

**HOMELESS SOLUTIONS COMMITTEE**  
**HOMELESSNESS SUMMIT**  
**LODI GRAPE FESTIVAL, JACKSON HALL**  
**413 EAST LOCKEFORD STREET, LODI**  
**TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2015**  
**7:00 – 9:00 P.M.**

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A. CALL TO ORDER

The Homelessness Summit of May 19, 2015, was called to order by John Ledbetter, Chairman of the Homeless Solutions Committee (HSC), at 7:04 p.m.

Mr. Ledbetter recognized the members of the HSC, which was formed to address the homeless population, adding that representatives from the District Attorney's Office and San Joaquin County Behavioral Health will be joining the Committee as well.

Homeless Solutions Committee Members – John Ledbetter, Lodi Community Foundation; Russ Hayward, Lodi Community Foundation; Captain Martin Ross, Lodi Salvation Army; Patricia Fehling, Lodi Salvation Army; Karen West, Lodi Salvation Army; David Warner, Lodi Salvation Army; City of Lodi City Manager Stephen Schwabauer; City of Lodi Police Chief Mark Helms; City of Lodi Police Captain Tod Patterson; City of Lodi Police Lieutenant Steve Nelson; City of Lodi Neighborhood Services Manager Joseph Wood; City of Lodi Council Member Doug Kuehne; Vince Yorba, Gravity Church; June Atwood Aaker, representing downtown merchants; and Joe Harrington with Lodi Memorial Hospital.

B. OPEN FORUM

Mr. Ledbetter reported that this second Homelessness Summit during the evening was scheduled to provide a forum for those who work or could not otherwise attend the previous event during the day. He stated the HSC is encouraging public comment via this summit to discuss complaints, concerns, and potential solutions. At the conclusion of this exercise with the public's input, the Committee will compile a balanced plan of both long- and short-term goals to alleviate the concerns of the community.

Loren Geiger stated she has a passion for helping the homeless and has been involved with the feeding events at Lawrence Park over the last seven years. She expressed hope that the Committee and community will develop a positive solution to help these individuals and not simply remove or displace them from the city. Ms. Geiger used the Gospel Rescue Mission in Stockton as a worthy example of an organization that has done a fine job of providing for the homeless and suggested a similar effort be undertaken in Lodi.

Jim Garrett with San Joaquin County Behavioral Health stated that the organization has two health outreach workers serving the homeless in the county by connecting them with other social services, assisting with hospitalization and medications, and working with homeless shelters in Stockton and Lodi. He offered the County's assistance to the Committee in this endeavor, as well as its support to the community and homeless.

Gary Kellam stated that the conclusion to have churches work with the Lodi Salvation Army on coordinated feedings has been beneficial for the homeless because other needs, such as clothing and services from other agencies, are also being met. He stated he was encouraged by the Committee's desire to find a solution to this situation.

Mr. Ledbetter stressed this issue is not solely a Police issue, but a community problem as well that will take a community solution and balanced approach. He stated the most common concern expressed to him was the serious lack of housing or shelter for the homeless.

Cliff Travis provided suggestions including making bathrooms available to the homeless in the downtown area; designating lots with canopies where they could sleep at night; using the Pennysaver so homeless can earn a higher rate on recycled cans; training and education opportunities through Salvation Army and college programs; and use of commercial buildings or cargo containers for the homeless. He believed there was no wrong answer and encouraged others to bring forth suggestions.

Reverend David Hill with Grace Presbyterian Church agreed with Mr. Kellam that the Salvation Army has been a positive partner in this effort.

Mr. Ledbetter reminded the public that on the fourth Friday of each month, the Salvation Army holds a Homeless Fair Day with many available services for the homeless and on the off Fridays, it holds a mini-fair with limited services. The first fair brought in 180 homeless individuals, many of whom had not been to the location previously.

