



Legislation Text

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To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Community Development Commission and Department of Health Services

Staff Name and Phone Number: Barbie Robinson, 565-7876

Vote Requirement: Informational Only

Supervisory District(s): All

Title:

Update on County Efforts to Address Homelessness, COVID-19 Homeless Response and Proposal for Future Strategies to End Homelessness

Recommended Action:

- A) Accept staff's report on the Community Development Commission and Department of Health Services efforts to implement homeless strategies approved by the Board on December 23, 2019 and March 10, 2020.
- B) Provide direction to staff on the establishment of an indoor-outdoor shelter(s).
- C) Provide direction to staff on the future of the Los Guilicos Village Shelter.
- D) Provide direction to staff regarding proposed short- and medium-range homeless strategies including the direction for the use and appropriation of federal and state homeless funding in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- E) Provide direction to staff on County's homeless funding allocation to the Home Sonoma County Leadership Council.
- F) Provide an update on upcoming efforts to lease and/or purchase remaining homes for shared housing.
- G) Provide direction to staff to explore opportunities to expand permanent solutions under the Project Roomkey program and appropriations under the governor's budget.
- H) Approve recommendation to have the Community Development Committee focus affordable housing and housing authority functions with the Board of Supervisors and have the Home Sonoma County Leadership Council focus on homeless matters.

Executive Summary:

This Board Item provides a status update on key actions the Board has directed staff to take including the following: (A) County's COVID-19 Pandemic response to shelter COVID-19-vulnerable homeless populations; (B) proposals for the allocation of COVID-19 pandemic State and Federal funding; (C) staff recommendations for indoor-outdoor shelter sites; (D) update on operations of the County Los Guilicos (LG) Village Shelter and provide direction on the future of the LG Village; (E) update on the upcoming efforts to lease and/or purchase remaining shared housing; (F) outreach efforts of the Homeless Encampment and Resource Team (HEART) to occupants of encampments and bring them into the sheltering and housing system of care; (G) proposal for short- and medium-range homeless strategies to be implemented within the next 3-6 months (short-term) and 6-12 months (medium-term strategies); (H) provide direction on future allocation of County funding to the Home Sonoma County Leadership Council; and (I) approve recommendation to streamline the roles of the

Community Development Committee and the Home Sonoma County Leadership Council.

Discussion:

California has a homeless crisis. California now has an estimated 151,000 people experiencing homelessness, accounting for almost half (47 percent) of the homeless population in the United States. Preliminary results for 2020 shows that there was a seven percent decrease in homelessness in Sonoma County. The 2020 Point in Time Count was conducted on February 28, 2020 after an approved delay from the Department of Housing and Urban Development from the end of January to the end of February due to the emergency on the Joe Rodota Trail (JRT). The decrease from 2,951 in 2019 to 2,745 in 2020 is due in large part to increased funding from the State of California in 2018-19 as well as intensive outreach and care coordination of critical services with the County's ACCESS Interdepartmental Multidisciplinary Teams (IMDT) and the HEART Cohort Team. See Attachment 1, "Preliminary Results of 2020 Homeless Count" for full details on preliminary results.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HOMELESS RESPONSE

Our efforts to address homelessness have been complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Unsheltered individuals living on the streets and those living in large shelter settings are particularly susceptible to COVID-19 since they are unable to shelter in place. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has issued guidance that people 65 years of age and older and those with underlying medical conditions are at risk of having serious health impacts as a result of the virus. Homelessness exacerbates the spread of COVID-19 since social distancing is more difficult in shelter settings, access to hygiene and sanitation facilities and connection to services and healthcare are limited.

On March 18, 2020, Governor Newsom signed an Executive Order to implement emergency aid to local governments and implemented emergency proactive measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 among the homeless. While the Order included increased local flexibility for spending and building shelters, public guidance on homeless shelters, purchasing trailers, and leasing hotels/motels in partnership with Counties, it was not combined with sufficient funding allocation.

COVID-19 Response

In March 2020, the Department of Health Services' (DHS) Department Operations Center (DOC) activated a Homeless Task Force (HTF) to provide strategic support to individuals experiencing homelessness and at high risk of developing serious complications from COVID-19. The Ending Homelessness Program Manager with the CDC serves as the Lead for the HTF and coordinates with the Behavioral Health Director who serves as the Operations lead of the DOC. The HTF currently includes representatives from five cities as well as subject matter experts from the Sonoma County Housing Authority, Behavioral Health Division, IMDT/HEART, Department of Probation, and Human Services Department.

