

SAN FRANCISCO HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

MINUTES

September 24, 2020 Regular Meeting

The regular monthly meeting of the Human Services Commission was held on Thursday, September 24, 2020 virtually & telephonically pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order N-29-20 and the Twelfth Supplement to Mayoral Proclamation Declaring the Existence of a Local Emergency dated February 25, 2020.

MEMBERS PRESENT REMOTELY (VIA ZOOM)	SCOTT KAHN, President JAMES MCCRAY, JR., Vice President RITA SEMEL DARSHAN SINGH GEORGE YAMASAKI, JR.
OTHERS PRESENT REMOTELY (VIA WEB-EX)	Trent Rhorer, Executive Director Elizabeth LaBarre, Executive Assistant to the Executive Director / Secretary – Human Services Commission Dan Kaplan, Deputy Director – Finance and Administration Joan Miller, Deputy Director – Family & Children's Services Noelle Simmons, Deputy Director – Economic Support & Self-sufficiency Other department staff and interested citizens
ROLL CALL	President Kahn called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. President Kahn visually confirmed that all members were present via the Zoom platform.
AGENDA	On motion of Vice President McCray, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission adopted the agenda as posted.
MINUTES	On motion of Commissioner Yamasaki, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission adopted the minutes of the July 23, 2020 Regular Meeting as circulated.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT	Executive Director Trent Rhorer furnished an update regarding federal, state and local activities, including COVID-19 information.

COVID-19 UPDATES

The City of San Francisco has 10,901 COVID cases to date with 99 deaths. Compared to other metropolises, San Francisco has a significantly lower death toll. San Francisco has 12.1 cases per 1,000 people compared to 24.6 per 1,000 in Los Angeles, 27.4 in New York, 29.1 in Boston, and 60.8 in Miami. San Francisco has 10.5 deaths per 100,000 people compared to 60.6 in Los Angeles, 281.3 in New York, 128.6 in Boston, and 108.8 in Miami. San Francisco is also conducting more tests than any of these major cities.

The LatinX community of San Francisco is 15% of the population but 50% of the cases and 27% of the deaths. Executive Director Rhorer met with LatinX community advocates and providers along with other Department heads and the Mayor. Dr. Colfax and Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) Director Torres are leading a Latinx-specific taskforce to address the disparities. In all, \$28M is needed to support grassroots efforts in the areas of health, food, rental assistance, workforce and learning hubs. HSA is being asked to provide \$5M to support the Mission Food Hub. The Agency has identified \$3.6M. The taskforce and our Agency are working with philanthropic groups and the Give2SF fund to find dollars. This is yet another example of new department partnerships due to the COVID response effort. Later in the meeting, Executive Director Rhorer and President Kahn will be honoring five individuals from several departments who greatly assisted HSA with the COVID-19 emergency housing effort. President Kahn will present "certificates of appreciation" to these colleagues who assisted us with the foundation of the emergency housing program, hotel contracting, without which we would not be able to negotiate housing for thousands of vulnerable homeless San Franciscans.

STATE

There are almost 252,000 open unemployment claims for San Francisco residents. Unemployment, food and rent arrears are the most critical issues facing City residents. The California Lost Wages Assistance Program provides a supplemental payment of \$300 per week, for a minimum of three weeks, in addition to the weekly unemployment benefit amount. The payments are for weeks of unemployment beginning July 26, 2020, and will be available for a limited period of time. This is in lieu of the \$600 per week supplement that Congress was unable to put forth so Trump did this by Executive Order.

We have been following this bill in previous commission meetings: Governor Newsom signed AB 1876 on September 18, which ensures all California tax filers, specifically undocumented Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) filers who are otherwise eligible, may qualify for the California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC) and the Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC).

LOCAL

About 85% of Agency staff have been telecommuting since March. It is really important and somewhat difficult to maintain communications with staff in this remote environment. To help relay important messages when so many staff work remotely, we held our third all staff Town Hall on September 14 via a Microsoft virtual meeting portal, attended by over 1,100 staff. There was a Q&A portion unique to this town hall where staff could type in their questions and comments. Executive Director Rhorer scrolled through the questions and answered as many as he could live. The biggest concern of the workforce is what does my work life look like—am I telecommuting, am I coming back into the office, and how do I continue to provide vital services to San Franciscans. Noelle Simmons hosted a town hall on September 11 to drill down on operations specific to ESSS not covered in the all-staff town hall.