Trisha Wohl stated she was born and raised in Lodi, but has been homeless since she was nine years old. She suggested Lodi implement programs similar to those in Florida that offer day labor jobs to homeless so they can earn money and housing for those to sleep, eat, and wash clothes. Ms. Wohl believed that homeless from outside of Lodi are responsible for the destructive actions in the community and they should be made to leave. She challenged someone to donate a house to her so she can prove that she can adequately manage and care for a home. Further, Ms. Wohl urged homeless shelters to allow pets because they are like family to many of the homeless.

Cheryl Francis with Grace and Mercy Charitable Foundation agreed with previous comments that the Lodi Salvation Army is a great partner and has had noteworthy success in the community; however, she pointed out that some homeless are uncomfortable at the Salvation Army and there are many other organizations that can contribute in areas that are lacking. She stated that the homeless need a place to store their personal belongings and most are willing to work to earn money. Ms. Francis believed that further discussion is necessary to determine a more appropriate location to build a restroom than downtown. She applauded the collective effort to make Lodi a better, safer, healthier environment for all.

Marty Thorpe stated that he owns a business on the opposite side of the freeway, which is an area often frequented by the homeless. Over the years, he has experienced problems with the homeless including property damage, excessive trash, human waste, and theft, and he added that they camp on the property and break water lines in order to shower. Mr. Thorpe expressed concern with offering small jobs to the homeless because of the liability fear should someone be injured while performing tasks. He believed that the homeless feel it is their right to have the public give them whatever they want and most are unwilling to receive the necessary help from programs and services. He expressed concern that a viable solution may not be possible.

Mark Armstrong stated that a majority of the homeless are unwilling to help themselves by working to earn money, adding that the Lodi Grape Festival is faced daily with damage, theft, and human waste from the homeless. He believed the first priority should be to clear up the homeless encampments along the river. In response to the earlier comment about donating a home to the homeless, Mr. Armstrong reminded everyone that the former warehouse across the street from the Festival, M&R Packing, burned down because the homeless were living in it.

Jared Coffey stated he has helped roughly 40 homeless individuals improve their situations in Lodi and that a majority of the community only hears from the troubled homeless; not the quiet ones who want help. He further expressed concern that there is only one dinner offered to the homeless in Lodi and complained that the City removed the barbecues and three-quarters of the tables from Lawrence Park.

Eric Lantz stated he and his fiancé are homeless and desperately trying to improve their situations by staying at the Lodi Salvation Army and performing odd jobs to earn money. He stated he previously lived by the river, adding that a majority of the homeless in that area act up because they feel Lodi citizens do not care. Some agencies, such as Salvation Army and Grace and Mercy, offer assistance to the homeless, but he believed if more people helped, the public would see a better response from the homeless. Despite being injured on the job, he continues to pick up trash, bottles, and cans to earn money and contribute to the cleanliness of the community.

In response to Mr. Armstrong, Mr. Lantz stated he is currently on medical leave and cannot work, but his wife works when she can. Ms. Francis confirmed that Mr. Lantz and his wife help at Grace and Mercy Charitable Foundation when they can.

Carla Cole stated she is aware of a number of citizens who would assist with cleaning up the river, adding that Caltrans has repeatedly cleaned the area, but it quickly returns to the previous state with shopping carts, encampments, garbage, and human waste. She stated that Casa de Lodi residents regularly experience theft by the homeless, as well as threatening or frightening behavior, yet the seniors are afraid to call the Police Department. She expressed concern that the homeless will start fires along the river because they regularly and carelessly use candles. She suggested a program similar to one in Chicago in which the homeless receive a small stipend for cleaning the downtown area.

Michelle Herrera stated she and her fiancé, who are both homeless, routinely clean up after other homeless individuals and try to seek employment to earn enough money to get off of the street; however, she has had difficulty finding a job because, as a female mechanic, many garages will not hire her because she is a woman. She believed people can be homeless, yet still manage to pick up after themselves.

Juanita Huerta with St. Anne's Place, located at 531 West Lockeford Street, stated the facility is a day center for homeless women and women with children who are welcome to stay during the day, receive assistance in connecting with various resources, and occasionally be provided small meals and toiletry items. She stated that St. Anne's Place is a safe location for the homeless during the day when the Salvation Army is closed and that the center has rules and expectations that a majority tend to follow.

