

From: Elis Imboden <>

Sent: Monday, January 18, 2021 3:43 PM

To: City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>; Ed Barberini <ebarberini@cityofsanmateo.org>; Drew Corbett <dcorbett@cityofsanmateo.org>

Subject: Community Wellness and Crisis Response Team Mental Health Partnership

Dear Mayor Rodriguez, Council members, Chief Barberini, and City Manager Corbett,

As a member of SURJ San Mateo and a resident of the city of San Mateo, I am writing to comment on the proposed Community Wellness and Crisis Response Team Mental Health Partnership.

I am glad to see the City looking into creative responses to mental health crises. However, I urge you to reconsider the initially proposed model. Instead of sending mental health professionals to accompany police, please use this opportunity to create a crisis response team composed *solely* of mental health clinicians, social workers, and emergency medical support.

There are multiple models, both locally and nationwide for programs with response teams that do not include police, including in Santa Clara County, San Francisco, Denver, Los Angeles, and Eugene, OR. I urge you to consider these programs as examples of how the San Mateo County pilot program can be structured.

While I appreciate the sense of urgency around this issue, I urge you to make time for public input on the design of the program before approving and launching it.

Sincerely,
Elis Imboden
San Mateo

From: Paige Lafferty < >

Sent: Sunday, January 17, 2021 9:22 PM

To: City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>; Ed Barberini <ebarberini@cityofsanmateo.org>; Drew Corbett <dcorbett@cityofsanmateo.org>

Subject: Community Wellness and Crisis Response Team Mental Health Partnership

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Sincerely,
Paige Lafferty

From: Heidi < >

Sent: Sunday, January 17, 2021 12:51:49 PM

To: City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>; Ed Barberini <ebarberini@cityofsanmateo.org>; Drew Corbett <dcorbett@cityofsanmateo.org>

Subject: Community Wellness and Crisis Response Team Mental Health Partnership

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I appreciate the sense of urgency around this issue and I ask that you make time for public input on the design of the program before approving and launching it.

Sincerely,
Heidi Lidtke

From: Mira <>

Sent: Saturday, January 16, 2021 7:40:12 PM

To: City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>; Ed Barberini <ebarberini@cityofsanmateo.org>; Drew Corbett <dcorbett@cityofsanmateo.org>

Cc: Stephanie Reyes <>

Subject: SURJ San Mateo Comment on Community Wellness and Crisis Response Pilot Project

Dear Mayor Rodriguez, Chief Barberini, and Councilmembers,

[SURJ San Mateo](#) is writing in regard to the proposed Community Wellness and Crisis Response Pilot Project, announced in the [January 12 County press release](#), which would partner mental health clinicians with police officers responding to crisis calls. SURJ San Mateo is the San Mateo County chapter of the national SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice) network. We organize, mobilize and educate white folks and other folks with privilege for racial justice in San Mateo County, and we have members throughout the county, including in San Mateo.

As you are working on developing the pilot program with the County and the city managers and police chiefs of the other participating cities, we urge you to reconsider the initially proposed model. **Instead of sending mental health professionals to accompany police, please use this opportunity to create a crisis response team composed solely of mental health clinicians, social workers, and emergency medical support.**

These professionals are much better suited than police to respond to mental and behavioral health emergencies. Their education and training prepare them to de-escalate crisis situations and provide care and connection to further services for the person experiencing the crisis.

By contrast, law enforcement training does not focus on these skills and does not equip police to provide the best response to such situations. Alex S. Vitale, a professor of sociology and coordinator of the Policing and Social Justice Project at Brooklyn College, has [pointed out](#) that police “use the only available tools at their disposal: arrest, jail, and, in some instances, violence.” Even a Nov. 4, 2020 presentation by the San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office to the San Mateo County Mental Health and Substance Abuse Recovery Commission acknowledged that it’s uncommon for law enforcement to disengage and simply leave a situation once they’ve been called. Where police do receive some kind of crisis response training, it is usually brief compared to the rest of their training and cannot compare to the full course of study that mental health professionals go through to qualify for their field. The [research](#) requested by mid-Peninsula city managers from Stanford quoted a study showing that de-escalation training for police “have little to no effect on the number of aggressive incidents in departments.”

