

December 12, 2019

South Bay supervisors approve more LGBT services

by Heather Cassell

Thursday Dec 12, 2019



Maribel Martínez, left, and Alicia Anderson proposed increasing LGBT services in the South Bay during remarks to the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors December 10. Photo: Heather Cassell

Two separate projects that will expand future LGBTQ services in the South Bay got a boost this week by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors.

The 5-0 votes occurred at the board's December 10 meeting.

The board tentatively approved the county's Office of LGBTQ Affairs to move forward with its proposed two-year plan for the creation of an LGBT wellness center. The office's team had spent a year conducting an intense community needs assessment for the project.

The supervisors requested the office return with a detailed budget and plan for moving forward.

The supervisors also approved \$300,000 for a two-year senior LGBTQ pilot program in partnership with Avenidas, a Mountain View senior center.

(cont. next page)

Additionally, the board approved the LGBTQ affairs office to conduct a countywide LGBT senior survey.

David Campos, a deputy county executive, and Maribel Martínez, director of the LGBTQ affairs office, were pleased with the votes. Joining them at the meeting were Julie Solomon and Valerie Stinger of Mountain View and Palo Alto's human relations commissions, respectively.

The county is seeing a board that is "very committed to these issues" and "continues to be a leader when it comes to LGBT issues," Campos, a gay man and former San Francisco supervisor, said outside the board chambers following the vote. With the departure of gay county supervisor Ken Yeager due to term limits in January, Campos was referring to questions some had about whether the board, which now has no out members, would continue to prioritize LGBTQ services.

Santa Clara County estimates that its 2017 LGBT population was 4% of its 1.9 million residents, according to the Gallup and the United States Census Bureau data, respectively.

According to the Williams Institute, an LGBT think tank at UCLA School of Law, California's LGBT population was approximately 5.3% of the state's 39.56 million residents as of 2018. Those figures are based on the census and the Gallup Daily on its interactive population map.

Santa Clara supervisors and the LGBTQ affairs office recognize that a large percentage of the South Bay's LGBT community lives in San Jose, the county's hub with 1.035 million residents as of 2017, according to the census.

The leaders also know that there are other areas where community members reside and need services. Santa Clara County stretches from Palo Alto to Gilroy, north to south, and Los Gatos and Milpitas, west to east.

Proposing the future

Martínez, a two-spirit queer woman of color, presented the two proposals to the supervisors with the support of Campos and Alicia Anderson, senior health care program manager of the county's Behavioral Health Services department.

Martínez laid out to the supervisors a strategic plan to implement a hub, spoke, and route for access to, and provision of, multiple services for the wellness center and the LGBT senior pilot program and survey.

For the wellness center, the supervisors, Martínez, and Campos expressed the same concerns about funding and fiscal sustainability, location, and services for at-risk communities.

Board of Supervisors President Joe Simitian praised the LGBTQ affairs office for its work partnering with Avenidas, which is in his District 5. Using the senior center as an example, he urged the office to be "opportunistic" and "entrepreneurial," and expressed concern about lost opportunities staying within the boundaries of working with other government agencies.

(cont. next page)

"We should encourage you to be entrepreneurial, go out and make something happen," he said.

Board Vice President and District 2 Supervisor Cindy Chavez and District 4 Supervisor Susan Ellenberg offered suggestions for potential locations near organizations already providing LGBTQ services, such as the Billy DeFrank LGBT Community Center, the new gender clinic, and O'Connor Hospital in San Jose.

KQED reported that the board approved the purchase of the hospital, along with the Saint Louise Regional Hospital in Gilroy, in October.

Chavez also spoke about creating centers or services in neighborhoods where there's a high LGBT population and getting services to the community quickly.

"Speed is actually very important," Chavez emphasized, following Simitian's statements to grab opportunities for creating the wellness center.

District 3 Supervisor Dave Cortese expressed concern about violence against the transgender community and noted he's aware that the county has a transgender assessment underway.

Campos told the board that addressing the transgender community's needs is a "personal passion of mine."

He took the opportunity to informally propose a survey of the transgender community and to create an organization specifically to advocate for, and serve, the county's transgender community.

