CORRESPONDENCE FROM MAY 24, 2021 CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Martinez, Ruben

From: Neftali Del Rio
Sent: Monday, May 17, 2021 11:52 AM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Subject: Comment on City council meeting May17

Hello Council members,

My name is Neftali Del Rio a native community member of Pasadena.

I would like to submit a comment on today's agenda item #6.

As we return to "normal" after the pandemic, I feel the pandemic gave us time to reflect on the importance of our Health. We understand a little more on keeping ourselves healthy but also others. With that being said in the past our city budget has neglected our public health department. I would like to comment that our upcoming budget for next year include more funding into our public health system. We have our own public health department that needs our city budget to help finance it. These finances can be repurposed from our police overtime budget because they use plenty of overtime payment.

Sincerely,
Neftali

Martinez, Ruben

From: Phyllis Chestang <
Sent: Monday, May 17, 2021 4:23 PM
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT RE:CITY OF PASADENA/CITY COUNCIL MAY 17, 2021 MEETING/AGENDA ITEM #6

I, Phyllis Chestang, a small women owned certified business advisory firm and founder/ operator, 501c3, Second Wind am in favor of continuing and expanding the following in your proposed Operating Budget a mentioned on AR6, Attachment B, Section 1, page 2:

Eviction moratorium, rate relief for power electric customers, food bank, pantries funding over $11 Mil, plus staff support, grab and go lunches, over 150,000, Great Plates, et al:

- Adopting an eviction moratorium for residential and commercial tenants;
- Rebating over $11 million in Underground Utility Surtax charges to Pasadena V Power electric customers and providing six months of rate relief;
- Providing over $1.7 million in funding and over 2,500 hours of direct staff sup local food banks, pantries and feeding programs;
- Coordinating the distribution of over 150,000 "grab and go" lunches to supple PUSD feeding efforts at seven schools on weekends;
- Adopting an ordinance restricting commissions charged by third party food de services to protect local restaurants and consumers from gouging;
- Participating in the State's Great Plates Delivered program which provided 17(restaurant-delivered meals to 367 Pasadena seniors throughout the duration program;

In addition, due to the issues re: City of Pasadena internal controls, appointing a Risk Manager, is also highly recommended with funding from county, state or federal as stated on Page 10, paragraph 2 in the current Fiscal Year.

establishment of a Risk Manager position. Unfortunately, due to the recent e downtown, the position, along with several others, was eliminated from the l cost-savings. Nevertheless, the underlying need for such a position along witl consolidation of various risk-management functions remains as vital as ever. economic situation has stabilized, staff believes it is an appropriate time to re position in the City.

Phyllis M. Chestang, MBA

Business Owner & Founder, Second Wind, a 501c3,

4Education & Community

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DISCLAIMER: I have not posted nor do I promote/sell any other products EXCEPT EBOOKS AND LIMITED PRINT BOOKS FOR EDUCATION and PODCASTS under the name "Phyllis Chestang". No alcohol, no tobacco, no other products & only PG (Adult content)

SONJA K. BERNDT
Pasadena, CA 91107
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May 24, 2021

Mayor Victor Gordo
Members of the Pasadena City Council
Pasadena, CA
(By email to correspondence@cityofpasadena.net)

Re: Agenda Item #21: The Recommended FY 2022 Operating Budget; the Recommended Police Department Operating Budget

Dear Mayor Gordo and Members of the City Council:

I. Introduction

This letter expresses my concerns about the Recommended Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget overall, and the Recommended Police Department Operating Budget in particular. The services and supports we need to create in our community are those around ending homelessness, creating more affordable housing and economic opportunity, and providing adequate health and mental health services. Yet our Police budget, with escalating salaries and benefits, continues to swallow up our General Fund.

Mr. Mermell states "the City exists to provide services responsive to the needs of its residents and business community" and "every member of our community has a right to achieve optimal health and well-being throughout their lives." (Mermell Transmittal Letter, pp. 7, 9.) But the Recommended Operating Budget is inconsistent with those stated truths because the Police Department's Operating Budget consumes an inordinate amount of the General Fund.

