

Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council (PRNC)
Homelessness Solutions Committee Meeting
Thursday, 1 February 2018
Starbucks at Porter Ranch 19759 Rinaldi St.
Porter Ranch, California

1. Meeting called to order

- Susan Gorman-Chang called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

2. Welcome/Introductions

- Susan Gorman-Chang introduced and welcomed board member David Balen, Laura Rathbone, Perry, Don Larson, Janice, and Rick.

3. Roll Call/Quorum

- Susan Gorman-Chang performed the roll call and declared a quorum of 100%.

Here (2)	Susan Gorman-Chang, David Balen
Absent (0)	

4. Comments/suggestions from homeless individuals in our community

- Perry, 31, discussed his morning, during which he was assaulted by another homeless person. Later, he encountered another homeless man stealing his stuff and got into a fight with him. The cops were called and sided with Perry.
 - Don Larson talked about hanging out with Perry and being able to help him out. Perry has been homeless for 5 years and aged out of foster care earlier in life. He's really close to his family and keeps in contact but at 18 he was back where his parents were, not living with them and always living in his vehicle. He didn't know how to transition and admitted he was spending money on girlfriends, and has learned a lot since then. Don said that he was going to be leaving soon because he's been up since 4 am, and will have Laura talk to Perry to find out more about him.
 - Perry said he is a little detached after staying up all night following the invasion of his camp. He wasn't sure where else to go around here that was safe around 12:00 AM during the previous night.
- Perry said that he hadn't meant to be in the Porter Ranch area this long, but that he can't hitchhike or find a ride out.
 - Susan asked where he was before he was in the Porter Ranch area, and Perry explained that before then he was in Barstow and Vegas, and was originally from Kentucky. Perry explained that he thought there was opportunity here, and he's just trying to communicate and network.
- Laura Rathbone gave Perry her contact information, and info on a homeless connect day coming up in Mission Hills.
 - Susan gave Perry an info packet with a TAP card that would get him to Hope of The Valley.

- Laura explained the process of talking to a case manager to get the process started of getting Perry a California State ID, a new Social Security Card, Medi-Cal coverage, and food stamps.
- Laura added that the Winter Shelter is animal-friendly and also has dog food for his dog Lucy, a black labrador.
 - She also said that the Hope of the Valley shelter is open Monday through Friday to accept new visitors, but while the case manager usually leaves around 3:00 pm, they have a great lunch at 12:00 pm.
 - She also made sure to point out the instructions for what trains/buses Perry could take to get there.
 - Susan asked if public transit buses in the area allowed dogs on them, and Perry said that it depends on the driver of each bus. Perry has said that Lucy is a service dog in the past in order to bring her on buses. But he finds in his experience that as long as you're nice, and respectful, and the bus driver can see that the dog is nice and respectful, it's usually not a problem.
- Laura summarized that Perry can go to the Hope of the Valley shelter to get started with documentation. Perry asked if he should start tomorrow, and emphasized that he wanted to start soon, that he was motivated. Laura said that it wasn't necessary, but pointed out that in addition to being able to get a hot shower and meal at Hope of the Valley, there were places nearby that let you come in to do your laundry for free once a week. Perry then excused himself to use the restroom.
- Susan asked if Laura wanted to tell him about the Clean Starts, Clean Streets Program, and Laura said she would see if he showed up tomorrow.
 - Susan and Laura talked about how important it was to cover stories like Perry's: if you looked at him from a distance, you wouldn't know that he aged out of foster care. And who knows what trauma he might have endured during foster care.
 - Susan and Laura continued to discuss whether the bus drivers would be accommodating to the dogs, and both agreed that it wasn't a sure thing.
 - Susan expressed interest in finding out where Perry's camp was, but didn't want to press too hard on the subject.
 - Laura also wanted to find this out, but also didn't want to press him for the location just in case police happened to come by Perry's camp later that night, in which case Perry might think that they told police his location.
- Don then said that he had to leave. Perry said he would contact Laura at the end of the day tomorrow to say what he'd gotten done. Don asked if Perry was hungry today, and Perry said that he'd made \$50 today, and had money for his own food, but Don offered to buy him a sandwich from the Subway next door since he needed the \$50 for his phone.
- Perry explained that his friend had bought him a cell phone, and that he only needed enough money to pay the taxes on it to pick it up.
 - Susan asked if there was an organization that gave cell phones to homeless people, and Rick confirmed that there was, but that the organization was out of business.
 - Perry said that he had a phone now, and that his best friend Miranda and husband Ken had bought it for him to encourage him to become more responsible. He explained that Miranda and Ken were missionaries, who were from Kentucky like him. He'd lived there all his life

until he became permanently homeless, then spent time traveling, hitchhiking, and hopping trains.

