

**FW: Agenda Item 8.3**

City Clerk &lt;city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov&gt;

Mon 10/23/2023 1:03 PM

To:Agendadesk &lt;Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov&gt;

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**From:** Kathryn Hedges <[REDACTED]>**Sent:** Monday, October 23, 2023 12:52 PM**To:** City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>; cityattorney@sanjoseca.gov; citymanager@sanjoseca.gov; The Office of Mayor Matt Mahan <mayor@sanjoseca.gov>; District1 <district1@sanjoseca.gov>; District2 <District2@sanjoseca.gov>; District3 <district3@sanjoseca.gov>; District4 <District4@sanjoseca.gov>; District5 <District5@sanjoseca.gov>; District 6 <district6@sanjoseca.gov>; District7 <District7@sanjoseca.gov>; District8 <district8@sanjoseca.gov>; District9 <district9@sanjoseca.gov>; District 10 <District10@sanjoseca.gov>**Subject:** Agenda Item 8.3

[External Email]

Dear Mayor, Vice Mayor, and City Councilmembers:

I am a registered voter in District 3 in Downtown San Jose. I am also a member of the Affordable Housing Network and SURJ and know members of our accountability partner Survivors Of the Streets. AHN and SURJ have not had time to form an official position statement on Agenda Item 8.3, but I believe my personal opinions on affordable housing and racial equity touched on by this agenda item are in line with their typical positions on those issues.

1. I strongly oppose any additional funding to Home First after the recent firing of several experienced, competent staff members at the Sunnyvale shelter, who were all Black. (The White employee they fired was the General Manager, not staff.) I met those former employees at the County Board of Supervisors when I joined other groups protesting the extension of County contracts with Home First. They seemed like people who cared about their clients and apparently the remaining staff are not as compassionate. Besides the ethical issue of awarding contracts to a contractor that appears to engage in racial discrimination against employees, I am concerned that this action may signal racial prejudices they may have against Black clients that would affect service equity. There is also a significant pragmatic concern that an organization that is fighting fair employment lawsuits may be unable to hire the best employees, will be distracted from their responsibilities to clients, and may not even continue to exist for the full 5-year contract term.
2. I am disturbed by reports of how Home First infantilizes their clients and engages in petty tyranny such as forbidding anyone at the Sunnyvale shelter from speaking the name of their beloved former shelter manager. Why should the City contract with providers who can't treat their clients with respect? Residents feel they are not being treated as full human beings, and that is unacceptable.
3. Besides the issues with Home First as a contractor, the report goes into detail about the necessity of providing permanent affordable housing so that interim housing clients can move into permanent housing. It is clear that if there are no paths out of interim housing, people will either fall back into unsheltered homelessness if they "time out" of interim housing or they will be stuck permanently in interim housing

and there will be few vacancies to get new people off the streets. (And EIH does not seem like a viable long-term living situation.) The Mayor and his cronies need to stop campaigning against affordable housing and promoting "Haven of Hope" in Texas as a model to emulate here.

4. Regarding specific aspects of the report, such as security, I defer to the people with lived experience in SOS and the Homelessness Response Group. My general impression is that EIH sites are like prison camps where residents aren't supposed to make friends, domestic violence and violence between residents is condoned, visitors from residents' support networks are banned, and morale is so bad that staff can't get residents to attend programs without bribes. There is a lack of access to preventive medical/mental health care so that people don't get help until they're in some sort of crisis and someone calls 911. People worry about being kicked out when they time out of the EIH even if they're not in the location with the CalTrans lease restriction on residency. Just as in permanent supportive housing, people who act out a lot are housed indiscriminately with people who are physically/mentally vulnerable. It sounds like a hellish living situation and I support whatever improvements the residents and others with lived experience recommend.

Please do the right thing and replace Home First with a different contractor. None of the homelessness service providers are ideal but Home First is far below the rest. Also, please vote for the recommended improvements and any additional changes requested by the people affected by these issues.

I don't approve of the City's suggestion that residents should save money by self-policing the EIH sites because they need to be recovering, not working. Obligations for community watch shifts would interfere with access to outside services and appointments as well as be inappropriate for their mental state coming out of homelessness. It would be dangerous to try to defend against outsiders with ill intent when they lack training or authority.

