

From: OZ <zurawska@yahoo.com>

Sent: Thursday, March 21, 2019 11:59 AM

To: Michael Soloff <Michael.Soloff@SMGOV.NET>; Diane Glauber <dglauber@lawyerscommittee.org>

Cc: Natalie Verlinich <Natalie.Verlinich@SMGOV.NET>; James Kemper <James.Kemper@SMGOV.NET>;

Anjuli Katz <Anjuli.Katz@SMGOV.NET>; Loren Bloch <Loren.Bloch@SMGOV.NET>; Richard Hilton

<Richard.Hilton@SMGOV.NET>; Sue Keintz <Sue.Keintz@SMGOV.NET>; Richard Gerwitz

<Richard.Gerwitz@SMGOV.NET>; Alisa Orduna <Alisa.Orduna@SMGOV.NET>

Subject: written public input - agenda item 2 - March 21, 2019 Santa Monica Housing Commission

Hello,

This is my written comment regarding agenda item 2, Public Input, at the March 21, 2019 Santa Monica Housing Commission meeting. I am copying Ms. Diane Glauber, who is preparing the Assessment of the Fair Housing Plan for the City of Santa Monica, and I request that Ms. Glauber consider this my public comment regarding the Assessment of the Fair Housing Plan as well.

Since November 2017, this Commission has been repeatedly presented with public comment by current and former clients of OPCC dba The People Concern, the City-contracted provider of homeless services. The public comment included allegations of civil rights violations including discrimination, elder neglect, intimidation and retaliation, unlawful program terminations, as well as substandard living conditions and scarce housing services that exist mostly on paper despite the City's generous public funding disbursed to the organization.

Please be informed that last week the ACLU of Southern California issued a scathing report about the conditions in homeless shelters, as well as ten recommendations to improve the shelter conditions. Both the report and the recommendations mirror the multiple testimony the City of Santa Monica has received from current and former OPCC dba The People Concern, including before the Housing Commission, The Disabilities Commission, the Social Services Commission, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission for the Senior Community, and the Santa Monica City Council, to no avail and no action on the part of the City whatsoever.

Recently the Human Services Manager Setareh Yavari refused to meet with advocates and clients to discuss possible action the City might take to alleviate the problems at The People Concern. This is despite the fact that the Santa Monica City Council directed City staff on January 22, 2019 to listen to the community and come up with solutions regarding the homeless service provider.

I hope that such inaction and denial will come to an end now that the allegations by The People Concern clients have been validated by the findings of the ACLU. Please note that the ACLU of Southern California did conduct a focus group with The People Concern clients as well, and the ACLU is being kept informed about any developments regarding this issue in the City of Santa Monica, or rather the ongoing inaction on the part of the City.

Here are the ten recommendations by the ACLU:

<p>The ACLU SoCal makes 10 recommendations to bring the shelters into compliance with the law and at least the minimum standards of fitness for human habitation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Establish clear and binding uniform health and safety standards for all shelters and hold shelter operators accountable to those high standards.2. Establish an Orange County Office of Civil Rights and a Civilian Oversight Board.3. Create a countywide reasonable accommodation policy for residents with disabilities.4. Establish policies to refer residents to higher levels of care when appropriate.5. Create a system for secure storage of personal property and eliminate policies that limit freedom of movement.6. Establish due process systems for denials, evictions and other sanctions.7. Safeguard protected speech in emergency shelters.8. Prohibit bans on residents taking photographs, video, or audio recordings inside the shelter facilities.9. Create a safe and confidential whistleblower policy for employees and residents of emergency shelters.10. Create opportunities for democratic participation in emergency shelter operations by residents.

