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December 12, 2017

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
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SUBJECT: Recommendation of Supervisor Parks to Approve the Conceptual Plan and Direct County Executive Office (CEO) Staff to Return with a Lease Agreement with Turning Point Foundation, a California Non-Profit Corporation, for County-Owned Property Located at 1722 S. Lewis Road in Unincorporated Camarillo, to Operate a Not-for-Profit Plant Nursery Job Training and Job Program ("Growing Works") for People with Mental Illness. (Supervisorial District 2)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Approve the conceptual plan and direct CEO staff to return with a lease agreement with Turning Point Foundation, a California non-profit corporation, for County-owned property located at 1722 S. Lewis Road in unincorporated Camarillo. The lease would be for approximately 9 acres of vacant undeveloped land and an approximately 6,000 square foot building, to operate a plant nursery job training and job program ("Growing Works") to benefit people with mental illness.

BACKGROUND:

On October 13, 1998, the Board of Supervisors accepted the Deed from the State of California transferring ownership of approximately 58 acres of land on Lewis Road. The land transferred to the County included land previously leased to the County from the State in 1991 for housing for people with mental illness. Mental health housing was built on a portion of this land offering supportive housing programs for clients of the County's Behavioral Health Department. The housing programs are operated by Turning Point Foundation and Telecare Corporation.

The subject lease would allow 9 acres of vacant land and a 6,000 square foot building to be used by Turning Point Foundation to operate a not-for-profit wholesale drought tolerant plant nursery to serve clients of the Behavioral Health Department with on-the-job training and paid jobs in the wholesale nursery business.

The County has no plans for the vacant land that has sat fallow for decades. The building that will be leased to Turning Point Foundation is not needed for any County purpose and is unoccupied.

Turning Point Foundation, which would operate the nursery, is dedicated to helping people with mental illness, particularly veterans and people who are homeless. They provide shelter, supported housing, and rehabilitation programs to assist people with mental illness to remain or become functioning, integral members of society.

The Concept Plan

The Growing Works job-training and work program is modeled after the successful Growing Grounds program in San Luis Obispo County which has been a sustainable operation for thirty years. Close to 60% of its approximate \$600,000 operating budget comes from the sale of plants, with the remaining 40% coming from contracts for job-training, with additional funds from grants and contributions. It is anticipated that it will take three years for Growing Works to achieve enough plant sales to be sustainable, with grants, contracts and contributions making up the gap during the start-up period.

The Growing Works program will provide one of the only job training programs in Ventura County specifically for people with mental illness. The program offers horticultural therapy for mental-wellness, on-the-job training for finding jobs, and a salary that can give independence to adults in recovery from mental illness. The need for a job program is an essential component in mental health recovery, as expressed by vocational training expert Paul Barry, M.Ed., C.P.R.P., "No one needs or deserves the empowering advantage of a real job more than adults in recovery from mental illness. And no one is denied the basic opportunity more routinely than adults in recovery from mental illness."

Mental health advocates in Ventura County have given their enthusiastic support for the Growing Works proposal, including unanimous support from the leadership and members of NAMI Ventura County, The Client Network, the Behavioral Health Advisory Board, as well as the Director of the Behavioral Health Department.

Turning Point Foundation has received commitments of \$70,000 in start-up contributions (\$30,000 from HOPE and VCCF, up to \$40,000 worth of fencing from Marz Farms, and potting soil from Agromin). Commitments of labor have been offered by the Seabees to clear and level the approximate 6.5-acre vacant land for the nursery which would commence in January, and the California Conservation Corps have committed to clear the brush along the 2-acre Lewis Road frontage to get it ready for landscaping.

Ventura County Behavioral Health Department is currently processing an application for Mental Health Services Act Innovations funding for clients with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI) to receive training and jobs at the proposed Growing Works nursery. The Behavioral Health Advisory Board voted unanimously November 20, 2017 for this Innovations

funding proposal to be researched and written. The proposal will come before our Board in late winter/early spring for approval to submit to the State. If approved, funding is anticipated in June 2018 for a five-year period. If Innovations funding is not forthcoming, other funding may be available through Ventura County Behavioral Health. Additionally, VCBH is working with the Department of Rehabilitation to establish a cooperative agreement for job training or work experience stipends to Transitional Aged Youth who have mental illness if they are referred to Growing Works. Several foundations have been contacted and more support is anticipated for funding Growing Works once the site is officially leased to Turning Point Foundation.

