



Memorandum

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Councilmember
Sam Liccardo

SUBJECT: Jacinto "Tony" Sequig
Northside Community Center

DATE: June 1, 2007

Approved

Date 6-1-07

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) Accept the staff recommendation to reject the proposal submitted by Asian American Recovery Services (AARS) in response to the Request for Proposals to operate the Jacinto "Tony" Sequig Northside Community Center (JTSNCC, or "Center").
- b) Refer on-going funding for City operations at JTSNCC to the FY 2008-2009 budget process.
- c) Direct City staff to immediately negotiate with every non-profit agency identified in the AARS proposal, and any additional non-profit agencies interested in providing services at JTSNCC;
 - a. Direct staff to conduct all negotiations involving JTSNCC in a manner consistent with Facility Re-Use Option 4, as described in the City memorandum dated December 8, 2006, and
 - b. No later than September of 2007, report to Council the status of negotiations with non-profit agencies interested in providing services located in JTSNCC.

BACKGROUND

The operation of the Jacinto "Tony" Sequig Northside Community Center has become a subject of great contention in recent years, in the wake of allegations of financial mismanagement by the prior operator. Although consensus exists to ensure that seniors who frequent the Center continue to receive needed services, the community has become polarized over the identity of the operator.

As a consequence, by the time that the RFP came before the Council again in April of 2007, it had become apparent that the process necessitated community input. On Councilmember Liccardo's motion, the Council deferred action on the AARS proposal, so that meaningful community outreach could occur. Council voted unanimously to ask that AARS submit detailed descriptions of the services it plans to offer, and to share information with neighborhood organizations surrounding JTSNCC. This decision reflected Council's concern that a divided community have an opportunity to come together to discuss the proposed changes at the Center, and to ensure that the neighborhoods surrounding the Center have input as to its mission, services, and operations.

Councilmember Liccardo's office reviewed the response data from the three community meetings conducted by City and RDA staff. As noted in the staff report, approximately 73% of attendees who responded urged rejection of the AARS proposal.

The surrounding community has expressed longstanding concerns that the Center has not traditionally served their neighborhoods, so the geographical location of those persons surveyed as well. Council District 3 Office performed additional analysis to see if preferences varied based upon the location of the respondents' residence. A zip code analysis of the minority (27%) supporting the AARS proposal reveals most of those individuals live outside District 3. In contrast, individuals in opposition live primarily within District 3.

The District 3 Council Office performed additional outreach, by informally emailing community leaders living primarily in the surrounding neighborhoods of Northside, Hensley and Japantown. The email directed the recipients to the PRNS website, which contained information about the Center and the RFP. Of the over two dozen emails received, every one expressed opposition to the AARS proposal for operation of JTSNCC.

The District 3 Council Office also received a petition signed by 154 seniors, requesting that PRNS remain as the operator of JTSNCC. Although disputes have emerged about the method in which those signatures were collected, this evidence reinforces what we have learned through our outreach.

In short, this divided community appears little served by the acceptance of this bid, and underserved local neighborhoods have expressed little interest in the proposal. Most importantly, maintaining PRNS as the lead operator also ensures the uninterrupted provision of services to seniors and veterans who appear most dependent upon the Center.

Nonetheless, I want to ensure that the City maximizes opportunities to partner with non-profit organizations which can competently provide needed services. All of the organizations identified in the AARS proposal--including such esteemed groups as AARS, FYC, and AACI--can play a significant role.

On December 8, 2006, PRNS presented four facility re-use options for Council consideration. Under the fourth scenario ("Option 4"), the City would maintain operational lead and oversight of the facility, while community-based organizations could individually provide services under contract with the City. That option offers the most flexibility, affording the maximum opportunity to leverage resources offered by

nonprofits with the capacity for culturally-sensitive and multigenerational programming. It also guarantees that neighborhood groups will continue to have access to the center. Beginning this process as a "pilot" at JTSNCC can inform staff and the Council about how to proceed with community center re-use as a citywide matter.

Having noted the importance of JTSNCC to the local neighborhoods, we remain mindful that its naming--in honor of Jacinto "Tony" Sequig--stands as tribute to the legacy of the Sequig family and the many Filipino-American volunteers that contributed so much to San Jose. The genesis of the Center emerged from their dream of a place for Filipino-American seniors to come together and to receive needed services. Council approved a Northside Master Plan in 1995 that provided for senior housing and an expanded community center, with meeting rooms, a library, a medical clinic, and kitchen. The services and programs these pioneers envisioned should remain a core part of JTSNCC's mission.

AARS remains a highly regarded agency that delivers quality services to its clients, and we should encourage it to expand in San Jose. However, at this time, the many diverse ethnic communities and neighborhoods using JTSNCC appear unwilling to accept an outside agency as the sole operator of the center. The community, especially the Filipino-American community, has suffered much in recent years, and needs time to heal. While that healing process occurs, the City should continue to operate the site, and ensure that it remains inclusive of every member of our diverse community.