

WEST HOLLYWOOD HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES – JUNE 9, 1999
CONFERENCE ROOM, 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 6:10 p.m., Wednesday, June 9, 1999, in the Conference Room at Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Boulevard, West Hollywood.

B. ROLL CALL

Present: Norman Chramoff, Ruth Cislowski, John D'Amico,
Steven Davis, Bob Graney
Excused: Teresa DeCrescenzo, Shirley Roberts
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, and Jeff Book. Councilmember Sal Guarriello and Council Deputies Howard Jacobs and Donna Saur were 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. INSTALLATIONS

Councilmember Guarriello administered the oath of office to three recently-appointed Commissioners (Norman Chramoff, Ruth Cislowski, and John D'Amico), who signed their oaths of office, and were welcomed by all present.

Recognition of former Commissioners was postponed to a subsequent meeting.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the May 11, 1999, meeting were approved on a motion by Commissioner Graney, seconded by Commissioner Davis.

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. SCHEDULING FOR COMMISSION MEETINGS, JULY - OCTOBER 1999

The Commission discussed scheduling of special meetings over the next few months. Focusing on June and July, Commissioners will notify staff of days they are not available, and the meetings will be scheduled to accommodate the highest number of participants.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. PUBLIC HEARING AND STUDY SESSION ON AIDS EDUCATION / CONDOM DISTRIBUTION

Tom West presented a report on HIV/AIDS statistics, transmission modes, educational methods, demographic variables affecting prevention programs, issues to address in HIV prevention, condom costs, potential distribution sites, and funding options.

Commissioner Davis said the City should consider including more establishments with a predominantly straight clientele in its condom distribution program, because the target population for prevention programs are persons of any orientation having sex in non-closed relationships. Thomas Dyer of West Hollywood Cares said that during their program's three and a half years of distribution experience, he had only been approached once about condoms by a straight-clientele business, which wanted to use them in a gift bag. He noted that condoms are distributed in many locations that do not differentiate by orientation, so it is likely that condoms are being distributed to both straight and gay members of the community.

Commissioner Graney asked about the Commission's legal capacity to mandate distribution of condoms and/or assess businesses for the cost of distribution. Staff will contact the City Attorney about this.

Commissioner D'Amico said we need to learn from how the medical community deals with prevention issues involving their patients, particularly those who are HIV positive. He also expressed concern about how to reach people under the age of 21, who presumably would not be in establishments serving alcohol.

Commissioner Chramoff said spending on prevention is cost-effective in comparison to spending on subsequent health care, and that West Hollywood bars do very well in this community and can afford to help with costs of prevention.

Thomas Dyer of West Hollywood Cares expressed concern about creating

distance between local government and city businesses, and suggested that fundraisers be considered as a way to help businesses meet any mandated costs.

Jeff Bailey of the Gay & Lesbian Center expressed concern that advice to simply wear a condom is not the best or most complete message to give out, and said he would like to see something like the Gay City program in Seattle, or the Gay Life program in San Francisco.

Sheri Lin of L.A. Shanti said we need to address barebacking in a straightforward and non-shaming way, and focus on harm reduction. She noted that countries that have used harm-reduction models, such as Australia, appear to not be developing a large barebacking culture.

Lee Klosinski of APLA said condom distribution is part of a broader continuum of HIV-related services, and that prevention is becoming increasingly scientific, due to the amount of research already conducted. UCLA is a center for this research, and he recommended working with scientists there on the best methods of prevention, so that the City's efforts and expenditures can be most effective.

Kathy Watt of Van Ness Recovery House said that three of the top five factors influencing HIV transmission rates are use of drugs and alcohol; anonymous sex; and working in the arena of HIV/AIDS. She noted that West Hollywood does not have a targeted drug and alcohol prevention program, even though it is likely that substance abuse is a major factor facilitating riskier decisions about sexual behavior. Emotional problems are also involved, she said, because grief, loss, and other psychosocial factors are highly involved in people's decisions about whether to take care of themselves. Half a million people are expected in the City this weekend for the Pride Festival, and, she noted, we do not have alternative venues and events ready for them.

Ethan Stone, testing coordinator for AIDS Healthcare Foundation at WeHo Lounge, said that the bottom line is that we know condoms do reduce the transmission of HIV, and that there are not enough condoms available in West Hollywood.

Karen Mall, program coordinator for WeHo Lounge, said that there are numerous prevention and discussion groups available for the community, and that what is missing is a sufficient level of condom distribution.

Cesar Portillo, director of governmental affairs with AHF, said this meeting is part of a process that led the Council to direct the Commission to conduct this study, a process which involved declaring the City a safer-sex City, and increasing distribution of condoms. Therefore, the Commission should not consider whether

to increase condom distribution, but simply how to do so. He said he considers educational materials distributed with condoms to be a waste, and that the City has an opportunity to create a very high-profile program involving mandatory distribution of condoms. As for funding options, he said that the State of California is going to have \$9 million in new funds available for prevention.