We have endured a prolonged pandemic and are just now emerging from it. Families and businesses are burdened with substantial debt. Many of our residents have lost jobs, and/or are housing insecure and fear eviction. We have an affordable housing shortage that is beyond critical. And tragically, we have hundreds of persons experiencing homelessness who sleep on the streets every night. The proposed FY 2022 Operating Budget will do little to improve the lives of these residents.

II. The Proposed Disproportionate General Fund Funding for FY 2022 Police Operations Will Come at the Great Expense of Our Most Vulnerable Residents

The proposed 2022 FY Operating Budget shows that the Police Department will receive over $84 million from the General Fund. The General Fund is critical, of course, because it funds services for all of our residents without the restrictions of special funds. In contrast, I have been informed by the City that of the $40.7 million recommended in the FY 2022 Housing Department Budget, only about $1.5 million is funded by the General Fund. How can this huge disparity be justified? While the Housing Department receives funding from the state and federal governments, such funding is not assured. *More importantly, the state and federal funding our Housing Department receives is far short of what our City actually needs to provide critical services to our most vulnerable residents.*

As of the January 2020 homeless count, we had over 500 unhoused persons, nearly 300 of which had no shelter at all. Experts have predicted that these numbers will rise due to the pandemic. And while persons experiencing homelessness in our City have suffered the most during the pandemic, many, many other residents live in fear of losing their jobs or being evicted for failure to pay past due rent.

Our Housing Department has done a commendable job with the resources it has. But it does not have sufficient staff or financial resources for programs that would end homelessness in our city and help people from falling into homelessness. Additionally, last winter, the Housing Department said that although there was enough money for motel "vouchers" for our unsheltered folks during bad weather, only the "most vulnerable" could receive a "voucher" because there were not enough outreach workers to provide supervision. Why did that happen? If the Housing Department had the money to contract with additional service providers, could all of our unsheltered neighbors have been sheltered during the rain and cold last winter instead of suffering outside? According to reports, persons in need of shelter during bad weather last winter were turned away.

III. Our City Needs Vastly More Bridge Housing

The goal of advocates for persons experiencing homelessness is permanent housing for all of our unhoused residents. But the permanent housing currently available is minimal compared to the need. Further, the units of permanent housing in the pipeline will take many months, if not years, to complete.

For these reasons, our City needs substantially more "bridge housing," temporary housing for the time period between living on the street until obtaining permanent housing. There are so many significant barriers to achieving stable permanent housing and wellness for persons who are unsheltered: lack of shelter from the elements, lack of personal safety or security for their belongings, no toilet, no shower, food insecurity, lack of easy access to health and mental health workers, and difficulty charging phones for those lucky enough to have them. Bridge housing meets these basic human needs.

Last year, during the pandemic, our Housing Department and a few other organizations were able to place some unhoused persons into motel rooms in what is referred to as "the scattered site" motel program. But many of those persons *were already sheltered* at Union Station Homeless Services' congregate shelter and were simply moved to the motel rooms in order to comply with COVID-19 guidelines. We are not able to shelter nearly enough unsheltered persons through the scattered site motel program. We need temporary shelter through tiny shelter communities with intensive on-site services. Many other cities have done this. We also need to purchase a local motel and convert it to bridge housing as other cities in the San Gabriel Valley and elsewhere have done with the help of state funding.

We can pay for basic shelter and services for our unsheltered residents by re-allocating money from our FY 2022 Police Department Operating Budget to our FY 2022 Housing Department Operating Budget. The Police Department reported that it "saved" $2.3 million in operations last year, which it intends to use for the remodel of its building. *This money needs to be used for humane, decent treatment of our unsheltered residents, not for remodeling a building.* Moreover, despite this purported operational savings last year, the recommended FY 2022 Police Department Operating Budget is almost the same as last year's. This makes no sense unless the Police Department plans to "save" more money in operations so it can pay for the remaining currently unfunded $2 million in remodeling expenses in 2023 and 2024. Is the City Council going to allow this to happen? Bridge housing not only provides basic necessities of life, it provides efficient, intensive services that assist our unhoused on the path to better health and mental health outcomes. Further, it is cost effective because it reduces emergency room services and eliminates "transient-related" police responses.

