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County of Santa Cruz

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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AGENDA: 10/24/00

October 12, 2000

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

RE: SHELTER AND CARE NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED

Dear Members of the Board:

Attached is a letter from Marian Wood, Chair of the County's Long Term Care Interagency Commission, forwarding a series of recommendations from the Commission with regard to shelter and care needs of the elderly and disabled. I believe that the Commission had done an admirable job in identifying the causes and problems associated with what is clearly a significant lack of appropriate housing for this segment of our population. The Commission has also identified a series of short- and long-term options to address these problems. In order for the Board to be able to discuss meaningful measures which may be available to assist in addressing the problems identified by the Commission, I recommend that the Board direct the County Administrative Officer to coordinate a response from relevant County staff and County advisory bodies and provide a report to the Board on or before January 23, 2001.

Sincerely,

MARDI WORMHOUDT, Chair
Board of SupervisorsMW:ted
Attachmentcc: Long Term Care Interagency Commission
County Administrative Officer
Human Resources Agency Administrator
Health Services Agency Administrator
Housing Authority
Mobile Home Commission
Seniors Commission
Commission on Disabilities
Human Services Commission

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County of Santa Cruz

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LONG TERM CARE INTERAGENCY COMMISSION

1400 EMELINE AVE., 3rd FLOOR, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
(831) 454-4864 FAX (831) 454-4290
MARIAN WOOD, CHAIR

9/29/00

Board of Supervisors
701 Ocean St.
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Re: Shelter and Care Needs of the Elderly and Disabled

Dear Chairperson Wormhoudt:

As the Chairperson of the Long Term Care Inter-Agency Commission, I am sending this letter to request the Board of Supervisor's assistance in addressing the escalating housing crisis in Santa Cruz County.

The Commission members are particularly concerned about our County's housing problem as it pertains to low and middle income elderly and disabled populations (e.g. loss of housing due to rent increases; unnecessary relocation out of the area; out of home placement at inappropriate levels of care).

Recent articles in the media have described the high cost of housing and the correlation with wages in our County. For the elderly and dependent adults, who are often subsisting on a fixed income, this predicament is even more traumatic, impacting both temporary needs and long term housing options. The crisis actually affects the entire continuum of housing, from the lack of low income independent units, to the decreasing availability of SSI beds at Residential Care Facilities (RCF's), to the cost at Skilled Nursing Facility levels.

As an indication of the severity of the problem, there are some significant points to consider:

- The number of residential care facilities for elderly (age 60 +) has declined dramatically in recent years. There are currently 34 residential care facilities in the county. Only six of these facilities accept SSI as the source of payment for some beds. Usually there are no vacancies for the SSI level beds, so access for placement is significantly restricted. Since 1997, eight RCF's have closed, including four that accepted SSI rates for placement. Three new facilities have opened in the past 2 years, with no designated beds for SSI individuals.
- In addition to the decrease in availability of SSI beds, there is an ever-growing segment of the senior population that is just above the SSI standard. Their income will not cover the cost of RCF placement, or even low-income housing.
- An increasing number of elderly and disabled adults are finding that they have to leave their homes and support systems in Santa Cruz County in order to find affordable care options.

While recognizing that solutions will take time, our intent is to inform the Board of Supervisors about the extent of this problem and to make recommendations for your consideration. We have developed some recommendations that address both short and long term goals.

Short Term

- Develop an ordinance requiring designated SSI level beds for any new Assisted Living Facilities and Residential Care Facilities. This would also incorporate other policy issues such as changes in permits, waivers for unique projects, incentive funds to encourage development of units, etc.
- Develop a funding mechanism (“patch fund”) to augment some SSI level and other low-income placements at residential care facilities. This could include pursuit of private funding sources/grants.
- Develop recommendations pertaining to housing and care facilities for elderly and disabled adults. This could be a collaborative effort involving County agencies and the private sector to devise a work plan that identifies the extent of the problem and possible recommendations.
- Coordinate with the Housing Authority to develop a work plan around options regarding the housing waiting lists for low income elderly and disabled.
- Coordinate with the Mobile Home Commission to share concerns and to consider measures that might minimize the impact of the housing crisis on mobile home parks in terms of availability and affordability.


Long Term

- Support or sponsor legislation that may evolve at the State and/or Federal level pertaining to: affordable housing; increases in the SSI out of home care rate (which currently is only \$749.00 monthly, or \$25.00 daily for meals, supervision, etc.) for residential care placement; Medi-Cal waivers for home and community based long term care.
- Assess the feasibility of developing a funding source for a short-term (30-90 day) shelter for the elderly who become homeless due to rent increases, unsafe living conditions, etc. A possible option is the renovation of an existing facility to serve this function.
- Create increased access (e.g. waiver of fees/permits, flexibility re: zoning ordinances) to care and housing for individuals who are not eligible for SSI but who also cannot afford the high cost of residential care.
- Collaborate in the development of a county supported residential care facility that targets the SSI level elderly in terms of assistance with placement issues.
- Encourage support for waivers (e.g. Medi-Cal) for supported living to avoid unnecessary displacement from independent settings or inappropriate levels of care. Partnerships with existing groups (e.g. the Long Term Care Integration Project; the IHSS Advisory Committee) may consolidate efforts to obtain innovative waivers.
- Integrate the work of the Long Term Care Integration Project into the planning efforts to address the continuum of care and the housing crisis for the low-income senior and disabled population. This may include consideration of the Governor’s Aging with Dignity innovation grants as a possible strategy of funding for projects.
- Explore ways to expand more resources for home maintenance and modification assistance (e.g. repair work) to keep individuals safely at home.

The combination of the lack of affordable housing and the often unstable living arrangements for some of our most vulnerable citizens compound the risk factors to their health and safety. The housing and care crisis is a critical issue in our community and the Board of Supervisors is an integral part of the change process needed to impact this dilemma. We are hoping that these issues related to shelter and care needs can be placed on a future agenda in the upcoming months so that the process of establishing an action plan can begin.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely, ,


Marian Wood, Chair
Long Term Care Inter-Agency Commission

bdletter.doc 9/00

cc: Rama Khalsa, HSA Administrator
Cecilia Espinola, HRA Administrator
Seniors Commission
Commission on Disabilities
Human Services Commission