Kind regards,

Kathryn Hedges



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**FW: City council Agenda item 8.3 10/24/23**

City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

Tue 10/24/2023 7:55 AM

To: Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>

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**From:** Debra Townley <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 23, 2023 10:40 PM  
**To:** City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>  
**Subject:** City council Agenda item 8.3 10/24/23

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Dear Honorable Mayor, Vice Mayor and Council Members,

My name is Debra Townley. I am frightened at the prospect of Home First being propelled forward with funding to continue to mistreat the people that they are meant to serve.

I am writing to you as a person with Lived Experience. In order for you to better understand my perspective, I have to out myself as a formerly homeless person, a disabled person, and a person experiencing poverty. These are things I would so very much like to keep silent.

But I can't because people are suffering.

I am a mom and degreed teacher who was married to a hardware engineer. Our family moved to the Bay Area in my 20's. Over the years, I was a stay-at-home mom, a licensed preschool owner, a Court Appointed Special Advocate, a foster parent, a good citizen, neighbor and friend. I hold a Bachelor of Science in Education, and an Associate of Fine Arts.

I have enjoyed access to some of the best mental healthcare practitioners, cutting-edge medical care providers, and holistic practitioners in the Bay area.

Several life-changing events that affected my mental and physical health, within a short period of time, while living in a district with few resources, contributed to my homelessness. The long story short includes divorce, a car accident, and experiencing disability while caring for a disabled adult child.

I fully expected my savings to get us through recovering from these life events until I could work again. Unfortunately, as my health deteriorated and my savings dwindled, my son and I moved from home ownership to rentals, to an RV and finally we had to live in our SUV.

While homeless, I visited the largest shelter in the county for help. Little Orchard, a Home First shelter. The name resounded with hope and growth and abundance.

But there, on that cold and misty day, I found a courtyard full of people with disabilities suffering in the elements just outside the mostly empty facility. Staff were inside. The guests were not allowed to go inside until lunch and then they had to go back outside again. The smell of urine and feces and garbage permeated the air. My shoes became muddy with filth just walking from the parking lot to the door of the facility. Inside the courtyard, people slumped on the ground. There was a man there who was crying, who had tardive dyskinesia. He spoke like a professor with a dignified vocabulary, but he stuttered and stammered as his body contorted and jerked with spasms. He told me that he was in terrible pain, exhausted from the spasms and suicidal. That he needed care but that the staff had written him off as an addict in the throes of withdrawal

and couldn't be bothered with him. They told him he could not be seen by the homeless healthcare doctors there. He had soiled himself and was in great need.

I waited with many others in a long line that starts forming for medical care before the sun comes up. I arrived exhausted and sick. I was incredibly anxious, i joined the line for medical care outside the facility. We sat on the cold wet concrete that was painful for me due to degenerative disc disease and arthritis. Some of us were told after hours of waiting in the elements, that the appointment schedule is now FULL. I had to return the next day to try again. When i did finally get in to be seen there, the staff questioned the validity of my homelessness, had a police officer intimidate my son while questioning the validity of my son's service dog, interrogated me about my full life's history from "birth to now," yelled at me to not rest on the edge of a concrete wall, refused to contact my former providers to confirm my medical history that they refused to believe me about, misdiagnosed me with a severe mental illness, asked that i be drug tested immediately and regularly, refused my regular medications for chronic conditions, and instead trained me to use a Narcan kit. They also got in my face to wake me when I closed my eyes to rest them.

When i voiced that i was dissatisfied and wanted a referral to other resouces, they referred me "in-house" by sending me to another of their locations where staff was equally dismissing and angry with me for not being visible when they called my name.

This was the first time in my life I had ever been treated this way by people caring for our most vulnerable. It unfortunately was not the last. I found out over time that it is a trend for some providers. My guess is that staff become burnt out and desensitized to the difficulties and suffering and that they look the other way when collegues behave badly, or they can no longer lead with dignity and blame the homeless for their ongoing predicaments. I do understand the patience and continual practice it takes to remain caring in an uncaring world. But this must change. We cannot continue to allow it.

