

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: David Clyne, City Manager Pro Tem

SUBJECT: UNHOUSED – NEXT STEPS

DATE: December 6, 2023

Background

At the November 27, 2023 Council meeting, staff was asked to provide information regarding the resources and efforts applied to address the unhoused situation in Cottage Grove and to staff training in biohazard management. Since the passage of Resolution 2086, Adopting a Management Plan for Use of Public Lands by Individuals Experiencing Homelessness (“Plan”), staff has undertaken numerous measures to address the perceived needs of the unhoused in compliance with evolving law and the adopted Plan.

Discussion

During its regular weekly meeting, staff discussed Council’s request and how best to respond in a timely manner. It became quickly clear that an in-depth analysis of time and expenditures to implement the Plan and address the City’s unhoused situation was both a substantial time-consuming effort in and of itself; plus, a confusing request.

In determining time and costs, it is difficult to determine when to begin the analysis and what to measure. The bulk of virtually all local government expenditures are in human resources. Time cards have not been kept in a way designed to track those expenditures. To go back in time is much more of an art than a science. To address these difficulties, directors and managers have been provided a form to estimate, by position, the percentage of time spent on various assignments uniquely attributable to the unhoused. I hope to summarize that information at the Council meeting to supplement this written response.

Additionally, we have some anecdotal costs associated with responses to recent public records requests. Specifically, an approximate 75-page records response was provided to a resident who requested records showing various public works costs associated with the camps. Rather than summarize those results, I will leave it to you individually to determine whether you wish for us to make further copies available to you or not. To be clear, there is no analysis of those costs, simply the raw numbers.

The issue of time and expenditures spent on services to the unhoused should include a review of costs foregone. Staff should not only review gross City expenditures in formulating its Council response, but also net expenditures. In other words, what resources would the City have expended if the Plan had not been adopted, and how do those costs

compare to the City's post-Plan adoption costs? We have no simple means to address those contrasting scenarios, but anecdotal evidence from before implementation of the Plan indicates that those daily operational costs (without consideration of capital investments largely or fully funded by external resources) very likely exceed those the City now spends, on average.

I mentioned above the confusion surrounding the Council request. Specifically, since Plan adoption, staff has seen its mission towards the unhoused as providing a humane solution consistent with both the letter and intent of local, state, and federal law. As such, several campsites were established with varying levels of service for a 24/7 solution. This allows the City to manage its other parks and public spaces consistently with what staff believes the public would like those experiences to be (i.e., those areas exclude informal sites for unhoused camping.)

Achieving that mission has been largely accomplished through the expenditure of ARPA funds, with some level of support from normal operating budgets and personnel. Staff believes that these current operations affect Council direction. Supporting this belief, Council has recently directed staff to pursue additional outside resources specifically targeted at continuing a higher level of service at the Highway 99 site.

Similarly, City staff is working to implement Council housing goals with City-purchased and controlled land. We have made significant progress on that front. Achieving that goal will increase the availability of below-market housing options, thus providing upward mobility options to those in need.

The above begs the question: Does the Council intend to continue providing space (and, in some cases, services) to unhoused individuals in order to allow enforcement of the Municipal Code in other City parks and public spaces and provide the public relatively unfettered access to those other areas? Or does the Council prefer staff to pursue a different policy?

With respect to City staff training and procedures regarding dealing with hazardous material, the following is provided:

- Blood Borne Pathogen Training
- First Aid/CPR
- PPE Items, Sharp Kits, puncture proof gloves, Biohazard Kits grabbers. The crew is trained on proper use of all the items.
- Alcohol and sanitary wipes, vital oxide, Clorox, Virex.
- For larger cleanups we employ the Sheriff work crew, old campsites, etc.
- Northwest Hazmat disposes of the seized RVs that have been authorized for demolition
- Phone numbers for regional hazmat are posted for employee reference

- Posters of how to handle hazardous materials are posted on notification boards.

Recommendations

In light of staff confusion on this matter, we have no specific recommendation beyond seeking clarity on Council direction. In that vein, the following options are presented:

- First and foremost, we request that Council convene a future work session (a tentative placeholder has been placed on the Agenda Planner for February 12, 2024) on this matter.
- The Council may wish to convene a facilitated community conversation in advance of the work session to inform the later Council/staff conversation.
- Alternatively, or as a result of the work session, staff could be further directed to begin tracking information that Council wishes to see shared back. We would set a date certain to begin that tracking and continue as long as Council wishes; then ultimately or periodically report back on the results.
- Council could also consider now, or as a result of the work session, the retention of an outside consultant to review city records and compile a meaningful report on the City's past efforts and related costs. We would strongly encourage that such a report also compare and contrast those actual expenditures against amounts the City likely would have incurred had the City not taken the steps it did to address the unhoused situation and laws through adoption of various Code amendments and the Plan.

Cost

Indeterminate at this time

Mr Roberts for:
David Clyne, Interim City Manager