- Laura asked if he stayed at the Park n Ride encampment, and Perry explained that he didn't stay anywhere where there were people he didn't know for safety.
 - He explained that he usually tries to tuck away, and doesn't want to be seen when he's sleeping, as opposed to people who sleep on benches.
 - He doesn't sleep behind buildings, and said that he usually sleeps in a bush that's away from any establishments, or sleeps in the woods somewhere. He lays a tarp down to lay on and puts up tarps for shelter.
 - Susan asked roughly how old Lucy was, and Perry said she was 15 months. Perry said he hoped he wasn't giving her bone damage from walking so much.
- David Balen asked how many Clean Streets, Clean Starts 6-week cycles Don has done, and Laura said that he's done 4.
 - Janice asked if the CSCS program follows up on people after they leave it, and Laura replied that they do, and were working on putting more data together that they can show the public.
 - Janice asked how many people in the most recent cycle got jobs, and Laura replied:
 - Two got jobs at Ralph's
 - One is a manager at Goodwill
 - One was working at a church
 - She was ready to get a job for one participant, but after seeing how he worked, and how much he struggled despite being eager to work, she concluded that they need to get him on disability (due to past carpal tunnel surgery and detached retina).
 - 2 other people from the cycle now have an apartment together, and Laura is working to get them jobs in Mission Hills.
 - One is already doing job training for being a security guard.
 - One woman is in a recovery home, with 60 days left, and already going to job interviews while in recovery home.
 - Janice asked if WorkSource was a connection for Laura, and she said it kind of is, especially after Goodwill backed out of their commitment at the last moment. Laura was under the understanding that their commitment to staff members of the CSCS program was a done deal, but then they pulled out of it.
- Rick asked if a homeless person comes to him and Janice and they want to get involved in the CSCS program in the middle of a current cycle, should they connect them with Laura, and is it possible to put them on a waiting list?
 - David asked if Don would let a homeless person into the program, for example, if there had been dropouts and they didn't have enough people working.
 - Laura said it would be better to put them on a waiting list for the next cycle, because people in the program start forming teams quickly based on the tasks their given, and bringing a new person in can disrupt the emotional and vocational flow of teams.
 - David asked if they would be able to consider if someone were brought to the program during the first week of work, if they would be allowed to join the program's work in the second week. And week two would be the cutoff for introducing new participants.
 - Laura said it could be done.

- Rick asked Laura what he and Janice could do if it's two months before they can do something to help a homeless person.
- Laura explained that they evaluate homeless people on a person by person basis, and that some people might come in to the program and end up hating it.
 - She said not to tell everybody who sees someone experiencing homelessness to call her right away to be considered for the program. She would want to encounter them several times in their current circumstances of homelessness to get a sense of who they are, and have time to run a little background check as well.
- Rick asked how else he and Janice can be helpful other than sending homeless people to Laura.
 - Laura explained that the program has a deal with Joyce's Coffee Shop to have a really good breakfast made each member of the program, at a cost to the program of \$5.00 for each member.
 - They meet up, have breakfast, go to their work location, work, then meet again.
 - Included in the grant for the CSCS program is funding for lunch, and Laura asked Rick if his church had community room where they could serve lunch and do navigation discussions with the CSCS participants.
- Laura asked if Rick's church had showers.
 - Rick said that they did in their gym, but he doesn't think they could use them.
 - Laura said that someone contacted her and said that if she could find a location with an electricity outlet, water hose, a storm drain, and find four volunteers and purchase hygiene elements, they'd bring portable showers.
 - David asked how long portable shower owners usually left them at a location.
 - Laura explained that they usually drop them at a location at night and pick it up the next morning.
 - Janice asked who supplies people to coordinate the homeless shower events.
 - Laura said that it depends if you want to announce it so everyone can come or if you just want to keep it for people who are in the CSCS program.
 - She volunteered to connect Janice to Monday Night Mission who would arrange everything besides the portable showers, and it's just up to them to find four volunteers and some form of hygiene, for example, a jug of shampoo or body wash to put into little cups for the people showering.
- Susan switched with David to talk with Janice and Rick.
 - David went to get Perry some food.
 - Laura again said for Perry to contact her when he got his phone.
- Rick talked about the process of getting counseling for homeless at their church.
 - He explained that there are levels of homelessness that they take into consideration: for example, if an individual comes in who's completely homeless and on the streets, Janice tells Rick, and he'll fill out a form to track him and see how many times he comes in, and the church has food boxes to give out to provide the homeless sustenance.
 - Janice explained that they have a huge database to keep track of everyone they help.
 - Rick added that if someone like Perry came in looking to get his phone bill paid for, they don't do that, preferring to spend the money on food boxes for local homeless. But they do give out gift cards for businesses to help them as well.

