

Madam Chair, Members of the Board,

I am an Advocate currently beginning the second year of service on the South Coast Homeless Advisory Committee and personally support the overall purposes of the merger and the broad outline in which elected officials and departmentals are more active in development and implementation of policy. I am also the founder of [Houseless Not Homeless](http://www.causes.com/causes/661615-houseless-not-homeless) on causes.com (<http://www.causes.com/causes/661615-houseless-not-homeless>) which is connected with [Teach Cough Hygiene Everywhere](#), a project devoted to development of community health education materials and practices to "train the trainers" who interact with persons utilizing homeless shelters, warming centers, jails and in-patient congregant settings. There are also sister projects utilizing social media to lobby for legislation pertaining to development of policy initiative pertaining to the large numbers of persons who lack ordinary housing opportunities in today's economy. These grew out of my earlier work with Dignity Village in Portland, Oregon, which was a 100-person legal camp and the California Houseless Information Team based in Santa Cruz, which devolved to Santa Barbara and drew support internationally.

These projects feature carefully considered policies which depart from the "conventional wisdom" predominating in the thinking of persons engaged with the commendable occupation of conducting ordinary day to day operations of homeless services. Alternative sources of Best Practices include engaged policy leaders who seek to advise legislative bodies with regard to often contentious turning points. Specifically identified national leaders include Rick Jacobs circle, "No More Deaths" and Ron Thomas, retired deputy whose own son met with mortality as a direct and proximate result of circumstances attendant to homelessness.

These organized efforts utilizing social media have attracted support from numerous prominent community leaders in Santa Barbara including both faith-based and political persons. My personal

qualifications include extensive background in public policy work in Washington, D.C., Rockville and Bethesda, Md. and New York City with respect to the prevention, surveillance and treatment of infectious diseases such as are often transmitted in congregate shelter environments. I have interacted with the National Institute of Allergic and Infectious Diseases, the National Institute of Drug Abuse and the National Institute of Mental Health, subcommittees of the U.S. Congress, the New York Institute of Medicine and have been on staff of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group and the Associated Community Organizations for Reform Now.

I notice that the above referenced agenda item has been modified such that the County CEO will be charged to return to the Board with a plan. This modification obviates the need for an immediate elaborate comment letter. However, I would at this time proffer some observations to assure timeliness. Please kindly review the below attached comments and suggestions. Thank you for your consideration hereof.

Sincerely,

Geof Bard
SCHAC Member
Founder, Houseless Not Homeless/
Teach Cough Hygiene Everywhere

Houseless Not Homeless

Sister project Of

Teach Cough Hygiene Everyw <http://www.causes.com/causes/661615-houseless-not-homeless> CAUSES.COM

PUBLIC COMMENT REGARDING Homeless Support Systems Merger/Reorganization

1. There is at this time not an adequate characterization of the role of "consumer advocates and community action groups".
2. Whilst use of the term "consumer advocates" may not be the most precise best practice it is an advance over previous versions of the proposal to include provision for individual advocates. This is important because those with institutional backing tend to lack direct experience of homeless issues in the manner which individual advocates may be able to contribute to deliberative processes. Conversely, those with the most immediate empirical basis for an epistemology of homelessness may lack significant organizational and institutional resources.
3. Ultimately the new structure should be subject to a rigorous published set of by-laws and should be mandated to follow Roberts Rules of Order to assure fair process and equal access to an opportunity to utilize the process.
4. There should be clear, published and flexible means to put matters on the agenda of the various committees and subcommittees and a commitment to as much transparency as is consistent with patient/client privacy.
5. There should be sufficient process for development of overall mandates and charges to respective committees and subcommittees.

6. There should be a conscious development and implementation of progressive, cutting edge group facilitation means and methods including non-violent communication techniques with the expectation that these means and methods would also disseminate to member organizations.

7. There should be a clear commitment to a "no-loss of functionality" in which no service or accommodation provided by any existing agency - BOCH, CG, SCHAC, etc. - should be diminished, including subcommittees such as the Hate Crimes Subcommittee of the SCHAC, of which I am a member.

8. There should be an integration with the new entity with (a) overall housing, zoning and planning and (b) emergency planning and (c) law enforcement planning.

This should include and not be limited to upgraded emergency planning of response to natural disasters and human-generated emergencies including but not limited to matters which will have particular impact on congregate shelters. The latter includes natural pandemics of infectious disease, particularly airborne and those transmitted via close human-to-human contact, as well as the unlikely but real potential of terrorism incident.

9. There should be an explicit engagement with community groups and neighborhood advocates with regard to environmental impacts and criminal justice ramifications of congregate services locations. Some form of environmental impact statement should be suggested for all new services which present the possibility of creating significant increase in the incidence and prevalence of associated crime and urban blight attendant to litter.

10. There should be an expressed mandate to long term planning including but not limited to creating change of culture amongst the unhoused with regard to hygiene and non-violent communication.

11. There should be an expressed recognition of various strata of persons impacted by lack of housing and explicit avoidance of cliched stereotypes such as imputing substance abuse, psychiatric disorder, etc.

12. There should be more explicit mindfulness of the effect which linguistic conventions and bureaucratic jargon may have in creating unhelpful, uninspiring and stigmatizing thought process, even when those terms are used with good intentions. There should be proactive development of novel and insightful means of framing issues, "thinking outside the box" and an ongoing process of experimentation with and proactive, even mandated implementation of more visionary terminology. For instance, many persons prefer the term "houseless" and staunchly reject the term "homeless"; similarly "differently abled" is superior to other terms. "Consumer advocate" may imply passivity but we probably wish to promote self-help and DIY solutions such as Food Not Bombs and peer counseling, in which people collaborate and produce rather than merely consume.

I am confident that the good offices of the CEO will be appropriately responsive to a range of public comments regarding that item and that there will be an opportunity to review the plethora of public comments which have only in recent hours become available on the county website. In all other matters, I am generally in concurrence with the views expressed by my colleagues, and am particularly inclined to concur with, or defer to, the evaluations of Emily Allen, Esq., and Michael Foley, Director of Casa Esperanza, both of whom have demonstrated exceptional vision throughout the revisioning process.