Tragically, because our most vulnerable are often in such a powerless dynamic with providers, they put up with it for a sliver of comfort, a meal, an overhang to avoid the rain, a bed at night.

But I had a car, thank the good Lord.

I was able to decline their offer to split my son and I apart, shelter us only at night, and keep our dogs in kennels.

Please, I beg of you. Find another provider to evolve with the NEW trend of caring for our most vulnerable that includes a supportive, trauma informed, resilience and strength based approach to providing environments and staff that foster hope and growth and an abundance of successful outcomes.

Debra Townley

One Person with Lived Experience

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## FW: Homeless Shelter Proposal: Via Del Oro and San Ignacio

City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

Tue 10/24/2023 7:51 AM

To: Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>

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**From:** julie <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 23, 2023 3:50 PM  
**To:** City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>; District 10 <District10@sanjoseca.gov>  
**Subject:** Homeless Shelter Proposal: Via Del Oro and San Ignacio

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Arjun Batra & Full City Council

I first learned of the generous proposal by Sobrato at the Tuesday, October 17, City Council Meeting - kudo's to Sobrato. The news caught my attention on several levels: this will be the fourth homeless facility within a 7 minute drive of my home of 30 years; VTA safe parking, Rue Ferrari, Bernal and Monterey. I understand 6,000 fellow human beings, sleeping in cars, under bridges, etc is not humane and \$1/year is a price that cannot be ignored. I dug deep within myself and have focused my energy on how we can increase the odds of success of this "experiment", as Matt Mahan referred to the relocatable homes approach.

To that end, what is the status of San Jose embracing the 1,000 foot buffer zone similar to Rohnert Park for Labath Landing? In the 30 years I have lived here I have never seen any homeless encampment on the Sobrato property. It would break my heart to watch a facility be constructed, an effort to help the homeless in a compassionate way, lead to tents popping up just outside the defined area without providing the City with the legal right to stop such activity. The land is right along Santa Teresa Blvd, a much traveled road – homeless encampments right along such a busy road would be a tragedy.

Additionally, I fervently ask that consideration be given to the exterior of the homeless shelter locations. I am hopeful plants/irrigation can be incorporated in the design to help soften the impression of a prison-like environment which I consistently see at the 3 other facilities in my neighborhood. Perhaps we can invite neighborhood plant nursery stores such as SummerWinds discount/donate plants and we invite local landscape/irrigation specialists to discount/donate their time? In exchange, publicity. A strong effort could be made to spread the word of their generosity in similar fashion to how the news of Sobrato's generosity spread in the news like wild fire; hero's on every corner. Most critical, will it look like the ghetto style safe parking fencing at the VTA safe parking site (which I believe all who have seen it would agree is quite dreadful). Please request that Dignity Homes incorporate a landscaping feature to the exterior of the fencing in their cost/benefit analysis. By taking the time to consider the community input on what will ease the stress/challenge of embracing homeless shelters as neighbors, we increase the likelihood of a successful experiment.

I visited Rue Ferrari four times since the Council meeting to get a personal experience of whether I feel safe and just to see what it looks like. Does the area look neat and tidy? Would I be willing to take children/walk my dog down Rue Ferrari in front of the homeless shelter, etc. I even spoke with the mailman, who happened to be delivering mail while I was there, about his daily experience. I am thrilled to share he said he feels safe, that the people who come out of the gated area to walk their dogs etc. have never bothered him, made him uncomfortable. I was encouraged by the conversation.

My disappointment came when on my first visit to Rue Ferrari I saw what looked like it might be an orange tent at the edge of the fencing for the shelter, I took a photo. Sadly, the one tent grew to two tents. Today they have added a large tarp...all within feet of the fencing of Rue Ferrari on the far side from Bernal. Please ensure we are pro-active in protecting the neighbors who are being asked to embrace a 4<sup>th</sup> facility. I am aware of the constraints of the Martin vs Boise Federal 9<sup>th</sup> District puts on all of us, all the more reason we make it a priority to be proactive and ensure the City embraces 1,000 foot buffer. What steps are needed to do this? How does this topic become a formal agenda item?

