

**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA ITEM TRANSMITTAL**

(1) DEPARTMENT Board of Supervisors		(2) MEETING DATE April 4, 2006		(3) CONTACT/PHONE James Patterson, 781-5450	
(4) SUBJECT Request the Board to receive and file the report presented at the Board on the Homeless Enumeration Project and provide staff direction regarding the county's role in working with cities, the Homeless Services Coordinating Council and other stakeholders in addressing homelessness throughout the county.					
(5) SUMMARY OF REQUEST The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires all applicants to conduct an annual homeless count as a part of the Supportive Housing Grant application. In the summer of 2005, it was determined that the need for more accurate and current data about the homeless population of San Luis Obispo County was needed, and members of the homeless service community came together in October 2005 in a collaborative effort to count the numbers of homeless persons living in the County.					
(6) RECOMMENDED ACTION It is recommended that the Board: 1) receive and file the report presented at the Board on the Homeless Enumeration Project conducted throughout San Luis Obispo County in October 2005; 2) direct staff from appropriate County Departments to work in some appropriate capacity with cities, the Homeless Services Coordinating Council (HSCC) and other stakeholders to develop a long-term, equitable and sustainable program for funding homeless services.					
(7) FUNDING SOURCE(S) N/A		(8) CURRENT YEAR COST N/A		(9) ANNUAL COST N/A	
(10) BUDGETED? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> NO					
(11) OTHER AGENCY/ADVISORY GROUP INVOLVEMENT (LIST): Department of Social Services has been involved, and will likely continue to be involved at some level. There may be some role for other county Departments to play in the future.					
(12) WILL REQUEST REQUIRE ADDITIONAL STAFF? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, How Many? _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Term _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Contract _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Help _____					
(13) SUPERVISOR DISTRICT(S) 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th <u>All</u>			(14) LOCATION MAP <input type="checkbox"/> Attached <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A		
(15) AGENDA PLACEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> Consent <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing (Time Est. _____) <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Board Business (Time Est. <u>15 min</u> )			(16) EXECUTED DOCUMENTS <input type="checkbox"/> Resolutions (Orig + 4 copies) <input type="checkbox"/> Contracts (Orig + 4 copies) <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinances (Orig + 4 copies) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A		
(17) NEED EXTRA EXECUTED COPIES? <input type="checkbox"/> Number: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Attached <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A			(18) APPROPRIATION TRANSFER REQUIRED? <input type="checkbox"/> Submitted <input type="checkbox"/> 4/5th's Vote Required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A		

(19) ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE REVIEW	OK G. Wilcox	D-1 (4.4.06)
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# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1055 MONTEREY, ROOM D430 • SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA 93408-2040 • 805.781.5450



**JAMES R. PATTERSON**  
SUPERVISOR DISTRICT FIVE

TO: Board of Supervisors  
FROM: James Patterson  
DATE: April 4, 2006  
SUBJECT: Presentation of a report on the Homeless Enumeration Project

## Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board: 1) receive and file a report on the Homeless Enumeration Project conducted throughout San Luis Obispo County in October 2005; and; 2) direct County staff to continue to support the efforts of the Homeless Services Coordinating Council (HSCC) and other stakeholders to identify a long-term, equitable and sustainable program for funding homeless services.

## Background

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires all applicants to conduct an annual homeless count as a part of the Supportive Housing Grant application. In the summer of 2005, it was determined that the need for more accurate and current data was becoming critical because services, grant writing, advocacy, and program development were based on old data.

On October 26, 2005 approximately 50 members of the homeless service community came together in a collaborative effort to count the numbers of homeless persons living in the county. During the count 2,408 individuals were identified as homeless. Of those, 817 were children under the age of 21.

While there is some controversy as to what percentage of the county's total homeless population this number represents, there is agreement that it does not represent all of them. However, no one disputes that on that day, there were 2,408 persons counted as homeless.

The project was a partnership with California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly), the County Department of Social Services (DSS), and various supporting agencies. Dr. Jean Williams, an Associate Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at Cal Poly, was instrumental in the overall design of the enumeration, and specifically the survey. Dr. Williams, in turn hired a graduate student, Philip Alonso, to organize, manage, and analyze the data. Stephan Lamb, Director of Student Community Services at Cal Poly

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and Suzanne Heitzman, recently-retired Homeless Services Coordinator with DSS, are co-chairs of the HSCC and served as project leaders.

### Discussion

The homeless enumeration project was successful in many aspects. In addition to identifying a homeless population which was larger than the estimate the project partners expected, it also provided the opportunity for a collaboration of diverse partners from all over the county to actively participate in the project. It was conducted with limited financial resources, but it was carefully planned and designed so that there were very few problems in the field the day it was implemented. (It should also be noted that one rural area not counted due to lack of resources, was California Valley.)

There was consistent feedback from the service providers that the number of clients present on the day of the count was lower than usual. In various locations throughout the county (Maxine Lewis Memorial Shelter, Prado Day Center, both Loaves and Fishes, and the South County People's Kitchen) there were lower numbers on the day of the count than there were on the day previous and the day after. This was in spite of the fact that there were special breakfasts and other incentives at the count sites and there had been tremendous public coverage prior to the count to educate the community about the project. There was much discussion at the first HSCC debriefing meeting after the count about the negative stigma associated with being identified as homeless. Even though efforts were made to publicize the project as an *anonymous* survey which was necessary to secure more funding to provide future services, the anecdotal reports of numbers indicate that some in the homeless population were reluctant to be included. For that reason, it was decided that future counts will be unannounced.

While other jurisdictions may hire a professional research firm to conduct similar projects that can cost as much as \$150,000 even in jurisdictions smaller than San Luis Obispo County, this study was funded through a \$5,000 contribution from the Board of Supervisors Community Project funds, with time and expertise provided by representatives from many community agencies.

The time between 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. was selected for the count to make the best use of the participating service providers and to reduce the chance of double counting homeless individuals. Some employed homeless people may have been missed because they had already left for work by 7:00 a.m. There may be some advantage to starting before 7:00 a.m. in future enumerations.

It is also important to note that different surveyors may have had different levels of success or cooperation from homeless individuals. For example, caseworkers who were already known in the community had little resistance while a park ranger, who often is required to remove homeless encampments from parks and creek beds, encountered some unwillingness to answer the survey. For that reason, law enforcement personnel – other than one officer in the City of San Luis Obispo who is the mental health liaison – were not used as surveyors. This is a difficult situation, however, as many of the areas are considered unsafe for a volunteer to canvass.

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### Other Agency Involvement

The group that collaborated on the Homeless Enumeration Project was the HSCC Steering Committee. The key organizations comprising the HSCC Steering Committee are:

- San Luis Obispo County Department of Social Services
- Transitions, Mental Health Association, Inc.
- California Polytechnic State University
- Friends of Prado Day Center
- Homeless Outreach Program
- Community Health Centers of the Central Coast
- Economic Opportunity Commission of San Luis Obispo County, Inc.

With the Board's approval of the recommended action, the County Administrator will identify County staff who will work with representatives from the cities, the Homeless Services Coordinating Council (HSCC) and other stakeholders to develop the funding proposal

### Financial Considerations

There is no direct or additional financial cost to the County associated with the actions recommended, however, there may be improved delivery of homeless services and additional HUD funding in the future as a result of the new data from this project.

### Results

The data from the Homeless Enumeration Study will be used to stimulate more thoughtful and informed community dialog on homeless issues, to inform future policy decisions, and to support future grant requests and the determination of funding needs.

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