

City of Alameda, California
SOCIAL SERVICE HUMAN RELATIONS BOARD
THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 2025
DRAFT MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

President Scott Means called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: President Scott Means; Vice President Samantha Green; Board Members Bernie Wolf, Dianne Yamashiro-Omi, Gerald Bryant, and Michelle Buchholz (attended remotely).

City staff: Assistant City Manager Amy Wooldridge and Housing Program Manager Grecia Mannah-Ayon.

2. NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

3-A Review and Approve July 24, 2025 Minutes

A motion to approve the July 24, 2025, minutes was made by Board Member Bryant and seconded by Vice President Green. Ayes: President Means, Vice President Green, Board Member Wolf, Board Member Yamashiro-Omi, Board Member Bryant, and Board Member Buchholz. Nays: None. Abstained: None. Motion passed 6-0-0.

4. AGENDA ITEMS

4-A Presentation of Rise Up Alameda (Guaranteed Income Pilot Program) 12-Month Interim Report

Public Comment: None.

Eric Fonstein, Development Manager at the City of Alameda's Base Reuse and Economic Development Department, gave a presentation on the mid-program findings for *Rise Up Alameda*, a guaranteed income pilot program. Please see [Exhibit 1](#).

The SSHRB Board Members thanked Eric Fonstein for his presentation. Board Member Grant asked a question about how the sense of community belonging felt by participants in the program could be sustained after the program is over. Fonstein agreed that sustaining community belonging is important and said he would be looking to the advisory board for ways to do that. He also mentioned inviting the SSHRB board to workshops with the consulting partners, Abt Global and Maven. Board Member Bryant asked a question about Operation Dignity, regarding one of their employee's ability to help with supplemental support services after the completion of the *Rise Up* program. Fonstein reported that Operation Dignity has distributed a survey (along with notification that their payments will be ending) to all participants in the *Rise Up* program. This survey collects information about whether participants will be receiving other benefits after the program, whether they would like benefits counseling, what type of services they need assistance with, etc. Operation Dignity will follow-up appropriately.

Board Member Buchholz asked about whether there are funding sources to potentially implement another round of the *Rise Up* program. Fonstein deferred to the City Council. He mentioned the current pilot program was funded primarily through the federal government's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocations that was passed to aid public health and economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic on March 11, 2021. He described how the data from the *Rise Up Alameda* pilot program will be pooled into a larger dataset with data from other pilot programs and could help inform policy discussion.

President Means asked the total cost of the program over the 2-year pilot period. Fonstein reported that the total cost was \$4.6 million, with \$3.6 million of that going to the direct cash payments. President Means asked if there will be a more formal report upon completion of the program. Fonstein reported that there will be another report similar to this one after the pilot program is completed.

Board Member Yamashiro-Omi asked whether part of the evaluation will analyze how the city functions in relation to the program, or whether it was focused exclusively on the clients. Fonstein confirmed nonverbally that it was focused on the clients. Board Member Yamashiro-Omi asked if there was a place for Fonstein to give feedback about lessons learned from this pilot in the event that the program would continue. Fonstein said a lot of the value will be in the evaluative storytelling, which may also identify future opportunities for discussion.

Vice President Green asked what the overall sentiment of city staff is regarding the program. Fonstein said he personally felt very excited about the program and felt it was really needed at this time. He said other city staff he speaks with are similarly excited. He described how City Council and other city staff were sensitive to the uniquely high cost of living in the Bay Area when determining value of payments to participants in the program.

Board Member Yamashiro-Omi asked about the status of other similar pilots in other cities, specifically Stockton. Fonstein said he believed other cities had found funding to continue their programs. He described that the mayor of Stockton had helped form an organization called Mayors for Guaranteed Income, which has provided consulting to many other pilot programs.

Board Member Bryant reminded the SSHRB board of how divisive the program was when it was originally proposed. Bryant asked Fonstein what he thinks the residents of Alameda think and feel about the program. Fonstein replied that he didn't know, but thinks that the storytelling aspect of the program evaluation will help change perceptions.