My home of 30+ years is a 15 minute walk from the Sobrato location. In lovely proximity to the foothills for daily hiking. I need reassurance that my safety and my quality of life will not in jeopardy. I listened carefully to the discussions at the October 17 meeting and I can tell you are striving to find the right balance.

- As an aside, who can I contact to stay current on this specific project – I deeply believe that timely input to Dignity Moves and their respective strategic partners, from the neighborhood community of Via Del Oro/ Great Oaks, (businesses as well as residents) will be of great value in a successful experiment. I am viewing this opportunity as a proto-type for solving unsheltered street homelessness as positioned by Matt. I find it to be an inspiring approach. Having a community that is embracing the solution will greatly add to the short term momentum and the long term success. As stated so well by Dignity Moves: “it takes an all-hands-on-deck and collaborative approach to end unsheltered street homelessness”.

Warm Regards

Julie Murphy  


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FW: action item 8.3 Oct 24

City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

Tue 10/24/2023 7:57 AM

To: Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>

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**From:** Dhanya Rajan [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 24, 2023 5:00 AM  
**To:** City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: action item 8.3 Oct 24

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Please add the below email to public records. I am opposing encampment management program which is turning San Jose into one giant encampment and also opposing how taxpayer money is wasted on failed social experiments. Homelessness is not the emergency here. Lawlessness and lack of accountability is. Thanks

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Dhanya Rajan <[REDACTED]>  
**Date:** Sun, Oct 22, 2023 at 11:10 AM  
**Subject:** Re: Concerned about homelessness emergency declaration  
**To:** Batra, Arjun <Arjun.Batra@sanjoseca.gov>, <City.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>, Jimenez, Sergio <sergio.jimenez@sanjoseca.gov>, Maguire, Jennifer <jennifer.maguire@sanjoseca.gov>, Mahan, Matt <Matt.Mahan@sanjoseca.gov>, Nora <Nora.Frimann@sanjoseca.gov>, Passons, Omar <omar.passons@sanjoseca.gov>, <bien.doan@sanjoseca.gov>, <david.cohen@sanjoseca.gov>, <domingo.candelas@sanjoseca.gov>, omar.torres@sanjoseca.gov <omar.torres@sanjoseca.gov>, <pam.foley@sanjoseca.gov>, <peter.ortiz@sanjoseca.gov>, <rosemary.kamei@sanjoseca.gov>

Hi All,

Forgot to add this link to my previous email

9th Circuit court published a case conclusively establishing that public agencies may promptly clear high-risk homeless encampments that pose an immediate danger to public safety or infrastructure without violating the ADA. <https://silverwrightlaw.com/wdwgb-caltrans-the-9th-circuit-federal-court-of-appeal-over-california-held-that-clearing-high-risk-homeless-encampments-doesnt-violate-the-ada>

Thanks  
Dhanya

On Sun, Oct 22, 2023 at 9:45 AM Dhanya Rajan [REDACTED] wrote:

Hi leaders,

I want to bring to your notice an innovative idea implemented by a shelter in Berkeley where they use empty warehouses to set up tents. It keeps the homeless folks safe from the elements and makes them feel more welcome.

It is a 3-minute video. I urge all of you to watch it. [https://youtu.be/DyCW89f\\_I0M](https://youtu.be/DyCW89f_I0M)

I had emailed this to the Mayor's team when he was campaigning last year.

This solution is still relevant, feasible, and very cost-effective in San Jose. The money the city spends on building infrastructure from scratch could be used in projects like this and subsidizing rents. I always wonder why can't the city screen people, check their skills and preferences to rent apartments in much cheaper cities, and move them out to those cities with some job training or assistance. Subsidized childcare could go a long way in helping a single parent go to work without worrying about the child's safety.