IV. Inexplicably, Our City Continues to Ignore the Potential Availability of Federal Funding for Mobile Crisis Intervention Services Involving Persons Suffering from Mental Illness and/or a Substance Use Disorder

Our Congress just passed The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. I have attached Section 1947 of the Act, which is entitled "State Option To Provide Qualifying Community-Based Mobile Crisis Intervention Services." If a community-based mobile crisis intervention program serving persons suffering from mental illness and/or a substance use disorder meets the requirements described in subsection (d), the Federal government reimburses 85 percent of the cost. In order to receive reimbursement, the services must be "qualifying community-based mobile crisis intervention services" which requires, *inter alia*, that at least one behavioral health care professional who is capable of conducting an assessment of the individual be available 24 hours a day every day of the year.[1]

None of our city's crisis intervention services meet this criterion, including the HOPE Team and the Pasadena Outreach Response Team (PORT). Rather, at various times during the week, uniformed police officers, alone, are dispatched. Significantly, the Police Department's own reports relate non-life-threatening situations where police officers were dispatched to crisis situations involving persons *with known mental illness* who were *known to act defensively when approached by a uniformed police officer*. In those instances, altercations can, and do, result and mentally ill persons are then arrested for assaulting officers who should not have been dispatched in the first place.

The FY 2022 Police Department budget report states it has redirected $225,000 from its proposed General Fund Operating Budget to fund a second PORT team and states "[e]xpansion of the PORT Team resource can only lessen the overdependence of armed response to those in need of substance abuse and/or mental health intervention." (Police Budget Report, p. 4.) Advocates for persons suffering from mental illness and/or substance use disorders wholeheartedly support that decision. Fireman Tony Zee and his staff provide critical services to our unsheltered residents. But the current PORT team has only four members. Even if a second team of four persons is added, it will not be near enough to

[1] This type of mental health crisis response is also referred to as a "CAHOOTS-type model" ("Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets"), after the successful crisis intervention model in operation in other states for decades.

respond to the thousands of calls for service annually that could be diverted from the Police Department.

In addition to re-allocating funds from the Police Department for a second PORT team, this City needs to create a humane, safe crisis intervention response for our residents suffering from mental illness and/or a substance use disorder that will qualify for reimbursement under the American Rescue Plan Act. Any funding needed to create these services over the reimbursed amounts should come from the Police Department operating budget since hundreds or thousands of call will be redirected away from the Department.

Advocates for persons suffering from mental illness have tried to get our City leaders to discuss the issue of a "CAHOOTS-type" model of crisis intervention, to no avail. It was on the Public Safety Committee's agenda last November, but the meeting was canceled. It has not been agendized since then. Significantly, on Tuesday, May 18, 2021, at the Faith Community Committee meeting, attendees asked Commander Clawson why our City has not considered a CAHOOTS-type crisis intervention model. Commander Clawson said it should be considered.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr. Mermell states "rebuilding the City's financial reserves to protect essential City services against the next calamity, should be the priority for use of the federal [American Rescue Plan] support." (Transmittal Letter, p. 4.) I respectfully disagree. Our City should be dealing with the calamity that is staring us in the face – needless human tragedy and suffering. I urge the Council to re-allocate funds of the Recommended FY 2022 General Fund Operating Budget from the Police Department to the Housing Department to address homelessness and housing insecurity. In addition, I urge the City Council to re-allocate funds from the Police Department to the department able to create mobile crisis intervention services for those suffering from mental illness and/or a substance use disorder that would take advantage of the funds available under the American Rescue Plan Act. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

/s/

Sonja K. Berndt, Esq. (retired)

Attachment

Cc: *Pasadena Now*

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 – H.R. 1319

SEC. 1947. STATE OPTION TO PROVIDE QUALIFYING COMMUNITY-BASED MOBILE CRISIS INTERVENTION SERVICES.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding section 1902(a)(1) (relating to Statewideness), section 1902(a)(10)(B) (relating to comparability), section 1902(a)(23)(A) (relating to freedom of choice of providers), or section 1902(a)(27) (relating to provider agreements), a State may, during the 5-year period beginning on the first day of the first fiscal year quarter that begins on or after the date that is 1 year after the date of the enactment of this section, provide medical assistance for qualifying community-based mobile crisis intervention services.