Additionally, the presence of an armed officer in and of itself increases tension in a situation and becomes an escalating factor. Consequently, sending unarmed responders increases the likelihood of a safe outcome for the person in crisis as well as for the responders themselves.

Knowing that it is police who will respond also deters some people from calling for help at all. When residents worry that a call will lead, not to help, but to possible arrest or use of force against them, they are reluctant to call 911. Concerns about immigration status may also prevent community members from reaching out when the path to care and services goes through law enforcement. Having a non-police response team will make it more likely for people to connect to the services they need.

Nationally, there is broad public support for crisis response by mental health professionals rather than police. A [June 2020 report and survey](#) by Data for Progress and The Justice Collaborative Institute found the following:

- “68%
- of likely voters support the creation of non-law enforcement emergency responders programs;
-
- “70%

- of likely voters support a non-police response for when a family member calls 9-1-1 because of a mental health crisis; and
-
- “65%
- of likely voters support a non-police response to a drug overdose.”

Several other cities, both locally and nationwide, have launched or are considering programs for response teams that do not include police. We urge you to consider these programs as examples of how the San Mateo County pilot program can be structured.

- **Santa Clara County** has
- [endorsed](#)
- an MHSA Innovation project for a Community Mobile Response (CMR) program that “seeks to maximize the ability to expand crisis response for individuals and families by adopting a community model that uses not only mental health workers, but also community workers,
- people with lived experience, social workers, and emergency medical support.” This program will be accessed through a neutral, trusted, non-law enforcement phone number rather than through 911 or 311.
-
- **San Francisco** has
- [launched](#)
- a program in which the health and fire departments collaborate to form unarmed mobile teams of paramedics, mental health professionals and peer support counselors.
-
- **Denver**
- has [created](#)
- the Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) program which sends a two-person team consisting of a mental health worker and a paramedic. An
- [article](#)
- published three months after the program’s launch noted that the unarmed team had not needed to call police for backup at all during that time.
-
- **Los Angeles** City Council members
- have [proposed](#)
- an emergency response model to send trained, unarmed specialists to respond to crises involving homelessness or mental health and substance abuse issues.
-
- **Eugene’s**
- [CAHOOTS](#)
- [program](#), widely referenced
- as a model for alternative crisis response, uses teams consisting of either a nurse or an EMT plus a crisis worker with several years of experience in the mental health field.

The [report](#) by Data for Progress and The Justice Collaborative Institute concludes that “[t]o be successful, these crisis response teams should operate independently of the criminal legal system, include both emergency and preventative services, and be fully funded to accomplish their mission.” The new pilot program is an ideal opportunity for cities in San Mateo County to explore the advantages of a community-based, non-police response team. We call on you to structure the program following these three criteria for success.

Thank you for your attention on this important matter to improve public safety.

Sincerely, Mira Park, On behalf of SURJ San Mateo

From: Stephanie Reyes < >

Sent: Saturday, January 16, 2021 2:42:04 PM

To: Eric Rodriguez <erodriguez@cityofsanmateo.org>; Amourence Lee <alee@cityofsanmateo.org>; Diane Papan <dpapan@cityofsanmateo.org>; Joe Goethals <jgoethals@cityofsanmateo.org>; Rick Bonilla <RBonilla@cityofsanmateo.org>; Ed Barberini <ebarberini@cityofsanmateo.org>; Drew Corbett <dcorbett@cityofsanmateo.org>

Subject: process for Community Wellness and Crisis Response Team Mental Health Partnership

Dear Mayor Rodriguez, Council members, Chief Barberini, and City Manager Corbett,

As a member of SURJ San Mateo and a resident of the city of San Mateo, I am writing to comment on the proposed Community Wellness and Crisis Response Team Mental Health Partnership.

I first became aware of the program by reading a late-September article in the San Mateo Daily Journal. Since then, I have been trying to get more information about who is designing the program and how the public could have input on the program.

I attended a meeting of the County Mental Health and Substance Abuse Recovery Commission, where I discovered that the Commission had created an ad hoc committee to help shape the pilot program. However, it appears the ad hoc committee has not had an opportunity to provide input. A representative from Supervisor Dave Pine's office attended that Commission meeting and said that members of the public should bring their thoughts to their individual cities.

But despite having attended the various policing community forums over the summer, and despite subscribing to the City's e-newsletter, I have heard nothing about this pilot program from the City of San Mateo. Then I found out a few days ago that the Council would be voting to approve the program on January 19th, without any public input I'm aware of.