I am really worried about the homelessness emergency memorandum drafted by Deputy City Manager Omar Passons. Homelessness is a crisis that is being engineered. The real crisis here is lawlessness and lack of accountability. The city is already ignoring resident complaints about the failed 'encampment management' program. One can only wonder about how things are going to be once you bypass the minimal public safety and health ordinances that the city currently has. What we witness is that people who do illegal things, refuse shelter, break rules, vandalize, and trash neighborhoods are given the free pass. It is time to bring back the enforcement and consider cost-effective solutions to handle the homelessness issue. EIHs are not going to solve everything. Repeat offenders who have been allowed to roam the neighborhoods should be tracked and held accountable for their actions. Criminal activity needs to be back as a trigger for abatement. MoUs with Union Pacific should be followed to keep tracks and transit stations clear.

A city is a reflection of what the leaders allow to happen. If housing affordability is the only issue, why are the neighboring cities in our county faring much better? We don't see litter or tents everywhere. Those cities must be doing something better than San Jose.

San Jose is just following SFO, Oakland, and Los Angeles. Please let me know anything you are doing differently than these cities. You cannot do the same things and expect different results.

I can give you an example of Foster City. It is just 10 minutes away from SFO. None of the issues SFO faces has spread to Foster City. It is clean and has respect for the taxpayers living there.

Here we are asked to put up with all kinds of lawlessness and 'quality of life crimes'

We deserve better. I would like to know your thoughts about the 'tents in a warehouse' idea and why cannot the city rent facilities or apartments in cheaper locations. Look at the table below. \$51,632 per bed/year is more than a mortgage payment or rent for a very luxurious apartment. Something does not add up here.



Thanks  
Dhanya

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Gema Escorcía** <[district10@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:district10@sanjoseca.gov)>

Date: Wed, Dec 21, 2022 at 2:57 PM

Subject: Re: Innovative solution for homelessness (from Berkeley)

To: [REDACTED]

Hi Dhanya,

Thanks for reaching out to our office with this great information. I will definitely pass it along to Councilmember Mahan and the rest of the team as we look for new solutions to solve our homelessness issue. Thanks again!

Gema Escorcía  
Operations Lead & Council Aid  
Office of Councilmember Matt Mahan  
City of San José | District 10



Email: [gema.escorcia@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:gema.escorcia@sanjoseca.gov)

On Thu, 15 Dec at 9:50 AM , Dhanya Rajan <[REDACTED]> wrote:

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Hi Councilmember Mahan,

I came across this news yesterday. It is about using tents in empty warehouses while folks wait for permanent housing and medical help. Could you please consider implementing this here? I am part of Quality of life committee with Mila Healey and other residents in South San Jose.

[https://youtu.be/DyCW89f\\_IOM](https://youtu.be/DyCW89f_IOM)

Regards,

Dhanya Rajan  
[REDACTED]

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**FW: Agenda Item 8.3**

City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

Tue 10/24/2023 10:03 AM

To:Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>

 1 attachments (31 KB)

AHN Letter to SJ City Council 10-24-23.docx;

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**From:** perrysandy [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Tuesday, October 24, 2023 10:01 AM

**To:** City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>; The Office of Mayor Matt Mahan <mayor@sanjoseca.gov>; District1 <district1@sanjoseca.gov>; District2 <District2@sanjoseca.gov>; District3 <district3@sanjoseca.gov>; District4 <District4@sanjoseca.gov>; District5 <District5@sanjoseca.gov>; District 6 <district6@sanjoseca.gov>; District7 <District7@sanjoseca.gov>; District8 <district8@sanjoseca.gov>; District9 <district9@sanjoseca.gov>; District 10 <District10@sanjoseca.gov>

**Subject:** Re: Agenda Item 8.3

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**AFFORDABLE HOUSING NETWORK** of Santa Clara County

P.O. Box 5313, San Jose, CA 95150 - [REDACTED]

October 24, 2023

RE: ITEM 8.3 OCTOBER 24, 2023

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

Affordable Housing Network of Santa Clara County urges the Council to refrain from allocating further funding to HomeFirst Services unless recent allegations of racial discrimination are addressed and resolved. The San Jose Silicon Valley NAACP and Unhoused Response Group have brought to light several extremely serious instances of discrimination against African American employees that require immediate attention. The City cannot claim to be adhering to a racial and equity policy if it fails to demand that its contracted service providers stop mistreating employees based on the color of their skin.

