



San Francisco SRO Task Force

1660 Mission Street, 6th Floor
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SRO HOTEL HEALTH & SAFETY TASK FORCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES – May 19, 2011

1650 Mission Street, Room 403

Members:

Rosemary Bosque, J.D.
Department of Building Inspection

Jeff Buckley
Central City SRO Collaborative

Bruce Burge
SRO Operator

Angela Chu
Chinatown SRO Collaborative

Vacant
Tenant Representative

Seth Katzman
Nonprofit SRO Owner/Manager

Joyce Lam
Families in SROs Collaborative

Victor Nelson
Tenant Representative

Johnson Ojo
DPH Environmental Health Services

Sam Patel
SRO Operator

Jorge Portillo
Mission SRO Collaborative

Charles Siron
Tenant Representative

Alex Tse, J.D.
City Attorney's Office

Scott Walton
Human Services Agency

Eric Whitney
DPH Housing & Urban Health

Chair:

Chair: Rosemary Bosque

Members Present: Jeff Buckley (Central City SRO Collaborative); Bruce Burge (SRO Operator); Angela Chu (Chinatown SRO Collaborative); Seth Katzman (Conard House); Johnson Ojo (DPH-BEHS); Sam Patel (Independent Hotel Owners & Operators); Jorge Portillo (Mission SRO Collaborative); Charles Siron (HIV Health Svcs); Alex Tse (City Attorney's Office); Scott Walton (HSA-Housing & Homeless Programs); Eric Whitney (DPH)

Absent: Unexcused-None; Excused- None

Guests: Joyce Lam (SRO Families United Collaboratives); Tomas Picarello (SRO Tenant); Charles Pitts (SRO Tenant); Alma Snyder, (San Francisco State University)

Minutes: Bernedette Perez (DBI-HIS)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Rosemary Bosque at 9:05AM.

2. Roll call/Determination of Quorum

Roll call was taken and there was a quorum.

3. Approval of Minutes of March 17, 2011 (Action)

Seth Katzman made a correction that reference to Conrad House should be changed to Conard House.

Another correction was offered that Elisia Gasca is from the Chinatown Community Development Center.

Public Comment:

Action: With the changes indicated the minutes were approved.

4. Administrative Announcements (Discussion)

Time & Location of Meetings: Rosemary Bosque thanked DPH for hosting the SRO Task Force meetings at their offices for several years, and indicated that she was now looking at a meeting location near or at the DBI Offices since that Department was now providing administrative support to the Task Force. It was discussed that the appropriate DBI conference room was not available due to administrative hearings. A possible Task Force meeting time move to Tuesday mornings presented a scheduling conflict for Task Force members Johnson Ojo and Jeff Buckley. It was determined that Bernedette Perez will look other venues available for the same monthly meeting time (third Thursday from 9:00am to 10:30am).

Amendments to By-Laws: Rosemary Bosque mentioned that next meeting we will bring back the By Laws for discussion and action.

Rosemary Bosque asked if there were any public comments..

5. Bed Bug Identification, Treatment & Eradication

DBI Response to Bed Bugs: Rosemary Bosque indicated that DBI is a secondary response agency to regarding bed bugs complaints, further describing that DBI receives these complaints through:

1. Referrals from 311
2. Transmittal from DPH either by email or fax.
3. Complaints directly from the Public (in person or by phone, mail, etc)

Rosemary Bosque mentioned that if a complaint contains bed bugs and other items we will respond. Rosemary pointed out a list of items. When we get these types of complaints we have the Inspector make an inspection and if it is a hotel we do room-to room inspection and we write a Notice of Violation. If the notice is not compliant in the time frame prescribed we will send it to a Director's Hearing, if they are complying in a timely manner we will not send it to a Director's Hearing.

The Department does charge an Assessment per the SFBC it is \$170.00 Inspection and \$104.00 for Administrative Fees. There are some exceptions per the routine inspections.

If the Property owners/managers are still not in compliance in the time specified, it will be referred to the City Attorney's office (Code Enforcement).

DPH Response to Bed Bugs: Johnson Ojo said that the DPH process is straight forward, they answer anonymous complaints, for routine inspection's the complaint enforcement is the same as DBI it is logged in and assigned to an Health Inspector and we respond to complaints within 48 hours or depending on the schedule we confirm the complaint by conducting an inspection. And then sign off 7-days to initiate to clear, the owners will need to have three consecutive treatments for the problem to be eradicated.

If the Inspector discovers that no progress has been made or complied with it will be referred to a first conference which is held every Tuesdays, and once every month on Wednesdays in front of the Public Health Commission. If DPH discovers that they have initiated service they need to provide proof that there is on-site treatment to follow two regimens.

Johnson Ojo mentioned that there are other pesticide treatments steam heat of course, which is not the most effective and there are monitoring devices that maybe used.

Johnson Ojo also mentions that those who do not comply it will be referred to the City Attorney's office. That is when Alex Tse gets involved after we have exhausted all administrative processes and we have no enforcement power.

HSA Involvement with Bed Bug Complaints: Scott Walton stated that HSA is not an enforcement agency, but they fund master leases on housing sites. HSA mostly works with contractors for pest control. They do hear complaints from individuals and they always encourage them to speak with the manager/landlord and they do follow up with the providers. When a tenant reports a problem they address the issues at that time. They do have challenges and they target issues with education with the client and tenants and have everyone participate. HSA doesn't have a formal process.

Residential Hotel Owner/Operator Response to Bed Bugs: Bruce Burge commented on that there are two types of properties tourist and SRO's. It is mainly tenant cooperation to eradicate the bed bugs. Some tenants do have clutter. It is very rare that they report that they have bed bugs. If rooms do have a problem with bed bugs that room and the adjacent rooms is taken off line.