"(b) QUALIFYING COMMUNITY-BASED MOBILE CRISIS INTERVENTION SERVICES DEFINED.—For purposes of this section, the term 'qualifying community-based mobile crisis intervention services' means, with respect to a State, items and services for which medical assistance is available under the State plan under this title or a waiver of such plan, that are—

"(1) furnished to an individual otherwise eligible for medical assistance under the State plan (or waiver of such plan) who is—

"(A) outside of a hospital or other facility setting; and

"(B) experiencing a mental health or substance use disorder crisis;

"(2) furnished by a multidisciplinary mobile crisis team—

"(A) that includes at least 1 behavioral health care professional who is capable of conducting an assessment of the individual, in accordance with the professional's permitted scope of practice under State law, and other professionals or paraprofessionals with appropriate expertise in behavioral health or mental health crisis response, including nurses, social workers, peer support specialists, and others, as designated by the State through a State plan amendment (or waiver of such plan);

"(B) whose members are trained in trauma-informed care, de-escalation strategies, and harm reduction;

"(C) that is able to respond in a timely manner and, where appropriate, provide—

"(i) screening and assessment;

"(ii) stabilization and de-escalation; and

"(iii) coordination with, and referrals to, health, social, and other services and supports as needed, and health services as needed;

"(D) that maintains relationships with relevant community partners, including medical and behavioral health providers, primary care providers, community health centers, crisis respite centers, and managed care organizations (if applicable); and

"(E) that maintains the privacy and confidentiality of patient information consistent with Federal and State requirements; and

"(3) available 24 hours per day, every day of the year.

"(c) PAYMENTS.—Notwithstanding section 1905(b) or 1905(ff) and subject to subsections (y) and (z) of section 1905, during each of the first 12 fiscal quarters occurring during the period described in subsection (a) that a State meets the requirements described in subsection (d), the Federal medical assistance percentage applicable to amounts expended by the State for medical assistance for qualifying community-based mobile crisis intervention services furnished during such quarter shall be equal to 85 percent. In no case shall the application of the previous sentence result in the Federal medical assistance percentage applicable to amounts expended by a State for medical assistance for such qualifying community-based mobile crisis intervention services furnished during a quarter being less than the Federal medical assistance percentage that would apply to such amounts expended by the State for such services furnished during such quarter without application of the previous sentence.

"(d) REQUIREMENTS.—The requirements described in this subsection are the following:

"(1) The State demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the Secretary that it will be able to support the provision of qualifying community-based mobile crisis intervention services that meet the conditions specified in subsection (b).

"(2) The State provides assurances satisfactory to the Secretary that—

"(A) any additional Federal funds received by the State for qualifying community-based mobile crisis intervention services provided under this section that are attributable to the increased Federal medical assistance percentage under subection (c) will be used to supplement, and not supplant, the level of State funds expended for such services for the fiscal year preceding the first fiscal quarter occurring during the period described in subsection (a);

"(B) if the State made qualifying community-based mobile crisis intervention services available in a region of the State in such fiscal year, the State will continue to make such services available in such region under this section during each month occurring during the period described in subsection (a) for which the Federal medical assistance percentage under subsection (c) is applicable with respect to the State.

"(e) FUNDING FOR STATE PLANNING GRANTS.—There is appropriated, out of any funds in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $15,000,000 to the Secretary for purposes of implementing, administering, and making planning grants to States as soon as practicable for purposes of developing a State plan amendment or section 1115, 1915(b), or 1915(c) waiver

request (or an amendment to such a waiver) to provide qualifying community-based mobile crisis intervention services under this section, to remain available until expended.".