The South Bay currently doesn't have a transgender organization advocating for the community's needs. The LGBTQ affairs office's transgender expert position has been vacant since the end of 2018.

"No factors are in place for an organization to happen organically, so the county has to step in and create an organization," Campos said, adding he will be back with a proposal for a survey and a budget.

Chavez expressed concerns for funding, not only for launching the wellness center, but also sustaining it in the future.

Discussing the challenges and successes of building and maintaining San Francisco's LGBT Community Center, Campos addressed Chavez's financial concern, stating, "The goal here is not just what it looks like at the beginning, but how do you sustain it throughout?"

Chavez requested Campos and Martínez return to the board with a budget and a mechanism for funding the wellness center.

Encouraged

"This gives us the green light to think outside the box," said Campos about the supervisors'

(cont. next page)

comments. "The message is clear they want a center that is in a great location for the community [and] that is innovative."

Martínez, who said next year the community will see much more from her office, was also encouraged by the board's vote and calling on her office to act quickly on behalf of the county's LGBT community.

The approval for her office's work was a "great way to end the year in a very hopeful and enthusiastic way and gives us much promise for 2020," she said.

San Jose Mercy News

December 14, 2019

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

County, Avenidas team up to better serve LGBTQ seniors

By Aldo Toledo

atoledo@bayareanewsgroup.com

SAN JOSE » In an effort to fill a gap of services for LGBTQ seniors on the Peninsula, Santa Clara County's Board of Supervisors voted unanimously this week on a partnership to better serve a population that officials say is vulnerable to neglect and mistreatment in aging care facilities.

Proposed by Board President Joe Simitian, the pilot will in-

volve a partnership between the county and non-profit aging care center Avenidas — which has facilities in Palo Alto and Mountain View — to provide new services like case management, caregiver support, friendly visiting, transportation and other socialization opportunities for LGBTQ seniors starting in January.

"By collaborating with Avenidas, the county has an opportunity to partner with a strong, respected and established leader

in the senior care community," Simitian said in a press release. "Their work speaks for itself. And I think Avenidas is the perfect partner; their experience and compassion make for a winning combination. And their desire to do even more for LGBTQ seniors is very good news."

The program aims at mitigating common challenges facing the aging LGBTQ population. County officials say LGBTQ seniors face unique economic and

health disparities relative to the general senior population. For example, they are twice as likely to live alone, and four times less likely to have children than their heterosexual counterparts.

That increases the potential for isolation, neglect and mistreatment at aging care facilities, officials said.

"Medical and social sector research has clearly demonstrated that LGBTQ older adults

experience a variety of social, economic, and health disparities compared to the general population of older adults," said Mountain View Human Relations Commissioner Julie Solomon, who spoke in support of the partnership at the Board of Supervisors meeting. "Increasing the availability and accessibility of culturally competent programs and services can help to increase equity and improve outcomes."

Palo Alto Weekly

December 24, 2021

PASSING WITH FLYING COLORS

... Acknowledging the need to serve older adults in the LGBTQ+ community, the **Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors** recently approved an additional \$75,000 to extend **Avenidas' Rainbow Collective** program through June. "Two years in and the program is thriving," Santa Clara County Supervisor **Joe Simitian** said in a Dec. 14 press release. "The Rainbow Collective has become a trusted community resource helping LGBTQ+ older adults build connections and access services in their local community." The program was first proposed in 2019 as a partnership between the county and Avenidas, a senior services nonprofit based in Palo Alto, to fill a service gap in the northern end of the county. A \$300,000 contract was approved by the end of that year.

The Rainbow Collective launched in early 2020, offering LGBTQ+ seniors a variety of services, including opportunities for socialization, education and case management. A survey of LGBTQ+ adults released earlier this year identified the Top 5 potential activities of most interest to this group: access to free movies or other entertainment; safe walking spaces; social and group activities; LGBTQ+ specific activities, services and programs; and support with technology. On Dec. 14, the board approved the additional funding to the program and extended it to June 30.

Thomas Kingery, Rainbow Collective coordinator, expressed his gratitude on behalf of the program. "We look forward to continuing and expanding our services in 2022," Kingery said.