- Susan asked if there was a free phone program for homeless people, and Laura and Rick replied that the local program she was thinking of had ended because the company providing the phones was going out of business.
 - Laura added that there was more than one company providing phones for the homeless, and that she thought they were coming to the upcoming Mission Hills Homeless Connect Day.
- Susan asked whether Rick and Janice kept a relationship and communication open with homeless who come to them and then don't want help or to go to a shelter.
 - Rick said that they give everyone contacts and resources that can help them, such as a schedule of when various shelters are serving meals, and when places around the valley are holding hygiene stations.
 - As far as shelters, they don't have a lot of luck with referring homeless to them: women won't go to the shelters because they don't feel safe. They then referred to Perry who said he doesn't want to go to a shelter out of fear that they won't let him stay because of his dog, and because he doesn't want to contract lice or something else from the homeless present.
- Susan, Rick, and Janice expressed their excitement about the Clean Streets, Clean Starts program, and Susan talked about meeting local homeless people known as Tina, Dougan and Danny.
 - Susan asked if Rick and Janice had other regular visitors like Perry, and they said that they have a lot of regulars.
 - Susan asked if they'd seen a homeless couple with a van and kids, and Rick and Janice said that they haven't.
 - Susan asked if their church, Shepherd Church, thought of offering a safe parking space for homeless residents with vehicles, and Rick and Janice said they probably couldn't.
 - Laura then asked if they would consider it if they could limit it to 10 cars and vet each one.
 - She talked about working with LA Housing and Safe Parking LA, and the efforts they went to: single men who wanted to park got background checks via Safe Parking LA. Safe Parking LA provides security, and also make sure they're helping people trying to get out of living in their vehicles.
 - Susan explained that her church First Presbyterian could possibly have space for 10 cars if they chose to do SafeParkingLA. She said that except for Sunday's, many church parking lots are usually relatively empty and unused during overnight hours.
 - Laura reiterated that Rick and Janice could choose the hours homeless parked in their church's lot and stipulate that the vehicles have to be insured and have to be moving.
- David said that he knows the City Council office was trying to put together a collaboration between churches in the area. Perry then said goodbye to the group, and said that he was apprehensive about showing up at first because he was in a poor mood. Susan thanked Perry for speaking and sharing with us and said we want to partner with him to help him out of homelessness.
 - He said his friend Miranda, who bought him his phone, said he should definitely come here, and it was a nice gesture for the Homelessness Solutions committee to even notice him and recognize the ambition that he has. He affirmed that he was going to get out of his rut, and left with a meal bought by David.

