

Memo

Date: March 4, 2016
To: Emily Halcon
From: Howard Lawrence
Subject: Remarks to City Sub Committee on Homeless Issues

As you recall I was asked to make remarks on the behalf of Sacramento ACT to the Sub Committee on Homeless issues last Monday February 29. Here is my best reconstruction of my remarks.

I began with the statement that we agreed with many of the points made by previous speakers, what I called an all of the above strategy. I was referring to the recommendations for:

- A new triage center to better link homeless individuals to existing services.
- Expanded emergency shelters including “Safe Ground” tenting sites and “First Steps” small house strategy.
- Establish toilet facilities and access to water and other sanitary services. I recommended that we look at the Portland Loo as model to adopt.

I then stated we support the “Housing First” strategy reminding the Council Members that Sacramento ACT had identified Housing First as a best practice about 3 years ago and we are pleased to see it implemented. However, I also stated that we were concerned about the availability of affordable housing stock and that we want to look at methods to address this issue.

Next I stated that the Council members need to know that the Winter Shelter program is becoming more difficult for the congregations to sustain causing wear and tear on both facilities and volunteers. In our view Winter Shelter was introduced as a temporary solution to a crisis situation and I think we need a fresh look at the situation. I pointed out that if a new triage center or similar facility was developed, it would be easier to recruit volunteers to help staff that facility than to continue in the same Winter Shelter format.

I stated that we needed to decriminalize homelessness, deescalate police activities --- that the current policy is not working.

I concluded by stating we need to work together on programs to help end homelessness in Sacramento.