President Means thanked Eric Fonstein for his presentation and his past work on the SSHRB Board, as well as congratulating him on his upcoming retirement. Other Board Members echoed the sentiment.

4-B Presentation on Domestic Violence Prevention Programs

Public Comment: None

Alameda resident, Jennifer Rakowski, MPA, presented to the board on the topic of a Domestic Violence Community Empowerment Campaign (please see [Exhibit 1](#)). Rakowski's current work focuses on housing, but she has over 20 years of experience addressing domestic violence at a national, state, and local level. She has served on the Board of the National Coalition of Anti-violence Programs, the California Domestic Violence Healthcare Leadership Board, and co-founded and co-directs an organization dedicated to providing services for abused women.

Following the presentation, Board Member Yamashiro-Omi asked if there were other people Rakowski had reached out to in terms of creating a city campaign addressing domestic violence.

Rakowski deferred to city staff to determine the scale of the campaign.

Board Member Wolf asked Rakowski where the city could start in terms of developing a domestic violence program and who would be in charge of it. Rakowski expressed that the City Manager's Office and the City Council would be best situated to kickoff the idea. From there, she encouraged performing a strengths assessment and potentially beginning a city employee education campaign as a starting point that it could grow from. She emphasized replacing the idea of "being a hero" with using one's own skills to take small steps to supporting a community that is deeply affected by domestic violence.

Program Manager Grecia Mannah-Ayon brought up the campaign that had already been done in the city to post domestic violence resources in public restrooms. She described that creating a formal city program would be a matter of human and financial resources and that there isn't a clear department or division to carry out such a program.

Board Member Wolf described the Domestic Violence Work Group's recent efforts to involve community groups such as Alameda Unified School District, the District Attorney's Office, Alameda County Services, the Alameda Fire Department, etc. He expressed concern that quarterly meetings did not result in action despite financial and human resources.

Board Member Bucholz asked how Rakowski would measure success on this issue. Rakowski responded that goals would have to be customized to the type of program or campaign.

Program Manager Mannah-Ayon asked whether Rakowski intended for the City of Alameda to take the lead on domestic violence prevention rather than Rakowski herself. Rakowski affirmed that her goal was to inspire the city to act on this important issue.

Board Member Yamashiro-Omi asked more questions about the city employee education campaign mentioned in the presentation. Rakowski expressed a desire to empower city staff with skills and knowledge to address domestic violence and to turn bystanders into resources.

Board Member Bryant asked how to empower Alameda residents who find themselves as bystanders. Rakowski described how a participatory-based campaign would allow the city to invite various residents to speak about their experiences and explain the diverse avenues for educating citizens about domestic violence prevention. Board Member Bryant asked what SSHRB could do to disseminate this information. Rakowski expressed the desire to have the SSHRB board examine how it could fit addressing domestic violence within its mission. She also emphasized the Board's ability to pass on recommendations to City Council.

President Means raised the need for community education about the less-obvious signs or precursors to domestic violence. The SSHRB Board Members thanked Rakowski for her presentation.

4-C LGBTQ City Manager's Office Presentation

On May 6, 2025, Councilmember Daysog brought a City Council Referral to City Council proposing an LGBTQ sanctuary city resolution. Through discussion, the City Council determined to focus on local action and directed city staff to create an LGBTQ Action Plan focused on local support of the LGBTQ community. Leadership for this effort was assigned to Assistant City Manager Wooldridge. Wooldridge met with Department heads to discuss what measures were already being taken to support the queer community in Alameda, as well as identify future opportunities—which together create the City of Alameda LGBTQ Action Plan draft (please see [Exhibit 1](#)). She is asking the SSHRB Board for their feedback on the plan, which will also be presented to the Library Board and Recreation and Parks Commission. Wooldridge will be presenting it to City Council in October.

The City of Alameda LGBTQ Action Plan ([Exhibit 1](#)) was presented by Assistant City Manager Amy Wooldridge.