Significant accomplishments thus far include:

- Sanitary stations: Over twenty-five handwashing stations and porta potties are deployed across the County, including North, West, Central, South, and Sonoma Valley areas.
- Non-Congregate Shelter (NCS): Eligible individuals for NCS sites include individuals who are 65 years of age or older experiencing homelessness or individuals under 65 experiencing homelessness with serious underlying health conditions such as chronic disease, compromised immune systems,

respiratory illness, etc. The HTF follows Centers for Disease Control and FEMA guidance in assessing eligibility for all NCS sites. NCS sites include the Astro Hotel, Sonoma State University, and trailers supplied by the State of California at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds.

- Service Provision: Contract service providers are responsible for shelter operations and management services.
- Medical Services: The DOC HTF contracts with St. Joseph's Medical Center, Santa Rosa Medical Center, Petaluma Health Care Center, and DEMA to provide a range of medical services for COVID pending, COVID positive and COVID vulnerable persons in our non-congregate settings.
- To date, 175 people have been served at the three sites; 154 individuals still reside at:
 - Astro Hotel - 27 individuals in 24 rooms
 - Trailers - 19 individuals in 10 trailers
 - 128+ individuals at Sonoma State University (108 homeless and over 20 COVID positive or persons under investigation)

COVID-19 FUNDING TO SUPPORT HOMELESS SOLUTIONS

To help State and local jurisdictions respond to the impact of COVID-19, the Federal government provided for \$790,600 in Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding to the CDC. Through the State, \$564,000 in Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG-CV) and \$393,754 in ESG Disaster funding with an additional estimated \$6.5 million in funding slated to come in the fall of 2020. The Federal government also provided \$1,109,159 in Community Development Block Grant - Coronavirus Funds (CDBG-CV) from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in response to COVID-19. Additionally HUD provided \$134,401 towards general rental assistance that allows CDC to divert to COVID-19 specific short-term tenant based rental assistance.

The County was also allocated \$529,103 and the Home Sonoma County Leadership was allocated \$575,095 in State funding to address immediate needs in response to COVID-19; these funds are already deployed for the extension of winter shelters for social distancing, hotel expenses for social distancing protocols for homeless shelters, porta potties, and handwashing stations.

Source	Amount
Federal ESG-CV Round 1	\$564,000
Federal ESG-CV Round 2	\$6,598,916 (estimated)
Federal CDBG-CV Round 1	\$1,109,159
State ESG Disaster	\$393,754
State ESG-CV	\$790,600
HUD HOME Investments Partnership Program	\$134,401
Total	\$9,590,830

Attachment 3 outlines the criteria and requirements for these funds. The federal ESG funds will provide the County with opportunities to implement additional emergency shelter solutions as well as targeted rental assistance and rapid rehousing for individuals experiencing homelessness. Other funds could be used for emergency short-term rental assistance, housing navigation services for voucher recipients, or capital projects that mitigate or respond to the impacts of COVID-19.

STATUS OF HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT PREVENTION EFFORTS

Indoor-Outdoor Shelter

On March 30, 2020 the Community Development Commission in partnership with the General Services Department presented the Board with six proposed sites for the location of two indoor-outdoor shelters to accommodate a minimum of 40 individuals at each location. During that meeting the Board narrowed down the number of proposed sites to four: 1) South Aston Barns near the Fairgrounds, 2) 3313 Chanate Rd, Public Health Lab Parking Lot, 3) 3333 Chanate Rd, at Chanate Hall and 4) 4040 Santa Rosa Avenue, which is no longer a viable option.

The Community Development Commission and General Services Department did further analysis of these sites. Attachment 5 provides the criteria and analysis of the County owned properties.

On March 10, 2020, the Board affirmed the direction to establish indoor-outdoor shelters. The establishment of an indoor-outdoor shelter to accommodate homeless individuals from across the County will be critical in addressing the County's efforts to support those entering the system of care and those who are not yet ready to come into the traditional sheltering and housing systems. These individuals may be more comfortable in an indoor-outdoor shelter environment as they transition towards stable housing and improved well-being. There may be opportunities to also consider how various county-owned sheltering programs could be placed in each supervisorial district.

Staff seeks the Board's direction on the remaining three sites for consideration.

Los Guilicos Village (LGV) Shelter

Los Guilicos Village has been operational since January 2020. On March 10, 2020, the Board of Supervisors directed an extension of the LG Village through the end of October 2020. To date, 90 individuals have been served, 17 have been connected to permanent housing, 19 individuals chose to leave voluntarily and an additional 14 were involuntarily exited for compounded rule infractions. Of those that left involuntarily, three were placed in residential/psychiatric facilities.