- Janice then wanted to further discuss homeless parking in church lots, and asked if it drew other homeless people in.
 - Laura said no they don't just let anyone who shows up in. There is an application process and interview involved through Safe Parking LA before they would be allowed. Laura added that if they wanted, the Church could mandate that they have to interview applicants in addition to Safe Parking LA.
- Rick elaborated on David's earlier point, that the City Council group had met with local churches and the LAPD. David asked that if they planned on having another one and there's room, that he and Susan would love to attend as members of the church with him.
- Susan went back to the previous issue of homeless parking in church lots, and assured Rick and Janice that they would have a lot of control over any potential homeless parking efforts through Safe Parking LA.
 - She thought that there might be resistance from her church when she proposed the idea, and Rick said that there'd be plenty of resistance within his and Janice's church. But even through all the stress and difficulty of working with the homeless, she keeps coming back to the simple religious principle of, "What would Jesus do?"
- Rick talked about how, with the size of their church, there's a lot of things they CAN do, but there's also a lot of difficulties with being such a large church. While they have a lot of resources and things to offer, they also have many layers of bureaucracy.
 - Susan commented that what's interesting is you have to get out of your comfort zone to interact with and help homeless people. The first time she did a homeless outreach in Porter Ranch, her heart was pounding, but now that they've done it two, three times, they see them as fellow human beings in need of help.
 - Rick talked about how he discussed with his wife last night after seeing Perry: if you saw him on the street you'd avoid him, but he's a nice guy and gentle and wants to get better.
 - David said that in line at Subway buying Perry food, Perry asked why David picked him, and he said that he didn't.
 - Susan admitted that they are fighting a lot of societal prejudice in getting the homeless plight recognized.
- Rick discussed transportation methods for homeless people, and said that his church would occasionally Uber people from the church to social services.
 - Susan liked the idea, and Rick explained that if someone like Perry was injured and had to go to the hospital, they could call him an Uber.
 - Janice has the app, and she added that buses in the area run so inconsistently, plus Uber was fairly inexpensive if the destination is somewhere in the San Fernando Valley.
 - Susan asked if they had a Community Concerns Committee, and Janice replied that it was just her and Rick, and that they were always looking for resources and feel the frustration when it seems like there's so much stuff we don't really do.
- Rick volunteered that if the PRNC Homelessness Solutions Committee needed a space to have their meetings, their church could provide it.
 - David explained that he's always asked to have meetings at the Porter Ranch Starbucks so people can join them from the community, which is why they have a sign out on the table here. They've had students come in, stakeholders, and representatives from local businesses as a result of holding meetings out in public, and it's nice to get feedback from them.

- Janice said that allowing the public to meet with the Committee and actual homeless people was a low-key way to start to desensitize people from their fear of the homeless.
- David said that Perry asked if he could bring Tina from West Hill to the meeting that night as a way of helping address fear of the homeless.
 - Laura said that she knows Tina, who resides behind the local Korean church with Danny and Dougan. Unfortunately, Laura mentioned that she knows Tina is using hardcore drugs, and would not qualify for the CSCS program.
- It was announced that Northridge West wants to do a Homeless Connect Day in October, and Susan said that PRNC would help them with the event.
 - Laura explained that the County Supervisor hosts Homeless Connect Days (HCD) once a month at different locations in Service Planning Area Two.
 - People can go to get a cell phone, their free ID voucher, GR, SSI, vaccination, dental, hair cuts, showers, clothes.
 - She has a table representing at HCD's representing the organization founded by her and her sister called Sisters On The Streets, which supplies homeless women with hygiene products.
 - Susan said that one of things she's realized is that homeless people frequently have no valid ID. David said that he's found homeless people who say if they could get a passport, they'd travel abroad for more work opportunities, but how does someone get a passport or valid ID if they have no birth certificate or Social Security card.
 - Laura related an anecdote about a girl who couldn't remember her SSN, and time was running out for her to get access to necessary services, so Laura called up Medi-Cal to look her SSN up by her name. She emphasized that helping the homeless frequently starts with getting them a valid ID, because it's needed for a lot of services.
 - Laura wanted to ask if Rick and Janice's church wanted to host a Homeless Connect Day, explaining that lots of churches and recreation centers in the area host them. Janice asked if she could find the flyer for the upcoming Homeless Connect Day online, and Laura said that she couldn't, but she could email the volunteer coordinator on the sheet.
- David and Susan suggested that they reconnect with Rick and Janice once a month, and offered that Rick and Janice come to their Homelessness Solutions Committee meetings on the first Thursday of every month.
 - They offered that Janice and Rick could help write the agenda.
 - In the meantime, David and Susan offered Janice and Rick bus passes and informational cards to distribute.
 - Janice said that her and Rick's church could be a meeting place for the next 6-week cycle of CSCS, and Laura thankfully acknowledged that it would be huge if they could host the daily breakfast.
 - Laura said that most of the time at the end of the CSCS working day, the shower programs and meal programs are hard to get to, so some businesses they work with leave them with a sack lunch.
 - Laura added that the CSCS program also now gives its participants gift cards that can only be used for gas and food.

5. Meeting adjournment

- Meeting was adjourned at 6:07 pm.