Board Member Bryant asked if the City of Alameda will continue with its DEIB employee training this coming year. Wooldridge said they are examining their organizational culture and ensuring that it feels safe and inclusive. Board Member Bucholz asked if we have population-level demographic data regarding same-sex head of households in Alameda. Assistant City Manager Wooldridge expressed uncertainty, but mentioned that people could self-identify in the 2024 census as LGBT. Board Member Yamashiro-Omi expressed the thought that the census data would likely undercount LGBT people.

Board Member Bucholz reminded Wooldridge about the queer prom that was held at the Queer Teen Activity Center (QTAC). Wooldridge thanked Bucholz and mentioned that the event had over 80 attendees and that they are planning a Halloween event for QTAC.

Vice President Green asked if there are gender neutral restrooms at Veteran's Hall where QTAC is housed. Wooldridge replied that there are not, due to the high cost of renovating historical buildings. President Means discussed the potential for new, modern designs of gender-neutral restrooms that can save space and fix other restroom-related issues such as line equity. Wooldridge agreed and shared that gender-inclusive restrooms can be more efficient for all users.

Board Member Bucholz queried Wooldridge on how the city is partnering with the school district on policies affecting transgender students. Wooldridge did not have a response to specific policies, but emphasized the importance of coordinating with the school district to support LGBTQ students. Board Member Bucholz further queried what could be done to assist Alamedans with getting resources regarding gender-affirming care. Board Member Yamashiro-Omi added the importance of promoting inclusive housing initiatives.

President Means raised the idea that creative funding sources could be tapped to fund gender-inclusive projects, since these projects often benefit multiple groups (the disabled, the elderly, etc.).

Public Comment: Lily Illia, student co-chair for the AUSD LGBTQ+ Round Table, addressed the objective to promote trans-inclusive policies in the school district. They described the difficulty with accessing gender-neutral restrooms in Alameda, especially on their campus (Alameda Science & Technology Institute), which currently has no gender-neutral restrooms. They emphasized the benefit of gender-neutral restrooms to multiple community groups. They also raised the issue of transphobic teachers in AUSD. Some schools or individual teachers opt out of LGBTQ+ training (which is 1 hour of training per semester), notably Love Elementary School. They reinforced their support for several items on the LGBTQ Action Plan.

Public Comment: Jennifer Rakowski, domestic violence prevention advocate, expressed appreciation for the City of Alameda. She described several harmful incidents toward the LGBTQ that caused her to lose trust with the city, but emphasized the tremendous strides the city has made since, though she reaffirmed that there is still work left to do. She raised awareness regarding the generation of LGBTQ seniors who survived the AIDS epidemic.

Board Member Yamashiro-Omi brought up the importance of cultural sensitivity toward LGBTQ+ people regarding their culture of origin, may have unique reactions toward or beliefs about queer people. She reaffirmed the importance of the public knowing the history of queer residents of Alameda. Assistant City Manager Wooldridge brought up the possibility of coordinating with the library and the Alameda Museum for stewardship over sharing this history.