Sincerely,

Sandy Perry

President

**FW: Please do not give \$6.2M to HomeFirst today**

City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

Tue 10/24/2023 11:46 AM

To: Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>

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**From:** Liz Steward [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 24, 2023 11:43 AM  
**To:** City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>  
**Subject:** Please do not give \$6.2M to HomeFirst today

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Dear Council,

I am writing in regards to the \$6.2 million dollars being offered to HomeFirst today. I do not feel that now is the right time to be giving them extra money and new responsibilities. Their current effort on the responsibilities they already have is worrisome:

1. Current and former clients of HomeFirst's shelter report that they feel unsafe and unheard. At the San Jose shelter, I could smell feces in the outdoor picnic area and it was littered with trash during the times that I went.
2. At the beginning of summer, all parents and children were removed from the Sunnyvale shelter to a hotel. The children did not have case-workers, no one knew if or when they were going to school, and they were exposed to adults having serious mental breakdowns. They have not returned.
3. HomeFirst recently fired six black people in such a way that the NAACP is getting involved.
4. HomeFirst recently fired Kelcy Fleming who was very accommodating and empathetic, after 24 years of service.
5. Current and former staff report having to handle human waste without proper equipment.
6. HomeFirst currently has 41 job openings. On Glassdoor, a company-rating website, employees give them a 2.4 out of 5, only 32% would recommend working there to a friend, and only 55% approve of the CEO.

Now is definitely NOT the time to give HomeFirst more money and new responsibilities.  
Now is the time to ask for:

1. An investigation into all the firings at HomeFirst
2. An Oversight Committee to help them vastly improve how they are run that meets current standards for trauma-informed care for both children and adults.
3. A Task Force to bring in new vendors who can compete with HomeFirst and either deliver a higher standard of care, or by their presence, force HomeFirst to improve their standard of care in order to compete.

Please do not give \$6,200,000 to HomeFirst at this time.

Thank you,

Liz Steward (I am on the Sunnyvale Housing and Human Services Commission, but writing today only as a citizen of Santa Clara County and not as a Commissioner or a representative of Sunnyvale).

-- Sent with <https://mailfence.com> Secure and private email

## FW: Item 8.3

City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

Tue 10/24/2023 12:32 PM

To:Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>

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**From:** iq4rent sc <[REDACTED]>

**Sent:** Tuesday, October 24, 2023 12:20 PM

**To:** City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

**Subject:** Item 8.3

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Hello All,

As you've probably heard already, the Sunnyvale Shelter staff unanimously decided to join SEIU 521. To be clear, a vote has not taken place and HomeFirst has not responded that they recognize the union at Sunnyvale nor companywide per staff and SEIU 521's request. Should HomeFirst decide to challenge the union, the whole issue would then be referred to the National Labor Relations Board where it could take a year for a decision. If HomeFirst does recognize the union, it can take a year for contract negotiations to be completed.

We write to express great concern regarding the awarding of \$6.2m to HomeFirst to manage four tiny home communities throughout San Jose. As you know, the San Jose NAACP has called for an investigation into terminations of almost exclusively Black staff at the Sunnyvale shelter. In the past two years, it seems there is perhaps only one non-Black staff member who was terminated and we've heard from current and former employees at other HomeFirst sites that Black employees have been disciplined and terminated at a disproportionately higher rate.

A Black female staffer at Sunnyvale was terminated for allegedly "yelling at a client," while the next day, a non-Black staffer physically pushed a client to the floor and was directed to watch a de-escalation video. Two identical scenarios, the only difference seems to be one was Black and one was not.

Two Black male Sunnyvale staff, with seven years of combined experience, were the victims of a brutal physical attack. There is one partial HomeFirst video of the incident and it does not show the men striking the client or doing anything other than holding her at bay and later, helping to restrain her until police arrived. Both these men were terminated, had their photos displayed like mug shots in front of the staff book, and existing staff were directed to call police immediately if these men were seen on property. This is racial profiling.