FINANCE/ADMIN

The budget has cleared the Board hurdle this week with the final vote next week. Even though HSA had large reduction targets, we were able to supplement with state revenue and have very little programmatic cuts and no job cuts. In fact, our budget increased by \$300M. Why would the budget be increased during the COVID epidemic: \$45M of the increased budget goes to food support (food pantries, home delivered meals, Great Plates program, etc.) and a large portion for OECE revenue backed by the unlocking of Prop C funds currently tied up in the courts. There will be increases in need for our cash assistance programs—CAAP and CalWORKs—so \$18.5M of the increase in budget is for increased aid payments in anticipation of increased caseloads. The Agency's role in mitigating the economic impacts of COVID is getting single adults and parents with young kids into jobs. The Mayor added an additional \$7M in the HSA budget for JobsNOW!, our subsidized jobs program. It will add 1,000 wage subsidy slots and will help our small businesses get back on their feet by underwriting wage costs when participating in the program. Commissioner Yamasaki was around during the JobsNOW! launch under Mayor Newsom in 2009 where 4,000 people were placed in jobs. That is the pace we want and need currently. The COVID job loss rate is staggering, worse than in 2009. Executive Director Rhorer is confident that we will have the same success as when the program was kicked off.

The Mayor is encouraging as much telecommuting opportunities for staff as possible. For our Agency, with increased client load, how many staff need to come back from full-time telecommuting for services that must occur in person and how do we guarantee a safe work experience. We never closed operations, our lobbies were always open to partial traffic, so Executive Director does not call this a reopening. It is a continuity of operations that looks a little different with staff on site. Agency leadership and the City is taking this very seriously. In partnership with HR and Facilities and the City Administrator's Office, we created a health and safety plan for each building. The plans include employee and client health screenings, safety barrier placement in lobbies and interview areas, facial covering and physical distancing in lobbies and work areas, PPE distribution and testing, reduced capacity for lobbies and work areas, and signage. The plans are iterative and will be adapted as we learn more. We are trying our best to keep clients and staff healthy. The City Administrator will finalize the plan in a day or two.

ESSS

SFBN

SFBN received a \$489,763 Federal grant to develop an online, searchable CAIFresh handbook, an online live chat function for our website and online instructional aides to limited English speakers that explain how to open a personal MyBCW account. We are using every tool available to help our clients in a remote environment.

We are coordinating efforts with the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to ensure homeless clients living in Shelter-in-Place (SIP) hotels have benefits. We currently have four eligibility workers rotating through the sites taking applications for CalFresh, Medi-Cal and CAAP. In just two and a half days they have generated 87 applications, 40 of which are for more than one program. This is an attempt to turn COVID into a positive of sorts by housing San Franciscans and getting them on benefits.

WDD (Workforce Development Department)

JobsNOW! was mentioned in the budget section, but here Executive Director Rhorer got more granular. The subsidized job program is not only eligible for CalWORKs clients. It has been expanded to include those with household incomes below 200% federal poverty level who may not be linked to any programs within HSA.

There is a big, late, citywide push to get San Franciscans to complete the Census. HSA has been assisting the City's lead agency on the effort, OCEIA, by contacting households in communities identified as having low Census completion. We made 8,000 reminder calls and texted clients. It is critical that we get every San Franciscan to complete the Census, not only for congressional representation but also funding for many City departments. HSA's funding is not tied to census numbers—our funding is tied to recipients.

Executive Director Rhorer opened up the floor for feedback and questions from the commissioners.

Commissioner Semel asked if Agency clients can register to vote through the Agency.

Executive Director Rhorer responded that our Agency is required through the state to provide clients with voter information at our service centers. However, with minimal in-person transactions, he is not sure how we are operationalizing this during COVID.

Commissioner Semel replied that she thinks it is terribly important. Executive Director Rhorer agreed and said he would check in with his team to get more information on the current plan and circle back with Commissioner Semel.

Commissioner Semel also commented about the 2600 hotel rooms, "You (Executive Director Rhorer) never thought you would be a hotel operator, did you." Executive Director Rhorer thanked Commissioner Semel for that acknowledgement and stated that many colleagues attending the meeting deserved praise for the hotel effort. He then discussed the heavy lift to get clients out of the hotels and into other shelter options. We are not emptying hotels one at a time, we are instead removing person by person based on when housing opportunities become available, and then transferring clients to other hotels so as to not have to pay for an entire hotel when half the rooms are empty. It is a bit of a logistical challenge.

Vice President McCray shared his experience driving to work down 13th, down 3rd, the back of Yosemite, adjacent to the Alice Griffith facilities, and being overwhelmed. He acknowledged that Executive Director Rhorer and the Agency are also overwhelmed. What kind of additional help is the Agency seeking—be it FEMA or other sources?

Executive Director Rhorer replied that COVID has highlighted the disparities and gaps in our economy and society. Communities of color are disproportionately negatively impacted by COVID19. We placed 2,600 people in hotels but you would not know it walking throughout SF—it doesn't appear we have made a dent in the homeless population on the streets. We would have loved to house 3,000 individuals. However, we stretched the budget as far as we could. Because of the commitment to not release anyone currently in hotels back onto the streets, that is a huge cost. The Mayor loaded a huge budget for housing for the homeless. If this was a mission-driven initiative, then everyone would be housed. But within the bounds of a budget, we are doing the best we can. Executive Director Rhorer does not see more federal aid coming generally for cities or states or for specifically homelessness. The state's budget is counting on federal dollars that may not be there.

