owner of the Firehouse bar at 696 N. Robertson Blvd., supported the condom distribution plan. He said 1,000 condoms per month would be a good start, but noted that attendance at his establishment is 600 persons per night, and that 1,000 condoms would be quickly distributed. He opposed mandating distribution on bars alone.

Don Bruhnke of West Hollywood said that condom distribution should be part of an overall plan to make youth aware of the consequences of failing to reduce risk. He said the Commission should pursue distribution and an awareness campaign together.

Terri Ford of Santa Monica, and AHF, distributed a handout regarding condom prices, and recommended calling a meeting of bar owners and AIDS service agencies. She said it was disgraceful that the City of West Hollywood does not fund a testing program, and distributed a letter criticizing Commissioner D'Amico for his remarks about AIDS Healthcare Foundation at the June 9 meeting and calling for him to be required to abstain on issues and funding relating to AHF.

Hillary Selvin, president/CEO of West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, endorsed the staff recommendation for condom distribution and increased education, and said that the Chamber board had voted to oppose mandatory distribution. Commissioner Cislowski asked whether businesses had discussed making voluntary contributions to the program, or being voluntarily assessed, and Ms. Selvin said that they had not, but these could be considered. Commissioner Graney asked whether any of the board members opposing mandatory distribution were owners of high-risk establishments, and Ms. Selvin said that two or three of them were. Commissioner Chramoff asked how long it would take to pull together a meeting of business owners and AIDS service organizations, and Ms. Selvin said at least a few days.

Jeanne Dobrin of West Hollywood said the City has done a good job in AIDS education, associated herself with the remarks by Mr. Horne, Ms. Selvin, and Mr. Bruhnke, and criticized Michael Weinstein of AIDS Healthcare Foundation for attempting to manipulate the City. She said the tall sign at California Federal (Santa Monica Blvd. at San Vicente Blvd.) is required to carry public service messages, but never does, and this could be a good opportunity.

Jeff Bailey of Los Angeles, HIV prevention services director at the Gay & Lesbian Center, noted that 18,000 condoms had been distributed during Pride Weekend by the collaborating AIDS service agencies, and that an additional 16,000 had been distributed in copies of the West Hollywood Independent. He said the condom

distribution program has credibility because of the work that Thomas Dyer has done to build rapport with business owners. Commissioner Chramoff asked whether it was more effective to distribute condoms or packets, and Mr. Bailey said it depended on the type of site where they were being distributed.

John Copeland of Los Angeles, HIV prevention program manager at L.A. Shanti, said he had noticed unused condoms being thrown away at the Pride Festival. He said that 50% of the community uses condoms and 50% does not, and that the goal of HIV prevention is not to require everyone to wear a condom, but to prevent new infections.

Ged Kenslea of West Hollywood, community relations director for AHF, said the Commission had been directed by Council to decide how, not whether, to distribute additional condoms, and recommended that all meetings of the Commission be taped. He supported Terri Ford's remarks at this meeting, and criticized Commissioner D'Amico's remarks at the previous meeting.

Karen Mall of West Hollywood, program coordinator for AHF, said the Commission was wasting its time unless it made condom distribution mandatory, and that objections from businesses were not significant, because they would adapt to this change as they had adapted to the ban on smoking. She criticized Commissioner D'Amico's remarks at the previous meeting, and said he should be disqualified from voting on anything involving AHF.

Kathy Watt of Los Angeles, director of Van Ness Recovery House, supported condom distribution and expanded prevention education, and reported that she had talked with youth during the Pride Weekend who were under the impression that if they got the AIDS virus, medical treatments would be available to deal with it. She suggested that the AIDS service providers continue to work together as a consortium, and use this to build relationships with local businesses.

Dean Decent of Los Angeles said he was a former manager of Store, the testing program on San Vicente Blvd. He opposed mandatory distribution, supported the idea of distributing condoms and/or packets depending on the nature of the site, and asked the Commission to consider new ways to distribute condoms, such as through a night-time van which would roam the area.

After a brief break, the Commission discussed the recommendations. Commissioner DeCrescenzo moved, with Commissioner Chramoff seconding, to handle the recommendations one by one. This was approved 6 to 1, with Commissioner Graney dissenting.

Commissioner Roberts moved that none of the funding for additional condom distribution be taken out of the projected cost-of-living adjustment for social services agencies. This was seconded by Commissioner Chramoff. Commiss-

ioner D'Amico moved to amend this so that agencies receiving additional condoms would not receive the COLA. After discussion, these motions were temporarily withdrawn so that the Commission could focus first on whether to distribute additional condoms.

Commissioner Graney introduced for discussion the idea of making 100,000 condoms (at 6 cents per condom) available to the ten agencies previously cited, at a cost of \$6,000, for distribution targeted to youth; of making 100,000 units, of which 50,000 would be condoms (\$3,000) and half would be packets composed of two condoms and lubricant (at 18 cents per packet, or \$9,000), available on a non-mandatory basis to identified high-risk establishments; and of allocating \$5,000 for promotional and administrative backup for the distribution. The combined cost would be \$23,000.

The Commission discussed whether condom distribution should be addressed singly, or in tandem with an expansion of AIDS education. Commissioner Cislowski moved, with Commissioner Graney seconding, to table discussion of additional AIDS education (the third staff recommendation) to a future meeting. This was approved 5 to 0, with Commissioner Roberts abstaining.

Commissioner Graney restated his proposal in the form of a motion, specifying that the specific choices on distribution would be made collaboratively by the AIDS service organizations. This was seconded for discussion by Commissioner Cislowski.

Commissioner Chramoff supported making the distribution mandatory, noting that many if not all of those who would be mandated to distribute condoms already do so as part of the City's programs. Commissioner Cislowski expressed reservations about how far the City would be willing to go in enforcement.

Commissioner Cislowski asked if this is a feasible task to assign to the consortium of AIDS service organizations, and Ms. Dennis said that it was.

Ms. Dennis said that West Hollywood Cares could be designated as the fiscal agent, with the actual distribution decisions being reserved to the consortium; that the consortium primarily works with adults, and therefore could be assigned the task of developing venues and outreach to youth, while distributing condoms to adults as well; and that packet costs should be figured at 20 cents each, which would make the overall cost of the proposal \$24,000. These points were accepted by the maker and seconder of the motion.

This proposal, which will provide for distribution of 250,000 condoms either singly or in packets, was approved in a roll call vote, 5 to 1, with Commissioner Chramoff opposed on the grounds that the distribution should be mandatory.

The Commission then discussed how to fund the proposal. Commissioner Roberts moved that none of the funding be taken from the projected 4.5% cost-of-living adjustment for social services programs. Commissioner Chramoff seconded. After discussion about whether Council would prefer to receive a recommendation asking for new expenditures or reassigning expenditures, the second was withdrawn.

Commissioner Cislowski moved to fund the proposal from year-end savings and the cost-of-living adjustment. The alternative to such funding would be to take the money from the General Fund. This was seconded by Commissioner Graney, and approved 6 to 0.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

V. ITEMS FROM THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Davis asked for appointments to committees and liaisons to be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

Commissioner Graney asked the Commission to consider having a car or float in the next Pride Parade.

VI. ITEMS FROM STAFF

Staff is working on scheduling two meetings in July while accommodating Commissioners' schedules, insofar as possible.

VII. ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC

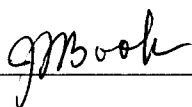
There were no additional items from the public.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

The next regular meeting will be at 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, July 13, in the Community Conference Room at City Hall, unless otherwise announced.

Attest:



Signed: _____


Steven L. Davis