SRO Collaborative Response to Bed Bug Complaints:

Central City Collaborative: Jeff Buckley stated the basic level of bed bugs drop in services because they have counseling in housing services, they are proactive in outreach of which they cover 270-280 hotels and they do their best to meet code violations and bed bugs. They usually confer with the property owners/managers if that doesn't work then they will bring in city enforcement to assist.

Jeff Buckley commented that much needs to be done with bed bugs any suggestions on how to improve the process, and there is a collection of people who want to see a change. Operators, tenants, pest control companies want improvements.

Mission SRO Collaborative: Jorge Portillo said that Jeff Buckley had covered mostly the concerns that the collaborative have, but we need to have regular meetings, bi-monthly meeting in addition the tenants should have access to laundry services, be provided with mattress covers, storage assistance when abatement is being conducted.

Chinatown SRO Collaborative: Angela Chu stated that some of the bed bugs cases last so long for example the Broadway hotel the situation has gotten worse. There needs to be better communication between DPH and the owners because when we talk with the tenants they are not aware what kind of action is being taken because the spraying is not working. It goes beyond pointing the finger, who is or who is not doing their job we should be looking at what actually works.

Angela Chu stated that some of the tenants do better in guest rooms without carpeting. She suggested that carpet removal could help. She felt that this is wide reaching problem extending to families in SRO's affecting child school performance due to sleepless nights caused by bed bug bites.

DPH Housing & Urban Health Involvement with Bed Bug Complaints: Eric Whitney commented that he has observed that some notices tenants may or may not cooperate to eradicate bed bugs and that the hotel operator can only do so much.

Charles Siron said when he was recently staying at a Los Angeles hotel, bed bugs were crawling all over his room. He notified the owner who then moved him to another room.

Families in SRO Collaborative Involvement with Bed Bug Complaints: Joyce Lam (the latest member appointed to the SRO Task Force) commented that there is a lack of communication with monolingual families who are not aware of the bed bug complaint process. She further stated that these families do not cooperate because they are unsure of what actions to take due to a language barrier.

Summary of Multi- Agency/Stake Holder Challenges in addressing bed bug infestations identified by the SRO Task Force:

1. Tenant education & cooperation
2. Inadequate staffing available for lead code enforcement departments
3. Rules and regulations the govern bed bug eradication should be reviewed and updated
4. Treatment can be lengthy and expensive
5. Limited resources to assist with pre-treatment room preparation (temporary/permanent boxing/bagging, removal of personal property volume, and lack of storage facilities)
6. Loss of use of personal belongings during treatment, and allegations of stolen items
7. Limitations in the disposal of infested personal property/furniture.
8. Limited resources to assist with laundry and treatment of personal property
9. Improvements to communication between all stakeholders,(City Departments, hotel operators, outreach agencies, and tenants.
10. Better room design and furniture selection to minimize bed bug infestation and treatment.
11. Requisite/quick response to bed bug complaints.

Scott Walton stated that SRO occupants can unknowingly bring bed bugs into a hotel with their belongings. He further commented that, in addition to education, all stake holders, hotel owners, tenants, pest control operators, and inspectors can help improve this situation.

Jeff Buckley mentioned that the Task Force should also consider IPN standards as a model for pest abatement regulations and standards. He further stated that pest control companies need to go by IPN standards and make sure rooms are checked, have tenants pull beds back from walls in order not to get bed bugs.

Seth Katzman asked when the standards will be completed.

Jeff Buckley replied that they would be completed in June. It is an ad hoc committee it is open to SRO collaboratives, community organizations.

Sam Patel asked if any hotel owners are involved with this bed bug working group.

Alex Tse asked what the Task Force project would be is to submit a report and present before the Board of Supervisors. He indicated that the Task Force should not duplicate what other bed bug working groups are doing. He suggested that they be invited to present their recommendations to the SRO Task Force.

Bruce Burge inquired what would be the consequences of a tenant who fails to cooperate with the bed bug eradication process.

Scott Walton said that if the tenants do not comply with the notice then they face the possibility of an eviction in order to vacate the infested room.

Johnson Ojo said that tenants are not always reading the information that is being distributed. He further indicated that San Francisco has tremendous challenges regarding bed bugs, citing that families of four to five members occupy some 7 x 8 guest rooms.

Johnson Ojo stated that DPH is working with DPW to pick up contaminated items, and dumpsters immediately so that the bed bugs do not spread.

Public Comment

Tomas Picarello said that the effective way to treat bed bugs is to use heat.

Charles Pitts stated that there should be educational information to inform hotel operators, and property managers to look for cracks, cover trash cans, and dumpsters that can be locked to reduce the spread of bed bugs.

Mario Oblena,(DPH Health Inspector) indicated that he addresses bed bugs complaints everyday on his inspections. In his experience, if the pesticides are applied properly they can eradicate bed bugs.

Jeff Buckley commented on the recent fire at the Park Hotel. He indicated that the Central City SRO Collaborative attended a meeting regarding the displacements of tenants at that hotel. He further stated that he had not seen a report regarding the fire damage related to the Sprinkler System in that building.

Scott Walton commented that HSA coordinates with Red Cross to provide housing to displaced tenants of residential hotels.

Sam Patel suggested that the bed bug issue remain on the Task Force agenda to reach a final disposition.

6. Proposed Amendments to SRO Task Force By Laws- Discussion & Possible Action

Rosemary Bosque said that the SRO Task Force needs to complete final review and adoption the proposed By-Laws amendments at a future meeting.

7. General Public Comment

There was no public comment.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:29AM