And here is the LAist public radio (KPCC) article about the ACLU So Cal report about the conditions in homeless shelters:

https://laist.com/2019/03/14/orange_county_homless_shelters_aclu_maggot_rodents_raw_se_wage.php?_ga=2.160564925.1841253717.1552934192-742701636.1548107259

Please note that this story was picked up by the Guardian thus garnering international attention:

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/mar/16/homeless-shelters-orange-county-aclu-report-condemns>

A related issue I would like to bring to the Commission's attention is The People Concern's recent attempts at silencing the clients and manipulating the clients into making positive (i.e. false) statements about the quality of the services they receive.

It's been reported that on January 29, 2019 Assistant Director of Samoshel Christina Dias told the clients not to complain about The People Concern at public meetings. The Office of the City Attorney sent an email to the Executive Director of The People Concern John Maceri reminding him of the clients right to free speech:

From: [Isabel Birrueta](#)
To: jmaceri@thepeopleconcern.org
Cc: [Setareh Yavari](#); [Margaret Willis](#)
Subject: Complaint Re Assistant Director of Samoshel
Date: Tuesday, February 5, 2019 10:06:00 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Dear Mr. Maceri:

A public member alleges that on January 29, 2019, Ms. Christina Diaz, Assistant Director of Samoshel, advised clients of The People Concern that they should not provide feedback regarding The People Concern operations at public meetings, such as a City Council or Social Services meetings. While the City does not know whether this allegation is true, we want to ensure that officers and employees of The People Concern understand that public members can speak on any item of interest so long as it is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative or advisory body. Neither the City nor The People Concern can prohibit criticism of programs, policies, procedures, or services of the City or its grantees. Individuals receiving services at Samoshel, or other facility operated by The People Concern, have a First Amendment right to petition the government.

Should you have any questions concerning this communication, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

[Isabel Birrueta](#)
Deputy City Attorney
City Attorney's Office
1685 Main Street, Room 310
Santa Monica, CA 90401
(310) 458-8323 Tel
(310) 395-6727 FAX
Isabel.Birrueta@smgov.net

Sadly, it does not appear the email worked. According to a recent report by a current OPCC dba The People Concern client, Ms. Lori Hood, Director of Turning Point, has told a heavily medicated client that the shelter would be shut down unless clients produce positive statements about The People Concern, and thus coerced the client to produce a two-page positive review of The People Concern. Here's a copy of the text message that reported this:

Today 11:50

This funny, Lori Hood, the director of turning made Elizabeth who on high doses of mental medication write a two page paper on how great her experience was at turning point Elizabeth is suppose to get on a radio station and say these lies, Ms told Elizabeth that clients are to get the place close down

It is time that the Santa Monica Housing Commission, and the municipal government take notice, and attempt to remedy the problems at the contracted homeless services provider's facilities. The serious problems have been reported to the City for at least two and a half years, they have been validated by the lawsuit that former (ousted) The People Concern employees

filed, by abysmal LAHSA monitoring reviews, by abundant photographic evidence of the conditions, and now by the ACLU So Cal report and recommendations, which mirror what advocates and clients have been asking the City of Santa Monica for for a long time.

It is evident to anybody who has been watching this issue evolve that at no time did The People Concern attempt to address any of the problems being reported. Instead, the organization has continued the tactic of denial, slandering the whistle blowers and advocates, and intimidating current clients into producing positive (i.e. false) statements about the conditions and quality of care at the City-funded shelters.

This kind of attitude on the part of the organization is quite telling in itself. When combined with the inaction on the part of the City it appears that there is complicity between The People Concern and the City in the mistreatment, discrimination, abuse and cruelty towards individuals experiencing homelessness in Santa Monica. It is disgraceful, and embarrassing for a City that likes to market itself as “progressive.”

Pertinent links:

Screenshots of the lawsuit filed by OPCC employees:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/616567778411018/permalink/1754168751317576/>

2017 LAHSA monitoring review of OPCC:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/616567778411018/permalink/1833076603426790/>

Pictures of filth, mold and “food” served by OPCC:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/616567778411018/permalink/1996410683760047/>

Regards,

Olga Zurawska