Terri Ford of AHF said she strongly supports expanded condom distribution. She said that condom distribution had been included in AHF's application for a social services contract, but that it was unfortunately not funded by the City. She said that when instructional materials are included with condoms, people throw them on the ground, and that it is much more useful to simply have jars of condoms available. She said there is a safer-sex crisis underway in the city, and that while alcohol and substance abuse is a factor, easy availability of large quantities of condoms would be a big help. She said she has written to Lloyd Long and will be meeting with him and Daphne Dennis about expanding the scope of AHF's contract.

Ged Kenslea, community relations director for AHF, congratulated the newly appointed Commissioners. He said that free breath mints are available at Starbucks, and that we have an opportunity to do something similar with sex, namely making free condoms as ubiquitous as free breath mints.

Dan Kovatch, West Hollywood resident, said that West Hollywood is a city on the forefront of prevention issues, and that how we respond to these issues serves as a model across the country.

Julie Jaskell with LA Free Clinic said it would be a mistake to force the Council to choose between increasing condom distribution and supporting all the other necessary social services that receive City contracts.

Commissioner Chramoff said that the issue for the Commission to determine is what it is possible to accomplish right now.

The meeting was recessed for refreshments. When the meeting reconvened, the Commission took up the discussion.

Commissioner Cislowski said that before deciding whether to mandate costs and distribution, we need information on business attitudes toward the program, and on whether they are interested in participating. Daphne Dennis said we should approach the business community as soon as we have something definite to discuss with them.

Commissioner Graney said there is a Nightclub Association, and that it would be good to contact them and involve them in the process prior to sending up a mandate for Council action. He was also concerned about giving the

Commissioners excused from tonight's meeting an opportunity to participate in the discussion.

Howard Jacobs said the Commission should consider how to fund increased condom distribution, and things such as whether lubricant should be included in a packet with condoms, and how broad a group of businesses should be included in the distribution.

Commissioner D'Amico said that staff should prepare a recommendation for Commission to consider at the next meeting, and that the topic of expanded condom distribution was being forced on the City by AHF. He asked Commissioner Davis to review whether he should be chairing this discussion in light of his employment with AHF.

Commissioner Davis said that he is alert to both the legal and the ethical aspects of his service as a Commissioner, as it relates to his employment, and Commissioner Graney said that the matter had been previously raised, with legal advice being received that Commissioner Davis's employment was not a conflict of interest unless a decision financially benefited his employer. In those situations, Commissioner Davis does not participate.

Daphne Dennis said staff would return on Tuesday with a recommendation and information about condom distribution, pros and cons of individual condoms vs. packets, and the scope of the City's legal ability to mandate actions on businesses. Howard Jacobs noted that business interests will be invited to the June 15 meeting.

B. REMARKS BY ALAN WEBER, SENIOR ADVISORY BOARD

Alan Weber, a newly appointed member of the Senior Advisory Board, addressed the Commission on the idea of building a heated, enclosed Olympic-size lap pool for West Hollywood. SAB recently asked for this idea to be explored by the City, and Mr. Weber is soliciting input and interest from other boards and commissions.

Commissioner D'Amico moved to table this discussion to the September meeting. This was seconded by Commissioner Graney, and approved.

VI. ITEMS FROM THE COMMISSION

A. LIAISONS

Commissioner Davis said new liaisons to related boards and commissions will be selected at an upcoming meeting.

1. CHAIRS MEETING

The chairs met on June 1. Commissioner Davis reported that the main topic was the city's acquisition of, and plans for, Santa Monica Boulevard.

2. CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE FOR PRIDE & EQUALITY

Commissioner Graney distributed copies of CAPE's most recent legislative report, which included coverage of the narrow defeat of AB 222 (Kuehl), dealing with nondiscrimination in schools. He asked staff to distribute copies of the report to the excused commissioners, and to the City Council.

3. DISABILITES ADVISORY BOARD

There was no additional report.

4. LESBIAN & GAY ADVISORY BOARD

There was no additional report.

5. SENIOR ADVISORY BOARD

There was no additional report.

VI. ITEMS FROM STAFF

Howard Jacobs commended staff and the members of the Commission for their work on condom distribution and the entire continuum of AIDS-related services. He said this topic stimulates a high degree of passion, and thanked participants for their interest in improving the quality of life in the city.

VII. ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC

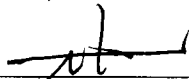
Terri Ford, Ged Kenslea, Daniel Kovatch, and Karen Mall expressed strong disapproval of Commissioner D'Amico's remarks about AIDS Healthcare Foundation and its role in bringing the topic of increased condom distribution to the Commission's attention.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

The next meeting will be at 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, June 15, in Hall A at Plummer Park.

MINUTES APPROVED JUNE 15, 1999



Steven L. Davis, Chair

Date



Jeff Book, Recording Secretary

Date