The Homeless Encampment Assistance Resource Team (HEART) cohort is made up of IMDT members who are part of the ACCESS Initiative. The HEART cohort first worked with the homeless on the Joe Rodota Trail to get them housed in shelters beginning in December 2019 and into 2020. With Board approval and additional funding, the team continues to work on sheltering Sonoma County's homeless population and connecting them with necessary supportive services. HEART members have outreached to 276 homeless individuals from the Joe Rodota Trail, enrolling 249 into various services beyond LG sheltering, including food stamps, Medi-Cal enrollment, voucher related services, general assistance applications. The ACCESS Initiative's HEART members has served as a key entry point into the sheltering and housing system of care for some of the most vulnerable and chronically homeless members of our communities.

Services provided at the LG Village are vital determinants in the success of homeless individuals receiving and maintaining shelter and eventually permanent supportive housing. It would be difficult to provide the additional wraparound services without 1) a decision to extend operations at LG or 2) additional resource allocation for the creation of an alternative. If LG is to remain, the City of Santa Rosa Fire Marshall has determined that the County will be required to install fire sprinklers in each unit since the occupancy will

extend beyond 180 days. The cost to comply with this requirement is estimated at \$155,000.

Shared Housing

On December 23, 2019, the Board directed staff to purchase six shared homes to house up to 60 individuals. To date, the Community Development Commission has purchased two of the six homes. The Commission also has four leased properties. Twenty-one individuals, including three homeless veterans are housed in 21 of the 25 units (bedrooms). The four remaining units will be assigned to tenants identified by the ACCESS IMDT within the next 60 days when repairs are completed.

The ACCESS IMDT has been successful in developing a strategic approach to setting goals and providing a holistic approach by providing intensive wraparound services that has allowed individuals to be successfully placed and supported in sheltering and housing. Additional investments in shared homes and long-term permanent supportive housing solutions will allow for more permanent and sustainable solutions to homelessness.

HEART Encampment Efforts

On March 10, 2020, the Board approved additional funding to expand the homeless teams of the ACCESS Initiative to increase the capacity and reach of the County's efforts to bring homeless individuals into sheltering and permanent supportive housing. This HEART cohort integrated into the existing Joe Rodota Trail team that was funded and approved by the Board on December 23, 2019 to support outreach and care coordination to homeless individuals living on the Joe Rodota Trail (JRT).

To date, the Board's investment in cohort teams to address large encampments has resulted in outreach to multiple encampments since the closing of the JRT encampment; four of the outreach efforts were to Sonoma, two in Healdsburg, and one in Cloverdale. HEART members provided 329 service connections, submitted 132 applications for an array of services including medical enrollments to primary care services, applications to general assistance, CalFresh, pharmacy services, Supplemental Security Income, driver's license and identification supports, referrals to crisis stabilization services, Court related services, and 33 doctor appointments/service connections. A total of 145 individuals have been enrolled in ACCESS through the HEART cohort with 33 sheltered and served to date. The HEART cohort has played an important role in the homeless taskforce's work to bring our homeless populations, and those vulnerable to COVID-19, into shelter.

Additional Short- and Medium-Term Strategies to Address Homelessness

The Board's efforts to address homelessness have been successful in achieving long-lasting outcomes in the County's efforts to achieve functional zero homelessness. The investments by the Board to date and the integrated efforts of the CDC homeless and voucher programs and the DHS behavioral health and public health programs and services have demonstrated the efficacy of the collaborative goal-setting approach that focuses on the root causes of homelessness and the determinants of successful long-term housing placements. The proposed strategies focus on the full continuum of housing, services, and supports as well as administrative and operational efficiencies. The Board and the Home Sonoma County Leadership Council have made significant investments to support sheltering, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing. With additional emergency funding to respond to COVID-19, the Board has an opportunity to create long-term, permanent and sustainable solutions that will assist in the County's efforts to achieve functional zero homelessness. Specifically these short- to medium-term solutions focus on: (1) administrative and operational improvements to the CDC and oversight bodies governing the homeless work; (2) expanding sheltering

through the indoor-outdoor sheltering proposals; (3) bridge housing by increasing lease-to-own or outright purchases of shared housing; (4) permanent supportive housing (PSH); (5) homeless prevention efforts; and (6) strengthened work of the ACCESS/HEART homeless IMDT cohort teams. Attachment 4 lays out proposed short- and medium-term strategies that could be considered to further reduce homelessness in Sonoma County.

