



## Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Advisory Committee Minutes of the April 17, 2012 Meeting

**Committee Members Present:** Commissioner Pappas, Angie Perone, Amy Whelan, Alex Batty, Amos Lim, Bart Broome, Bianca Polovina, Bonnie Miluso, Bill Ambrunn, Diane Alcala, Fayaz Rajani, Mark Murphy, Matthew Valdez, Marcelle Million, Mike Van Nguyen, Neo Veavea, Patrick Pablo, Paul Klees, Ray Rudolph, Tracy Garza, and Vaughn Villaverde.

**Committee Members Absent:** Commissioner Mavis, Corrin Buchanan, Cynthia Yeung, Mark Snyder, Mark Dunlop, Sterling Johnson, and Thomas Temprano.

**Staff Present:** Nadia Babella

### 1. Call to Order and Roll Call:

Commissioner Pappas called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. Nadia Babella called the roll. There was quorum.

### 2. Public Comments for Items Not on the Agenda:

None.

### 3. Approval of March 20, 2012 Minutes (action item):

Motion was made by Bart Broome to approve the minutes and seconded by Paul Klees. The motion passed unanimously.

### 4. Transition of the LGBT Advisory Committee

Director Theresa Sparks introduced herself and informed everyone that Commissioner Pappas was appointed to head the LGBT Advisory Committee after Cecilia Chung was appointed by San Francisco's Mayor Lee to the Health Commission. Commissioner Pappas is the Director of the Interfaith Council. The Interfaith Council is comprised of 758 congregations. He cares deeply about LGBT issues.

Commissioner Pappas expressed gratitude for his new appointment as the LGBT Advisory Committee chair. He spoke of his work with the faith community. The faith community is becoming more open to LGBT members as exemplified by the fact that the Interfaith Council hired him, a member of the LGBT community, as their Director. The Interfaith Council hosts a breakfast where members of the clergy and laypersons share their faith journey. Director Sparks spoke at one of the breakfasts. Commissioner Pappas expressed his belief that houses of worship are places for LGBT seniors to connect, for example.

Commissioner Pappas informed everyone present that he looks forward to working with and getting to know all of the LGBT Advisory Committee members. Commissioner Pappas shared that he is a proud father of three children – an eighteen-year-old and ten-year-old twins.

Commissioner Pappas congratulated Commissioner Cecilia Chung on her appointment to the Health Commission and expressed his continued desire to continue working with her.



Commissioner Chung stated that she worked with the Commission and Committee for seven years, and she is very proud of the work the Committee has carries out. Commissioner Chung said that she is confident that Commissioner Pappas will provide great leadership and continue to take the Committee to new heights because of his existing work with LGBT and faith-based communities. Commissioner Chung also expressed that human rights impacts are also a public health impacts. She thanked the Committee for everything they have taught her.

##### **5. Jamie Wagner: Proposed Project to Provide Legal Services to LGBT Seniors and Disabled Adults Presentation**

Jamie Wagner is working on a project to provide legal services to LGBT seniors and disabled adults through the Bay Area Legal Aid. Bay Area Legal Aid is the largest, legal services provider to low-income individuals in the Bay Area. Mr. Wagner's focus is to increase and expand existing public services to disabled seniors, who are not normally aware of these services.

Mr. Wagner identifies as an LGBT, male, resident of the Bay Area (twenty years now), as someone with AIDS, and disabled. It was not until after his AIDS diagnosis, while coping with a serious bout of an AIDS-related illness, that he first interacted with the public sector. They helped him seek out public benefits file appeals and cope with the ensuing denials to his appeals. This process is unfortunately an all too common reality for many. During this period of illness, Mr. Wagner was also indigent. It was this initial exposure to the public sector that catapulted Mr. Wagner into law school. Mr. Wagner's focus is to increase and expand existing public services to disabled seniors.