Marquita Collins then requested to speak. She requested that the waiver of the face-to-face requirements for interviews be for a longer term than month to month. This is not an issue that Executive Director Rhorer nor the Agency has control over. However, Trent did mention that Noelle Simmons was on the call and would take note.

COMMISSION COMMENDATIONS

President Kahn presented five certificates of appreciation to the Human Services Agency's emergency housing hotel contract partners: Josh Keene, Special Projects and Transactions Manager, City of San Francisco's Real Estate Division, Eileen Malley, Deputy City Attorney, David Ries, Deputy City Attorney, Louise Simpson, Deputy City Attorney and Peter Goldstein, Deputy Director, Risk Management Division.

Executive Director Rhorer then added that thanks to this team, San Francisco housed over 2600 people. Alameda County, with a similar homeless population of 8,000-9,000 housed 500 people and San Mateo County housed 600 people. Los Angeles, with 60,000 homeless, housed about 3,000 people.

Josh and Eileen thanked President Kahn, the commissioners and Executive Director Rhorer for the acknowledgement and requested that Robert "RE" Walsh, Director of Operations for HSA, be honored for his amazing partnership. Mr. Keene mentioned that while he was at home, Mr. Walsh was in the field gathering the information that Mr. Keene then transformed into contracts. Mr. Walsh was his ears and eyes on the ground. Executive Director Rhorer acknowledged RE Walsh's contributions noting that Josh Keene "beat him to the punch" in complimenting RE. Executive Director Rhorer added that RE, who is in Facilities, was available literally 24/7; he would text or call RE past 11pm often. RE, Josh and team assessed over 150 hotels—that is a massive feat. The Agency had not yet recognized "in house" yet but it will in a future commission meeting.

Commissioner Semel added that Executive Director Rhorer should do an op-ed piece with the Chronicle about this partnership and the incredible work done to house 30% of the homeless population.

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH	<p>President Kahn announced DAVID LIBUNAO, CalWORKs Supervisor, as the September 2020 Employee of the Month. The Commission recognized Mr. Libunao for his work with CalWORKs and his immense contributions as a Disaster Service Worker (DSW) Site Manager at the emergency housing hotels. David was awarded an engraved desk clock, which he graciously accepted and then dedicated to everyone working at the emergency housing DOC (Department Operation Center). He added that it was the team that made each hotel a success and helped David succeed as a site manager.</p>
CONSENT CALENDAR	<p>On motion of Commissioner Semel, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission approved and ratified actions taken by the Executive Director since the July 23, 2020 Regular Meeting in accordance with Commission authorization of September 24, 2020:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submission of request to encumber funds in the total amount of \$57,424,397 for purchase of services or supplies and contingency amounts. 2. Submission of 0 temporary positions for possible use in order to fill positions on a temporary basis made during the period of 7/11/20 to 8/11/20. 3. Submission of 1 temporary position for possible use in order to fill positions on a temporary basis made during the period of 8/12/20 to 9/10/20. 4. Submission of 2 temporary appointments made during the period of 7/11/20 to 8/11/20. 5. Submission of 8 temporary appointments made during the period of 8/12/20 to 9/10/20.
HOMELESSNESS AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FUND	<p>Justin Chan, Senior Budget Analyst, provided an analysis of the HOMELESSNESS AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FUND FY19-20 savings and reviewed estimates of revenues for FY 20-21 pursuant to Administrative Code Section 10.100-77(e).</p> <p>Commissioner Yamasaki noted that this was not an action item and a vote did not need to occur. The commission heard Mr. Chan's analysis and review and thanked him for the summary.</p>
HONORING COMMISSIONER GEORGE YAMASAKI FOR 45 YEARS OF SERVICE	<p>President Kahn congratulated Commissioner Yamasaki on 45 years of service to the Human Services Commission and presented the commissioner with a commendation from Mayor Breed and a plaque from his fellow commissioners, Executive Director Rhorer and the staff of the Department of Human Services.</p> <p>Executive Director Rhorer read a text from Mayor Breed, who apologized for not being able to make it to the commission meeting and thanked Commissioner Yamasaki for his service. Executive Director Rhorer then thanked Commissioner Yamasaki for his service, noting that September 26 will be exactly 45 years since the commissioner was nominated by Mayor Alioto in 1975. The commission was then called the Social Services Commission. He also shared that for 16 of the 45 years the commissioner served as President of the commission, most recently from 2004-2007. November 10, 2005 is George Yamasaki Day declared by then-Mayor Newsom on occasion of creating the George Yamasaki foster youth college fund. Executive Director Rhorer has a 20-year history with Commissioner Yamasaki. He was in Trent's interview for the director position with then Mayor Brown Chief of Staff Eleanor Johns. So George hired Trent, along with Mayor Brown. Executive Director Rhorer thanked Commissioner Yamasaki for hiring him, and for trusting him to run the Agency for 20 years. Commissioner Yamasaki's caring & leadership for the department are so admirable, and so is his involvement. He never missed a foster youth graduation, foster youth parent appreciation dinner, holiday lunch, or softball tournament. This commitment goes a long way with staff, demonstrating how much a mayoral appointee cares about them. The familiar faces on the Zoom meeting demonstrate the importance of Commissioner Yamasaki's professionalism, intellect, caring & commitment. Executive Director Rhorer concluded by saying that he wished the commissioner's beloved wife, Anne, could join us in this momentous occasion. She would be very proud of you, as is Executive Director Rhorer.</p>
PUBLIC COMMENT	<p>Executive Director Rhorer opened the meeting to public comment. Commissioners Semel and McCray congratulated Commissioner Yamasaki. Then the following members of the public congratulated the commissioner and offered anecdotes of their relationship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard Rahm • Mark Izu and Brenda Wong Aoki • Richard Hashimoto • David Ishida <p>Also for the record is the Zoom "chats," which can qualify as public comment for a virtual commission meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Richard Hashimoto: Yay, George! CONGRATULATIONS!!! • From Mark Izu & Brenda Wong Aoki: George - you SWING!! • From Richard Hashimoto: Woo Hoo!!! • From Jennifer Heggie: George, Thank you for all you've done for this city for the last 45 years, including donating your exceptional piano skills. Congratulations!