The Proposed Location

The location proposed for the Growing Works nursery is on property owned by the County on Lewis Road as shown on the attached map. Bordering the site to the south is residential housing with treatment for approximately 80 people with mental illness, predominantly clients of VCBH. Their residential care is provided by Turning Point Foundation (Villa Calleguas) and by Telecare Corporation (Casa de Esperanza/Las Posadas). To the north of the site, occupying the rest of the County's Lewis Road property, is the RAIN project and Casa Pacifica.

The County's lease of the proposed Growing Works site to Turning Point Foundation could bring greater cohesion and synergy to the various residential facilities, and improve the surroundings for those who live and work there.

The proximity of the site to clients of VCBH, including those in Turning Point Foundation's Villa Calleguas, makes it a short walk to receive job training and job placement.

Casa Pacifica is also a supportive partner of the proposed Growing Works nursery. The convenient location of the proposed nursery could provide a place for foster youth field trips. Additionally, the timing of construction projects at Casa Pacifica and Growing Works may result in shared cost reductions for site improvements.

Residents of the RAIN project could also benefit from Growing Works activities, with involvement in volunteer planting days and other social activities, craft projects with nursery plants, possible job opportunities, and a more hospitable landscaped area in place of vacant weed-covered lots.

The proposed Growing Works site is within a mile walk or bus ride from California State University at Channel Islands, another strong partner with the support of President Erika Beck. Growing Works will be an excellent learning grounds and place for volunteering and community service for students from CSUCI's Institute of Social Business, Psychology Department, and School of Community Engagement. Partnerships with other local colleges, including California Lutheran University where President Chris Kimball has indicated support for CLU student involvement. By volunteering at Growing Works students can enhance their

understanding of mental illness and lessen the stigma associated with the illness. Growing Works could also act as a portal to mental health services for students in need. CLU and CSUCI are also prospective customers of the nursery, as is the County Government Center, which will help the not-for-profit Growing Works nursery thrive, along with sales to retail nurseries and landscapers.

Experts from San Luis Obispo's Growing Grounds believe the proposed location for Growing Works, which is near more urban areas, along with its slightly larger size, will eventually generate more revenue from plant sales (that can be applied to its operating budget), than the San Luis Obispo nursery.

Lease Parameters

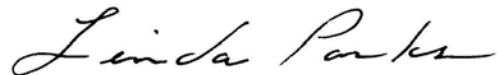
The County GSA has performed an assessment of the unoccupied building to determine the scope of improvements needed. The building, which currently warehouses used furniture will be improved so it can be used for office space, classroom space and workshops for Growing Works. Bathrooms and lighting were recently upgraded. GSA estimates that the building requires \$150,000 in improvements, including a new roof and completion of unfinished interior walls. An additional \$35,000 is being requested for plants and irrigation lines for landscaping the front parcels with the help of volunteers. Turning Point Foundation would oversee the tenant improvements to the satisfaction of the County.

Proposed Terms for Lease Agreement

- 1) County to contribute \$185,000 to Turning Point Foundation (TPF) to improve County building (including roof and completing walls), and plants and irrigation lines for landscaping along Lewis Road frontage.
- 2) TPF to pay for and oversee building improvements, and complete front landscape installation, to the satisfaction of County.
- 3) TPF will pay \$1/year rent.
- 4) TPF will pay all utility costs.
- 5) TPF will pay for all maintenance to the building during lease term.
- 6) TPF will pay for all landscape maintenance on the property during the lease term.
- 7) TPF to improve the vacant land for the nursery including clearing the land and fencing within the first year of a signed lease agreement.
- 8) TPF nursery to provide job training and employment for Ventura County Behavioral Health clients within the first year of a signed lease agreement and for the duration of the lease.
- 9) RAIN Project to have option to occupy up to approximately half of the building for storage, rent-free.
- 10) TPF will establish good neighbor policies and work in cooperation and collaboration with neighboring uses.

The Government Code prohibits leasing County property to a private entity for a term of more than ten years without submitting the proposed lease to competitive bidding. Additionally, the lease cannot include an option to renew its term beyond that 10-year limit. If your Board approves this recommendation to direct staff to return to your Board with a lease agreement, CEO staff will work with Real Estate Services and County Counsel to negotiate a lease permitted by the Government Code and return to the Board for approval.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Parks".

Linda Parks
Supervisor, Second District

Attachments:

Exhibit 1 – Project Site Map



S LEWIS ROAD

Villa Calleguas

2 acre Demonstration Gardens

Casa de Esperanza

RAIN Project

Growing Works 2 acre Phase 1

Casa Pacifica

Growing Works 4.5 acre Phase 2

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