Mr. Wagner referenced the most recent SAGE report to highlight informative findings about older LGBT individuals. The SAGE report outlined how older members of the LGBT communities – especially low-income individuals – become more “tribal” as they age. In other words, older LGBT individuals tend to surround themselves with those they are familiar and comfortable and not with persons outside their circle or community because of fear of discrimination and homophobia. This, according to Mr. Wagner, is compounded by the fact that the City of San Francisco has transformed from once being an affordable place to nearly inaccessible by many because of its increase in the cost of living. It is also challenging for older individuals to live here because Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is not enough, and the amount given to recipients has not been raised in many years. Currently, SSI recipients receive \$845 a month, and this amount is simply not enough to live here in the City of San Francisco.

Mr. Wagner's proposed project, coupled with the expertise and existing infrastructure of Bay Area Legal Aid, seeks to expand existing public benefits specifically to disabled seniors. This project would be the first of its kind because it seeks to serve disabled seniors as a particular class. Mr. Wagner believes that this is foundations.

When speaking of public benefits, Mr. Wagner is speaking of SSI, SSDI, Medi-Cal, Medicaid, Medicare, in-home support services (IHSS) and food stamps. He noted that existing policy of people receiving public benefits allows for benefits to actually be docked if the person simultaneously receives public benefits from existing, different government programs. And, if someone is also employed while receiving public benefits they, most often than not, will also have their benefits reduced. Generally, when this occurs, a reduction in public benefits, the individual will have ten days to respond and have a hearing on the government's proposed reduction of their public benefits. Mr. Wagner's proposed project would come into play, because his program would provide crucial assistance during this interim process. Mr. Wagner informed the audience that if the individual does not respond during the allotted time (ten days), Social Security will assume that the person has approved the reduction without any opposition and automatically go forward with the reduction. The reduction may be up to \$140 dollars a month, and this amount, said Mr. Wagner, may be enough to trigger someone not being able to make their monthly rent payment, for example. This is worrisome because non-payment of rent in the State of California is grounds for eviction. Mr. Wagner expressed these factors – lack of monies being channeled to public benefits, existing hurdles to receiving public benefits and the different mechanisms that allow for one's public benefits to be docked combine to make a “silent tragedy” that needs to be fixed.

Mr. Wagner handed out a summary of his proposed project to audience members, and he also welcomed comments or questions.

Question: Are the services Mr. Wagner spoke of already being provided by Bay Area Legal Aid? Yes, however, Mr. Wagner said, Bay Area Legal Aid is interested in collaborating with him because Mr. Wagner would serve as a bridge between LGBT communities and the Bay Area Legal Aid organization, to make sure services are being accessed by this community. Some LGBT seniors have "issues" with being associated with an "LGBT" organization – this gets back to pre-Stonewall experiences with homophobia that many older LGBT individuals dealt with growing up.

Question: What about existing LGBT organizations? Will Mr. Wagner duplicate existing services? Also what did Mr. Wagner mean when he said that, "Older individuals tend to lose their web of support with an LGBT organization." Addressing the former, Mr. Wagner said that there is no particular organization that is focusing on providing public benefits legal representation to this particular community. There are specific needs this community has. For example, lesbians and transgender individuals have particular health concerns that require public benefits. A transgender older citizen may have to deal with health issues stemming from the use of hormones over a long period of time. Addressing the latter, Mr. Wagner noted that for him loss of "web of support" refers to the individuals having to leave this haven (City of San Francisco) because they cannot afford it, and then after their departure having to realize that San Francisco provides a unique web of resources and social support, forcing some to go back into the "closet" after leaving the City.

Bill informed Mr. Wagner that this past January, the Board of Supervisors looked at the issue of the importance of eviction defense and creating a pool of monies to provide assistance to individuals in the midst of that process. Bill recommended that Mr. Wagner contact Tommy A. Mecca, and that Mr. Wagner take a look at a recent report that was published by an SRO collaborative because the report focused on LGBT seniors in those specific communities.

Commissioner Pappas expressed that there is momentum building around the issue of collecting demographic information and issue of affordable housing and public services for LGBT seniors.