- From Arlene Hylton: Congratulations Commissioner George Yamasaki (Dad) I am so proud of you and all you do.
- From Luigi F Lucaccini: Congratulations on 45 years of public service!!
- From DKelly: You're a wonderful presence on our Commission.
- From Kara Valls: Congrats, George!!!
- From Beverly Tharp: Congratulations! You're an inspiration and your friendship is a treasure. Aloha Keoki!
- From Noelle Simmons: Thank you, Commissioner Yamasaki, for your incredible personal commitment to the Agency and its mission. You are an inspiration!
- From Sophia Isom: Congratulation Commissioner Yamasaki. Your 45 years of service with HSA is greatly appreciated.
- From Arlene Hylton: you are such an inspiration to all of us.
- From Paper Tree: Congratulations, George! The entire Mihara family sends our sincere congratulations on an honor well deserved! You are an amazing talent, an upstanding citizen of San Francisco, and a pillar of the Japanese American community. We love you!
- From Judith Harding: George Yamasaki and I went to the same high school in Honolulu, just a few years apart. We only met when our daughters became close friends in their freshman year at University High School. Since that time, in the mid-seventies, George has been enriching our lives with his beautiful music. His gifts included weddings, funerals, a birthday at the Plush Room and one on the Potomac. Whatever he does, whether serving on the HS commission, practicing immigration law, preserving Hawaiian culture, and above all, making music.
- From Gregory Vilorio: On behalf of the Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival...congratulations on an amazing milestone...with gratitude...
- From Richard Rahm: On behalf of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California Historical Society, Congratulations -- you are an invaluable, unforgettable asset to the Historical Society as well as to the City!
- From Luigi F Lucaccini: Augurii, Giorgio!!!
- From Arlene Hylton: On behalf of all foster children in San Francisco, we thank you Commissioner Yamasaki, thanks for all your support throughout the years.

Commissioner Yamasaki then requested an opportunity to respond to the outpouring of support and explain a few special details about this tenure. Commissioner Yamasaki considered his most important act as a commissioner was to urge successfully, along with then-commission-president Brian Gaines, Mayor Brown to name Trent as Executive Director. Commissioner Yamasaki paid tribute to and thanked Executive Director Rhorer for his tremendous contributions to the City and its residents during his 20-year tenure -- and expressed his deepest gratitude to Trent for warmly recalling Anne in his generous remarks.

The celebration concluded with a photo slide show of Commissioner Yamasaki in various phases of his 45 years of service and was narrated by Planning Director Dan Kelly. Toward the end of the slide show, thanks to Commissioner Yamasaki's childhood friend from Hawaii, guests viewed photos of the commissioner in his elementary school in Hawaii. It was a lovely photographic overview of a great man.

ADJOURNMENT

President Kahn adjourned the meeting in memory of Ruth Bader-Ginsburg and asked Commissioner Semel to share details of Bader-Ginsburg's legacy with the Commission.

Adjournment of the Human Services Commission September 24, 2020 Regular Meeting occurred at 11:02 a.m.



Elizabeth LaBarre, Commission Secretary
Human Services Commission

Posted: 10.6.2020