

WISPPA Holds First Homelessness Strategic Plan Input Session

BY **HARRY YADAV** MARCH 9, 2018 *South Pasadena Review*

Last Saturday morning's monthly Women in South Pasadena Political Action (WISPPA) meeting was highlighted by the first in a series of City-sponsored community input sessions regarding ways to address homelessness in South Pasadena.

Winnie Fong, the consultant hired by the county as a result of the \$30,000 grant from Los Angeles County and United Way of Greater Los Angeles, said that collecting input from the community is an important step toward developing and implementing a tangible strategy to combat homelessness in the city.

"We want to develop key action steps for achieving our goals and will look at associated policy changes the city could implement in order to realize those goals," Fong said, while laying out her timeline.

Fong and her consulting team will be working with the City to conduct more input sessions in March, the next of which will take place on March 14 at 10:30 a.m., at the Chamber of Commerce Office, 1121 Mission St. Fong said the team will draft a strategic plan to address homelessness between April and May before presenting the draft to City Council. The deadline to submit the plan to the County is June 30.

Joining Fong Saturday were South Pasadena's Management Analyst Karen Aceves, SPPD Sergeant Shannon Robledo, Union Station Homeless Services Manager Keith Hendrikson, and Marlene Moore, the Director of Community Services at Holy Family Church St. Joseph Center. The panel was moderated by WISPPA Secretary Judith Harris.

Robledo, who specializes in working with the local homeless population, emphasized that sharing resources with those in need is one of the most effective actions residents can take. "In addition to interacting with the homeless on a normal level, treating them as human beings, I frequently find myself providing individuals with a list of shelters and services available to them," Robledo said. "You can't force people to get help, but you can equip them with the resources they need."

The Sergeant often distributes backpacks full of hygiene essentials to the homeless. One of the main sources of those aid packages is St. Joseph's Food Bank, run in part by Moore, who sat next to Robledo Saturday. Moore outlined to WISPPA the different services Holy Family provides and highlighted a relatively new program, called Bicycles and Burgers, which was begun in an effort to address the issue of transportation for the homeless.

Hendrikson, who represented Union Station Services, spoke about the importance of creating more transitional housing. Union Station Board Chair and South Pasadena resident Alan Maltun, in attendance at the meeting, joined the panel briefly to talk about his organization's efforts in Pasadena, as well.

The grant was the result of Measure H, a quarter-cent sales tax implemented throughout Los Angeles County to raise funds to prevent and fight homelessness that passed in March 2017.

Council Member Diana Mahmud, who was present at the meeting, said, "with such scarce resources and an overwhelming need to address homelessness, it's so important that cities know what other cities are doing so that we can maximize the efficacy of all of those dollars. Again, thank you so much for supporting Measure H, because without that this would not be possible."

The panel posed the following questions to the audience to spark discussion: what is being done to address homelessness in the city? What plans to address homelessness in the county are in the works? What can residents do to address homelessness in the community? What can the City do to enhance and expand current services?

Those same questions will face community members Wednesday morning at the second community input session.