Question: There are four letters in "LGBT" - How will Mr. Wagner work with each of these communities? Is there a particular community he would seek to get more help to outreach to and serve to make sure they are well served? Mr. Wagner is working on increasing his understanding of the specific issues that transgender seniors or lesbian seniors. Mr. Wagner will reach out to existing groups that work with these communities to learn how to reach out to all of these diverse groups.

## **6. Tom Temprano**

Mr. Temprano was unable to make the meeting because he was ill. Commissioner Pappas proposed rescheduling his presentation.

## **7. Workgroup Report Back**

### **Beyond Castro**

Angie Perone reported that the group will meet with service providers in District 10 on May 1. The meeting will be hosted by the Black Coalition on Aids. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. The Black Coalition on AIDS is located on 2800 Third Street, San Francisco, CA 94107. The goal of the meeting is to ascertain what are the issues affecting District 10 LGBT residents and to set the agenda for the larger panel discussion. This meeting is a prelude to a panel discussion about District 10, and the panel discussion is intended to mark the one-year anniversary of the Beyond Castro Group's first District 10 meeting.

## **LGBT Housing**

The next Advisory Committee meeting will take place at the API Wellness Center and will host a panel on housing issues affecting the LGBT community. The panel will address five areas of LGBT housing: (1) youth (two speakers), (2) shelter community (Episcopal Community Services spokesperson will be there), (3) AIDS Emergency Fund representative, (4) Seth Kilbourn from Openhouse will be there do discuss senior issues, and (5) SROs. The group is currently looking for an SRO spokesperson. Also, Bevan Dufty will be there. Supervisor Kim will be unable to attend as initially planned because she has to speak at a graduation. The flier for the LGBT Housing Panels is still under production. Structurally, panelists will be given a specified amount of time to talk, and then a question and answer session will take place. People were encouraged to bring fliers about their respective organizations. The group has worked hard to make this event happen. Commissioner Pappas noted this has been a great experience for him.

The panelists will answer questions given to them. The final goal of all of this is for them to give policy recommendations on how to better serve LGBT communities, to share whatever data the panelists' respective organization has on LGBT communities, and to ascertain what organizations are working with the transgender community – if so, how. Each panelist has been given seven minutes to answer questions posed by the group. The group will subsequently draft policy recommendations to the San Francisco Human Rights Commission. This ties back to the beginning of the year because this was initially proposed as a POP.

It was recommended that group draft an op-ed to reach a wider audience. The group is open to suggestions, and is also currently looking for a food sponsor. Group is making a push to really reach out to the homeless and marginalized communities. Commissioner Pappas recommended that we attempt to record (video) this upcoming event because of the caliber of speakers and important subject matter. Channel 29, generally, records all Commissioner meetings; however, departments have to pay for this service and it's very expensive. An alternative would be doing a low-budget production by a Committee member.

## **LGBT Youth**

The LGBT Youth Group reported that they met with Kevin Gogin of the LGBT Support Services in the San Francisco Unified School District. At their meeting, Mr. Gogin had shared that he had new data coming back to them regarding student health survey. Vaughn and Patrick had asked Mr. Gogin regarding the responsibilities of the staff liaisons to the GSA and what exactly do people have to do to be chosen as a GSA and receive the \$800 dollars for their work? The Committee learned that a GSA liaison is given one year to perform and if they are not up to par they are released. The district had also conducted LGBTQ cultural sensitivity training for physical education teachers.

The Committee recommended that the San Francisco Unified School District create a website that caters to LGBT youth. Kevin had expressed to them that the reason they don't have a centralized list of LGBT organizations catering to youth was because of safety issues. They have tried to create a central list of LGBT organizations and post it on their website but the Organizations subsequently received hate mail. It is because of this that the S.F. Unified School District has refrained from posting that information on a centralized website catering to LGBT youth.

With respect to enforcement of the 2010 resolution, Mark Murphy emailed School Board Member Sandra Lee Fewer who was excited to take the issue on. She is the head of the Curriculum and Program Committee of the School Board and plans to put this topic on her agenda for their May meeting.