Project Roomkey: Emergency Housing for Immediate Protection

On June 26, 2020, the California Legislature passed the 2020-21 Budget Act including several key investments and provisions related to reducing homelessness in California. The Budget appropriates \$550 million Coronavirus Relief Fund to support housing for individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These funds will be prioritized for counties, cities, and public entities to build off Project Roomkey through acquiring or rehabilitating motels, hotels, hostels, and other sites and assessments as specified. In addition, the budget appropriates \$50 million General Fund to be administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for the acquisition, conversion, rehabilitation, and operating subsidies for hotels, motels, and other properties to provide housing for individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness. Building on the COVID-19 efforts to date, the CDC and DHS are seeking direction from the Board to explore options to acquire motels, hotels and other sites to provide non-congregate housing (NCS) to homeless individuals who are vulnerable to COVID-19.

Home Sonoma County Leadership Council and Community Development Committee Redesigns

In order to align funding decisions and strategic planning for the homeless system of care, staff recommend a redesign for the Home Sonoma Leadership Council which serves as the mandated Continuum of Care (CoC) Board per HUD regulations. This redesign ensures that all jurisdictions have representation on the Leadership Council and builds upon work done from 2017-2019 in redesigning governance of the homeless system of care.

Staff recommend the Community Development Committee focus its efforts on affordable housing and housing authority functions with the Board of Supervisors and have the Home Sonoma County Leadership Council focus on homeless matters.

Changes to the Home Sonoma County Leadership Council (LC) will improve the effectiveness of the Council by positioning it to (1) focus on the development of homeless policies to guide county-wide efforts to end homelessness; (2) restructuring to ensure that the Community Development Commission is effectively providing the operational and administrative support necessary to successfully backbone the LC; and (3) clearly delineate roles and responsibilities between the LC and the CDC. Detailed recommendations are available in Attachment 2, "Proposed Changes to Leadership Council". A change to the Leadership Council will require a change to the CD Committee Bylaws and a change to the Ordinance. Attachment 6, "CD Committee Bylaws Draft" and Attachment 7 "Ordinance Amendments v 2.0_redline" are included for this Board's consideration.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Board has made significant progress in addressing homelessness. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the need to continue investing in the system of care with permanent and sustainable solutions to achieve

functional zero homelessness.

To help with this funding disparity, CDC and DHS are proposing a November 2020 Sales Tax Measure for Behavioral Health and Homeless Services in Sonoma County focusing on interventions for our most vulnerable. Faced with reduced Federal, State, and County funding and expected changes in the State's system of care, our most vulnerable residents whose needs span the behavioral health service and housing systems of care will be severely impacted. Information about the proposed sales tax measure will be brought to the Board for consideration at the Board's July 14, 2020 meeting.

Prior Board Actions:

March 10, 2020: Item #26, Indoor-Outdoor Shelter Sites and Services for Homeless Individuals

December 23, 2019: Item #1, Emergency Housing, Shelter, and Support Service Options

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 19-20 Adopted	FY20-21 Projected	FY 21-22 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources			

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Funding for the Indoor-Outdoor shelter will require funding from the County. These costs include site development; transferring existing equipment; storage; security; maintenance building fees; and permits. Preliminary estimates to develop a site is in the range of \$980,000 to \$7.7 million. See Attachment 5 "County of Sonoma Transitional Housing Site Evaluations".

\$1,350,000 in Homeless Housing Assistance & Prevention (HHAP) funding previously approved in board item dated 12/23/19 is available for site operator annual costs. Contract providers are currently on a list of "providers qualified to provide services". Once a site is identified, discussions and contract negotiations with providers can begin.

Emergency Solutions Grant Funding can be used to pay for the six-month extension costs associated with homeless emergency service site operator costs for Los Guilicos Village. These costs are estimated to be approximately \$800,000 for six months.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

The Board approved HEART cohort funding during the March 10, 2020 board item. This funding is term-limited for one year.

Attachments:

1. Preliminary Results 2020 Homeless Count
2. Proposed Changes to Leadership Council
3. Homeless System of Care Funding
4. Short and Medium-Term Strategies to Address Homelessness
5. County of Sonoma Transitional Housing Site Evaluations
6. Draft Community Development Committee Bylaws
7. Draft Community Development Committee Ordinance (Redlined)

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

N/A