Three mothers of Color with 12 years of experience between them, have been told they must change their child care or they will be terminated. Previous management had accommodated their child care needs, allowing for a ½ hour shift change that current management refuses to acknowledge and has made it clear these women will be terminated at the end of the month. We cannot understand why HomeFirst would choose to be so rigid that they would force out three working mothers of Color during a national child care crisis.

Across the company, HomeFirst can't retain program or shelter staff, yet just in these three instances, they had/have six dedicated staff with over 20 years of combined experience and they terminated or are threatening to terminate all of them. *The remaining Black employees are chilled, some feel as if they're "an endangered species."*

The beloved manager of the Sunnyvale shelter, was just terminated after 24 years. Rather than follow the HomeFirst blanket rule of automatically exiting people from the shelter for a year after a fight, she would investigate to see if someone was having a bad day, off their meds, etc. This undoubtedly kept many people, primarily People of Color, from being traumatized

by being made re-homeless. She didn't tolerate racism towards anyone in her shelter, LGBTQ harassment and was a real mama bear for the families in her care--making holidays special, noticing when family dynamics might be dangerous. Sunnyvale was a genuine safe haven for families, the LGBTQ community and women escaping domestic violence. In just a month, that has all changed and Sunnyvale no longer feels like a safe haven for anyone, staff or clients.

Our concerns with HomeFirst don't stop at Sunnyvale or with racism. We have heard numerous stories from HomeFirst clients throughout San Jose.

A woman of Color recently reported that she lived in an apartment, experiencing domestic violence, reported it to her HomeFirst case manager and asked for an immediate safety transfer to another non-specific property. Her case manager gave her the VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) pack and told her to fill it out. When she asked for help, saying she didn't understand everything on it, the case manager said they didn't give legal advice and didn't refer her to anyone who did. Nothing else was done at the time, she continued to endure the domestic violence and ended up evicted seven months later, her belongings locked inside the unit and her animals at Animal Control. When she requested the transfer, HomeFirst stopped paying rent on her unit and never communicated that to her. This woman is now unhoused. Again. HomeFirst is supposed to be "where homelessness ends," not where it begins.

Several people have told us staff at tiny homes are under the influence of drugs. As such, they give little care to the rules and perform their duties as they see fit. If they don't like you, they will harass you and write you up. They found out one client had a warrant, called police and had him arrested. They didn't wait to see if he was going to be released soon and put all his belongings out on the street the same day.

Clients have set up cameras in their rooms to record if their rooms are breached by other clients, only to find their rooms are breached by staff. When the clients brought their complaints—with the video—to HomeFirst, they were gaslighted. Later, their rooms were breached again and the cameras stolen.

Several clients report being told to sign leases for apartments they've never even seen. How do you teach people independence when they can't even have a say in the home they'll live in for at least the next year or two? It is so traumatic to be left somewhere in an unsupportive "take it or leave it" fashion. Clients are repeatedly treated with a "be grateful" attitude rather than given agency to do things like tour an apartment before signing a lease.

People who have graduated from tiny homes into apartments report they're not allowed to visit the tiny home area, even if they have a partner living there. The issues with feeling "isolated" that Homebase refers to in their report are experienced by both people in tiny homes and people in apartments. More needs to be done to help people during transition times to allow them to straddle their old and new communities until they complete their transition—on their own timeline. We also don't understand why Isolation didn't make the Top 8 recommendations, when the inability to receive visitors has been a top complaint at tiny homes since the very beginning.

*The city of San Jose and Santa Clara County are too reliant on HomeFirst, utilizing them for OWLs, shelters, tiny homes, and more. Because the city and county are so reliant on HomeFirst and because they essentially have almost no competition, they have no accountability, no fear of reprisal. The city and county must create an Oversight Committee made up of clients, advocates and others to oversee HomeFirst, hold them accountable, ensure staff and clients are being treated with dignity and respect. The city and county must also form a Task Force made up of staff, people with lived experience and advocates, to tour other programs anywhere in the county and bring new vendors to San Jose and Santa Clara County.*

Moving on to HomeBase report and eight recommendations:

*The report clearly states that domestic violence victims asked for additional security stations at tiny home sites and yet one of the eight recommendations is to only have actual security on the graveyard shift. It's inexplicable that client safety, their own stated safety concerns, should be tamped down to save a few dollars. That HomeFirst's CEO would back that plan, at client expense, at the expense of clients experiencing or overcoming domestic violence is preposterous.*

It's not uncommon to meet someone who has become unhoused again after their Rapid Rehousing voucher expired. It boggles the mind why the city would want to take away precious time meant for housing, not warehousing in a tiny home. It is incredibly traumatizing to be re-unhoused and to know that the city would want to increase the amount of people who experience that needless trauma, for profit, is inhumane. (Recommendation 5)

Clients must be told as soon as they get to Felipe that there is an absolute maximum of 180 day stay and when they get within 45 days or so, if the client is not ready to move out, they will absolutely work on a plan to transfer the client to

another tiny home site. We have worked with clients that have not been advised of the maximum 180 day stay and clients that were made re-homeless because HomeFirst didn't find them another spot at another tiny home location. Clients should never suffer the trauma of being re-unhoused.

Page 12 of the Homebase report says "Real consideration must be given to housing encampment residents together in the same EIH sites" and we couldn't agree more. Unhoused people are tribal and form deep community relationships, being able to maintain these relationships while pursuing housing would increase the likelihood of the whole camp getting housed.

Also on Page 12, it mentions staff punishing clients who do not complete their housing search logs on time by removing their television, as if they're a child. Is this the kind of disrespectful behavior we want to reward? There are better, less invasive ways to handle the situation than taking away their television. What's next, a spanking if you're out past curfew?

*Page 13 of the Homebase report, the entire section about ADA issues is shocking. How could the city of San Jose create numerous tiny homes sites that don't adhere to ADA requirements, have substandard bedding, have a lack equal access for disabled residents, and various hazards, whether it be furniture or landscaping? We would also like to note we raised many of these issues and were ignored while more tiny home sites were created.*

Page 27 of the Homebase report says "Focus group participants expressed sometimes feeling pressured by staff to accept employment positions that are not the right fit for them and/or move out of the EIH and BHC sites into unstable living situations as they neared their 120-day thresholds." This is common for many people in tiny homes and often leads to the trauma of being re-unhoused. This is completely inhumane and unacceptable.

Page 28 says "When a client does find housing, they must exit the EIH/BHC program the day they sign the lease." This is not properly explained to clients in advance and they often just feel shoved out the door. The fact that they don't have any furniture only makes it feel worse. Communication goes a long way to prevent clients from feeling so abandoned.

*Page 28 has a suggestion to "Keep residents enrolled until they have a shelter bed secured," which is a simple stop-gap measure to prevent people from being re-homeless. We cannot understand why this didn't make the top eight recommendations. This keeps people mentally and physically healthier, more engaged with providers, doesn't break trust and keeps the client safe. How could this not be in the top five?*

Page 30, parents at Evans Lane should be allowed to make their own decisions about child care, allowing their teenage children to care for their younger siblings so the parent can take care of important tasks for a few hours. Providers have no business getting in between parents and children unless there are abuse issues and concerns. We also wholeheartedly agree that there needs to be some sort of visitation policy at all sites.

We appreciate your time and hope you'll consider our suggestions and reprioritize Homebase and staff's recommendations. We feel validated by this report which essentially says much of what we've said for years, that unhoused people are not a monolithic group and should not be treated as such. They deserve compassion, to be communicated with clearly and in a respectful manner, to be able to maintain their original community and to be aided in building a new one, they don't need to be punished like children or have their child raising policed by staff, they deserve unimpeded ADA access to all areas of all sites, they deserve accommodations that are safe and comfortable as well as secure for DV victims, and they deserve visitors. All of this can be accomplished with the assistance of an Oversight Committee and new vendors via a Task Force.

Regards,  
Rev. Jethroe Moore II  
President, NAACP San Jose/Silicon Valley

Santa Clara County Wage Theft Coalition

Debra Townley,  
Member, West Valley Community Services Lived Experience Advisory Committee and Survivors of the Street

Shaunn Cartwright  
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