

HIPS OUTREACH UPDATE

September 24, 2017

This brief note summarizes the highlights of activities since the July board meeting, and plans for the rest of the fall. Overall, we are feeling very positive about increasing evidence that the report is proving to be a *catalyst*—helping community leaders to understand the nature of the challenges facing Sonoma Valley, and stimulating activity in both formulating potential actions and beginning to take them. We have done more than two dozen presentations and meetings since the report was published.

We are doing one final push on outreach over the rest of the fall, and then planning to close down the outreach process. At the end of this year or early next year, our HIPS team would conclude its work with a “report back” to the community, sharing highlights from the outreach process and the ways in which we see the community beginning to move forward.

At the SVF November board meeting, our HIPS team plans to bring the board some high level ideas about potential actions SVF might take, based on what we have learned and are hearing in the community. Given the current state of play and the fact that we will be bringing on new board members in early 2018, our team feels that SVF won't be ready to make a decision about SVF's role until next year. Among the many factors to consider will be who on the board is willing to lead on potential actions (as Joshua will be leaving the board and the HIPS team will have completed what it committed to doing).

Another piece of the puzzle is our own capacity building cohort, and what its plans for 2018 are; our board will be hearing more from them this week.

Below are highlights from the outreach activities.

Engaging Government Leaders

Supervisor Susan Gorin seized on the report and has been using it constructively to bring attention to the Valley (not always an easy thing to do in Santa Rosa). The HIPS team has had three opportunities to engage with Supervisor Gorin. In the first, she got up to speed on the results of our research, saying the report's focused analysis was just what she needed and had been looking for. She then invited the team to Santa Rosa to present the findings to department heads and senior staff from the Human Services Department, the Department of Health Services and the Community Development Commission, which included the staff person charged with dealing with county homelessness.

In this session, these leaders argued that Sonoma Valley is “leaving money on the table” in a variety of ways. Next Supervisor Gorin brought the department heads to the Valley, touring the homeless encampments and then engaging in a dialogue with community members in a session at La Luz. There are a number of possible follow ups, as Supervisor Gorin continues to focus on how to get the Valley's needs better met and increase visibility in Santa Rosa. One key is finding physical space to house county services in Sonoma Valley.

Katherine and Nancy also met with the new Sonoma City Manager for a lively exchange, and two of the Council members have attended presentations.

A Revived President's Council

After hearing our public presentation, community volunteers Elsa Nelson and Lorraine Ashton came together to invite all nonprofit board chairs to convene. This took place in early September, with about 18-20 organizations represented (and about 30 people overall). Nancy and Kimberly presented the data, and Joshua attended, with Kimberly participating in the break-out groups that followed.

Elsa and Lorraine have volunteered to convene the group a couple more times, as it decides whether to reconstitute a formal affiliation (which used to exist). They are still gathering feedback from the attendees. Our SVF contingent reported several key takeaways. The organizations see the need to collaborate more, but are unsure how to implement it and are looking for support to do so. They are interested in our capacity building cohort model and would like to learn more about it. They are of course first and foremost concerned that anything new does not diminish their existing financial support.

While our SVF participants were clear that SVF itself is limited in what we can do, the group nevertheless wants us to assume major responsibility for the follow up. As one person put it, "they opened a can of worms and now the worms want to be fed."

Additional Presentations and Activity

The team did presentations, complete with lively discussions at SOS with its board and volunteers, and the monthly meeting of the Springs Community Alliance. Nancy also did a "studio" presentation for KSVY TV for broadcast.

It is also clear that a number of citizens are beginning to lean into the housing issues. Whitney Evans has led the way with some others in exploring some new approaches, and Simon Blattner has begun seriously exploring putting together a new housing development.

The HIPs team has also been involved in a number of other informal conversations, as various leaders and groups in town begin to consider next steps. We hope to have more to report at our November meeting.

Plans for the Rest of the Fall

The team will present at the October board meeting of Boys and Girls Club. Kimberly is leading outreach to other nonprofits, letting them know that we are available for discussions or presentations until our formal outreach period closes at the end of the year. The team has prioritized organizations that we want to make sure to make contact with, and it looks as though some interesting discussions are planned.

Michael is still working to get us on the calendar at Rotary. We are trying to schedule with the interfaith group, Ministerial Alliance. And Lew is taking the lead with advisors (lawyers, accountants, real estate professionals and the like).

The Development Committee has taken the summer off. It seems likely now that the board will need to formulate potential actions before additional donor meetings take place.