4-D Discuss and Review Social Service Human Relations Board Workgroup Reports

Public Comment: None

- Domestic Violence Workgroup (Wolf)
 - Board Member Wolf thanked Program Manager Mannah-Ayon for putting together the Domestic Violence (DV) Taskforce, which had 10 participants from a variety of public and private groups (APD, AFD, city staff, AFS, Building Futures, etc.)
 - The APD has transitioned to a new liaison for domestic violence, Robby Stofle, who presented statistics on DV and arrests, which were particularly high in June and July
 - Stofle reported that there is likely a lot of domestic violence that is not reported, and police have difficulty pursuing arrests when there are no physical signs of abuse. Stofle also reported completing a 3-day course on strangulation.
 - The Alameda Fire Department said they employ a paramedic on every rig and that they look out for medical requests related to domestic violence. They reported effective communication between the AFD, APD, and the Family Violence Law Center. However, due to lack of funding the Family Violence Law Center does not have a presence in Alameda, and is currently housed in the Oakland school district. Board Member Wolf suggested this as an opportunity for future resource growth in Alameda.
 - Future task force meetings will involve a district attorney. The APD in particular would like to promote domestic violence prevention programs in schools.
 - Program Manager Mannah-Ayon expressed that the task force was successful, and that they have increased the frequency from twice a year to quarterly due to participant feedback. Mannah-Ayon suggested the task force could assist in potential campaigns and school outreach.
 - Board Member Wolf expressed a need for greater coordination between organizations that address domestic violence.
- Alamedans Together Against Hate (Yamashiro-Omi, Bryant)
 - Board Member Bryant shared that they had an opportunity to speak with the mayor and vice mayor about the resolution. The mayor indicated some reservations about the timing of the resolution and a preference for creating an action plan. Board Member Bryant reported sharing some of his lived experiences in support of a resolution.
 - Board Member Bryant said that the APD was planning on reaching out to him but he has not heard from them.
 - Board Member Bryant expressed an intention to move forward with the resolution.
 - Board Member Bryant reported beginning preparations for United Against Hate Week, which will be occurring in late October. He described some past events, such as a poetry slam, as being unsuccessful, and a desire to try something different.
 - Board Member Yamashiro-Omi said that discussions with key city leaders regarding the resolution were going forward.
 - Board Member Bryant said they were pursuing opportunities to engage with students. President Means told the group that he would be able to put them in contact with leadership at Encinal Junior & Senior High School.
 - Program Manager Mannah-Ayon reported that Shamar Edwards (from the AUSD Office of Equity) encourages reaching out to parents first.
 - Vice President Green asked if the SSHRB Board could collect the qualitative from the listening session and make it public so that residents could learn from the experiences of their community members. Mannah-Ayon emphasized the limitations posed by privacy measures.
 - Board Member Yamashiro-Omi emphasized that the Mayor is taking a very cautious position in regards to the timing of the resolution, but is supportive of it. Board Member Bryant concurred. President Means emphasized being

persistent.

- The Road Home/People Experiencing Homelessness (Means, Green, Buchholz)
 - President Means shared that the Road Home held their first listening session, which had 11 attendees with fairly diverse representation. He described a need to seek out the voices of seniors who do not regularly visit the Mastick Senior Center.
 - President Means reported that the topic of transportation was prescient, with consideration needing to be given to the accessibility of transportation to seniors.
 - Vice President Green brought up the need for successful communication and identifying ways of connecting people with needed resources, especially those who are not connected or involved in other ways already.
 - Vice President Green raised awareness regarding social isolation, as well as the difficulty of balancing the needs of various communities (e.g. bike lanes add accessibility for some, but may pose a barrier to parking for seniors who drive cars).
 - Vice President Green reminded the Board that the Point-in-Time (PIT) count is around the corner.
 - President Means reported that the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) at Dignity Village is proceeding smoothly, with relationships based in trust being established.

5. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

5-A Status Report on the City of Alameda's Housing and Human Services

Staff Member Grecia Mannah-Ayon reported the following:

- HHS has hired an Administrative Specialist who will be assisting SSHRB and ACCYF who starts on September 2.
- Point-in-Time (PIT) Count update: Alameda County indicated that a time will be selected soon for the first meeting with the designated point of contact. HHS anticipates needing to recruit volunteers to assist with the PIT Count.
- Operation Dignity has housed more individuals in the last few months of their tenure than the last two providers combined.

6. BOARD COMMUNICATIONS, NON-AGENDA

President Means reported that Alameda County Healthcare for Homeless has an annual summer solstice event to celebrate individuals with lived experience being homeless. 12 individuals will be receiving a Resiliency and Determination (RAD) Award. They reached out to President Means to discover whether the SSHRB Board would be interested in nominating someone for the award next year.

Board Member Bryant shared that he has tickets to a museum event on Friday. Board Member Wolf expressed interest in attending with him.

7. ADJOURNMENT

President Means adjourned the meeting at 8:51pm.