I am glad to see the City looking into creative responses to mental health crises. However, I have some thoughts (outlined in the formal comment letter you received from SURJ San Mateo) about how the program could be better designed than what is being put before you today. I have also heard from residents who have family members with mental illness who have had interactions with the police; these residents desperately want--and, in my opinion, deserve--an opportunity to provide input on the mental health and policing pilot.

While I appreciate the sense of urgency around this issue, I urge you to make time for public input on the design of the program before approving and launching it.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Reyes

From: Andrea Rosenman < >

Sent: Sunday, January 17, 2021 9:13 PM

To: City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>

Subject: Community Wellness and Crisis Response Partnership

Dear Mayor Rodriguez, Chief Barberini, Council members and City Manager Corbett,

As a member of SURJ San Mateo and a resident of the city of San Mateo, I am writing to comment on the proposed Community Wellness and Crisis Response Team Mental Health Partnership. I am overjoyed to hear that you are exploring the possibility of including mental health care workers as part of a police response to community emergencies, I know, however, that there are several pilot programs in other cities (Santa Clara County, San Francisco, Denver, Los Angeles and Eugene, OR) that are using a different model. They are using a crisis response team composed of a mental health care worker, a social worker and a paramedic. These teams are unarmed and do not include a police officer. The presence of law enforcement at such emotionally fraught moments inevitably serves to escalate a situation by creating an overlay of "criminality" that may not be warranted. A team of mental health professionals who have undergone extensive training in rapid assessment, de-escalating techniques and tools for humanely handling mentally unstable people in crisis may meet with greater success. I sincerely hope that the Council will study and give careful consideration to such pilot programs BEFORE embarking on the one proposed here which merely adds a mental health professional to a police response team. I know we share the same goal. Let's be sure we spend the time, do the research and gather the community input needed to attain it. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Andrea Rosenman

From: Lisa Taner <>

Sent: Saturday, January 16, 2021 12:09 PM

To: Eric Rodriguez <erodriguez@cityofsanmateo.org>

Cc: City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>

Subject: Cost in Question for City of San Mateo Re: Community Wellness and Crisis Response Pilot Project

Dear Mr. Mayor and Councilmembers,

It was brought to my attention that an item on your agenda this Tuesday regarding a crisis response pilot program being spearheaded by the County has budget implications to our City which may be unnecessary.

It is my understanding that California's 1991 Realignment legislative package transferred responsibility from the State to the Counties for:

1. All community-based mental health services, including but not limited to, pre-hospital emergency behavioral health services,
2. State hospital services for civil commitments, including but not limited to acute care,
3. Mental health services for patients in need of long-term psychiatric nursing facility care.

It is also my understanding that the only exceptions to the state to county transfer were for two municipalities with their own Health Departments, Santa Monica and Berkeley.

Reports are that the County is only assuming responsibility for fifty-three (53) percent of the cost and the four participating cities will be responsible for forty-seven (47) percent of the cost.

The 1991 Realignment package would seemingly place the cost burden fully on the County's shoulders in regard to San Mateo. Perhaps something was missed or perhaps there is good reason to ask our city for funds. It's worthwhile to fully understand before approving any outgoing funds.

Thanking you in advance,

Lisa Taner

From: David Usher <>
Sent: Tuesday, January 19, 2021 9:38 AM
To: City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: Wellness and Crisis Response Team

Dear Mayor Rodriguez, Council members, ,

As a member of SURJ San Mateo and a resident of the city of San Mateo, I am writing to comment on the proposed Community Wellness and Crisis Response Team Mental Health Partnership.

I am glad to see the City looking into creative responses to mental health crises. However, I urge you to reconsider the initially proposed model. Instead of sending mental health professionals to accompany police, please use this opportunity to create a crisis response team composed *solely* of mental health clinicians, social workers, and emergency medical support.

There are multiple models, both locally and nationwide for programs with response teams that do not include police, including in Santa Clara County, San Francisco, Denver, Los Angeles, and Eugene, OR. I urge you to consider these programs as examples of how the San Mateo County pilot program can be structured.

While I appreciate the sense of urgency around this issue, I urge you to make time for public input on the design of the program before approving and launching it.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr David Usher
San Mateo