

Council Passes Resolution in Support of Plans Providing for the Transformation of the Sonoma Developmental Center

On September 3, Council passed a resolution introduced by Council member Bob Rowntree to support the efforts of the Sonoma Coalition that has organized to oppose the closing of the Sonoma Developmental Center.

By now, everyone is probably aware that Governor Jerry Brown submitted a budget proposal in May 2015 calling for the closure of the Sonoma Developmental Center by the end of 2018. A large number of persons in Sonoma and throughout the Valley, including several members from our Congregation, have organized in support of the aging medically acute and psychologically fragile residents still housed at the Center who wish to stay. In addition to support for the residents, there are strong feelings about the future purposing of the Center property and the need to keep environmental considerations like protection of the wildlife corridor and public access to the land intact. The Sonoma Coalition has organized to develop a plan with significant community input that will integrate community values, sustainability, and economic viability to achieve these higher purposes. The preferred scenario is a trust or wholly-owned government corporation that would invite public-private partnerships that, in addition to permitting the current residents to stay, would examine a satellite campus, health service institution, and other complementary uses in accordance with the core values and purposes endorsed by the community of the Sonoma Valley. More information about this process is available at <http://transformsdc.com/2015/09/03/draft-site-study-for-transform-sdc/>.

The Council stated its belief that the proposed resolution in support of the Coalition's intention to seek this transformation of the Sonoma Development Center would receive strong support from the FCC, Sonoma Congregation, and perceiving little opposition, decided that the resolution would not be required to follow the new process for taking a public stand. The Council voted unanimously in favor of the resolution as stated following:

Resolution Supporting the Transformation of

SONOMA DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER

To Include Critical Patient Services and Protection and Public Access to the Land

WHEREAS: The Sonoma Developmental Center has been slated to close by the end of 2018. The center has been in existence since November 24, 1891. It employs 1,200 people who provide services to a reduced population of about 400 very fragile clients, many of whom have been there for decades.

WHEREAS: Some individuals are successful in community homes, but after over 30 years of placements in the community, the patients who remain at SDC have extremely severe medical issues, behavioral problems and/or physical disabilities that cannot be cared for in the community.

WHEREAS: The reported cost difference between SDC and community placement is very deceptive, as the Developmental Center costs include medical treatment, dental treatment, equipment maintenance, therapies and day programs, In addition, there are developmentally disabled citizens inappropriately housed in our jails, but their costs have not been included in the published reports. Finally, admissions to SDC have been halted for several years thereby increasing the per-patient costs to maintain the facility.

WHEREAS: There are unique and beneficial services at SDC that are not available in the community such as custom-made wheelchairs, custom-made shoes, dentists, doctors, eye specialists and other medical specialists who know how to work with severely disabled patients. Many medically fragile and high risk psychological patients languish in urban hospitals because they have nowhere else to go for assessment and treatment.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we, the Church Council on behalf of FCC, Sonoma urge Governor Brown and the California Department of Developmental Services to actively and creatively pursue the “transformation” of Sonoma Developmental Center rather than its closure.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we support the Parent Hospital Association’s (PHA) key points: maintain on site, a center that provides and maintains adaptive wheelchairs and other durable equipment; has medical, dental, mental and behavioral support for the developmentally disabled; provides housing, a crisis center and placement of last resort for those who cannot transition to community homes.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we support permanent protection of the open space, land and wildlife corridor on SDC property and support expanding public access and recreational opportunities that are compatible with the property’s conservation values.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we want the views of PHA, the SDC Coalition and those of the Sonoma community **heard** and **seriously considered** in developing a plan for the future of SDC.

Signed Margie Mitchell

September 3, 2015