The workgroup also spoke about S.B. 48, which requires social science curriculum in schools to include LGBT history. There will be a committee working on this, but for now they are working on finding supplemental materials for teacher to use since, as of now, there is no set LGBT curriculum for schools to use. Commissioner Chung informed everyone that the State Department of Education has developed guidelines for schools on how to implement LGBT curriculum in their classes. Commissioner Chung

expressed, it's good that students cannot opt-out of those classes, and reminded everyone that our City Colleges teach "Queer Studies," therefore, they too are sources of where to pull material from.

## **8. Member Reports on Activities in the Community**

Bill Ambrunn reported on current LGBT senior efforts. He informed audience members that today there was a meeting at City Hall to announce the creation of an LGBT Seniors Task Force. The Task Force was introduced by Supervisors Scott Wiener, David Campos and Christina Olague. The Task Force will hold hearings for fifteen months and will then have three months to draft and send a report to the Board of

Supervisors with recommendations on how to improve the lives of LGBT seniors here in San Francisco. It will be an eleven-member entity, and each individual will be appointed by the Board of Supervisors. The background of each Task Force member will range from experts and advocates in the area as well as LGBT seniors from our communities. Commissioner Pappas recommended that the Supervisors be invited to the May 24, 2012, hearing and be able to draft a resolution of support of this recent action by the Supervisors.

Bill also expressed that research on LGBT seniors is lacking at the federal and state level. The City's Departments do not require that they systematically collect information pertaining to sexual and gender identity during their intake process. The federal government is doing this – LGBT data collection – in a limited capacity – some national health surveys. Bill also expressed that we need to work with faith-based communities because LGBT seniors are involved in that sector, too. It is great timing that Commissioner Pappas is now heading the LGBT Advisory Committee.

Bill also informed everyone that the San Francisco D.A. has formed an LGBT Community Steering Committee. The D.A.'s committee is comprised of twenty individuals and they will meet on a quarterly basis to get feedback from community members. The D.A. will be attending these meetings and has expressed a desire for feedback from attendees; Channel 2 will be providing some news coverage about the inception of this new Committee. Angie noted that there was a Transgender and Aging symposium which, again, illustrates the lack of services that LGBT are grappling with. Commissioner Chung noted that the City of Philadelphia has become the first city in the U.S. to have an LGBT housing senior project. The City of Philadelphia just received 11M to create their housing project.

## **9. Commissioner Report**

Commissioner Pappas discussed the War on Drugs Hearing. He noted that this would impact existing policy and asked Nadia to share some her thoughts of what went on. Commissioner Pappas also reported that on April, 26 the Commission meeting will be held at a public library in the Sunset to hear from the community in Sunset. Recently they have changed their meeting time to 5:30 to encourage more attendance. The Commission wants more people to attend, especially those that are engaged in the trenches and in the field.

Commissioner Pappas shared his contact information. He encouraged people to reach out to him. In addition he made the following announcements: 1) Therese Sparks recently wrote an op-ed for the BAR. 2) Rules Committee meeting will be taking place in City Hall, and their topic is the approval of a new health commissioner, Commissioner Chung. If people can't attend, it's possible to submit letters of support for said individuals. 3) Planning for pride. Please work with Nadia on this.

## **10. Announcements:**

Nadia reported that the Human Rights Impact of the War on Drugs that took place at the Board of Supervisors Chamber was a great success. There were nine agendized speakers addressing the impact of the War on Drugs on human rights. They addressed issues such as racial disparity rates in arrests and

convictions rate despite similar use across racial groups and the post conviction impacts such as loss of eligibility to student loans, food stamps, voting, employment and housing.

Looking at drug addiction as health issue rather a criminal issue was also discussed at the hearing. One person testified that he was arrested seventeen times and it was not until the last time that he received an offer to help him combat his addiction. He was offered treatment in lieu of incarceration. Commissioner Chung expressed that we need sentencing alternatives, and we also need to learn more about restorative justice.

Zoe Polk is working on the Report which will have recommendations and findings.

With respect to LGBT representation on SF Commissions, about 12.5% self-identify as LGBT and it seems that half of the Commissions have at least one LGBT member on their Commission.

**11. Old/New Business:**

None.

**12. Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:19 p.m.