Ken Lung stated the homeless come from the river and pass by his store on a daily basis, yet none of them has inquired about a job. He agreed that the best place to begin is at the river and stated he is not opposed to helping those who truly want assistance, adding that he hired a graduate of the Salvation Army program who is starting work the next day.

Jackie Garcia stated she came from a lifestyle of abuse, dysfunction, and prison, but with the help of Lodi House, she has lived in her own home for the last three years despite the struggles to maintain this new lifestyle. She encouraged others in similar situations to vigorously persist in improving their lives, stating that support and encouragement from others is helpful, but each individual must also work hard to advance themselves out of a negative situation.

Mr. Ledbetter stated the Committee recognizes it cannot help all of the homeless in this community, but it will support and encourage those who truly want the hand up to improve their situations.

Trisha Wohl spoke once more, stating she has issues with mental health but requested that, when people see her, they help her instead of ignoring her or taking pictures. She expressed her complaints against the Police, public, parks, and the parking garage and suggested that a shed, at which she could leave her belongings, would be helpful.

Mayor Pro Tempore Mark Chandler assured the public that the Council is committed to being a part of the solution, that Council and staff have heard the concerns and suggestions expressed at both meetings, and that the challenge is to be both compassionate and part of the enforcement process. He too expressed interest in cleaning the river.

An unidentified individual questioned how the Police will identify the dangerous individuals when many of them flee when officers arrive on scene and asked if there were guidelines community members could follow because she often does not call the Police for fear that she is disturbing the Department.

Police Chief Mark Helms strongly urged residents to call the Department when they have concerns because those calls measure the volume of complaints, which in turn determines what areas need extra attention. The Police Department has identified the river as one of the many areas in Lodi that needs focus, along with parks and freeway ramps. Chief Helms explained that the river is problematic because there are legal requirements regulating encampments, which state that the City must post the property with a legal notice, clear the area after the designated number of days, and hold the collected possessions for 90 days. It is a significant undertaking,

and the Department has limited resources to handle the process effectively and regularly. Instead, the approach is to respond with heavy enforcement against those who need it. In some cases, it may be referring homeless to a detoxification program or it may be jail; however, the Department is using every available resource to deal with those who are destroying this community. With regard to residents cleaning encampments on their own, Chief Helms cautioned against that because it is a dangerous situation, stating that even City Code Enforcement Officers go on site with armed officers.

Lieutenant Steve Nelson, district commander for the river area and member of the HSC, encouraged residents to contact him with any issues or concerns relating to the river area, including potential encampments that need removal. He stressed there are legal matters relating to taking one's property without permission and cautioned against residents doing so.

Mr. Armstrong suggested that a task force made up of business and home owners in the area be created to assist the Police Department in cleaning up encampments and that the area be posted on a regular basis, such as every 30 days. This would provide a workforce to help with the effort at very little cost.

Chief Helms and Lieutenant Nelson agreed that a collaboration of that nature may be the correct solution, but that the goal is not to continually relocate the homeless, but to develop a permanent location.

Mr. Lantz suggested a vacant building downtown as a place for the homeless to stay. He stated the homeless need a secure place to leave their belongings while they look for employment, which he believed would motivate many to improve their situations. Mr. Lantz also stressed the need for more treatment centers.

Richard Blackston cautioned citizens against raiding homeless encampments because removal of their property would be theft and, as an advocate for the homeless, he would ensure that charges and lawsuits be brought upon those who steal their property. In addition, he stated it is dangerous to walk into a homeless encampment because the dwellers do not trust those unknown to them and because of the blood borne issues from used needles.

In response to Mr. Blackston, Ms. Herrera stated that she picks up trash at the homeless encampment and discards used needles in the biohazard receptacle at Lodi Memorial Hospital.

C. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the summit was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

ATTEST:

Jennifer M. Ferraiolo  
City Clerk