



Staff Report

File #: 19-252, Item #: 5.2

Meeting Date: 9/25/2019

Westminster City Council

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council
Thru: Eddie Manfro, City Manager
From: Eddie Manfro, City Manager
Reviewed by: Sherry Johnson, Finance Director
Prepared by: Eddie Manfro, City Manager

SUBJECT:

Creation of a Homeless Task Force.

RECOMMENDED ACTION/MOTION:

Staff recommends that the Mayor and City Council:

- A) Approve the creation of a City Manager's Homeless Task Force made up of community stakeholders and key staff to study the impact of homelessness on the City of Westminster and the feasibility of the creation of an emergency homeless shelter;
- B) Authorize the City Manager to make appointments to the Task Force based on the guidelines contained in this report; and
- C) Authorize the Task Force to study these issues and submit recommendations and findings to the City Council before February 28, 2020.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION:

Council Member Sergio Contreras has requested that this item be placed on the agenda for Council consideration. Previously, Council Member Tai Do requested an update on the City's efforts to address homelessness, including the feasibility of the creation of an emergency homeless shelter; this update was provided to the Council at the September 11th Council meeting (Attachment 1).

The January 2019 Point-in-Time Count and Survey identified a total of 184 homeless in Westminster. Since the last Point-in-Time Count in 2017, the homeless population identified by the count in Westminster has doubled. Countywide, the total homeless population is 6,860, an increase of about 43 percent since the 2017 count.

Increases in the number of homeless can be attributed to a wide range of factors ranging from systematic federal reductions in mental health assistance to the high cost of housing, particularly in coastal areas like Orange County. The ability to respond is limited in many cases, as Westminster does not currently have an emergency shelter nor adequate funding resources to provide the multifaceted assistance many homeless people require.

At the September 11th meeting, the Council provided direction to staff to further research and gather information regarding the feasibility of a shelter. Council Member Contreras' recommendation for a Task Force would support the efforts.

Scope of Work

The proposed Task Force's scope of work will be to evaluate myriad issues related to homelessness including, but not limited to, the following:

- The characteristics of the homeless population.
- The current state of homelessness in Westminster and in Orange County, including an analysis of the regions Point-in-Time homeless count and the number of emergency shelter beds within the County.
- The City's current efforts to address homelessness including related City budget issues.
- The City's current efforts to provide affordable housing and permanent supportive housing in the City of Westminster.
- Services and financial resources available within the County to address homelessness.
- The City's ordinances related to parks and public spaces, including a review of pertinent case law impacting cities' ability to address certain homeless issues.
- The City's General Plan and Zoning Code as they relate to the feasibility of the creation of an emergency homeless shelter.
- The availability of public and private properties as they relate to the feasibility of the creation of an emergency homeless shelter.
- The best practices of other cities.

Composition of Task Force

The City Manager will select members of the Task Force based on the following guidelines:

- 2 members from the Police Chief's Advisory Board
- 2 members from the City's Economic Development Advisory Task Force
- 2 members from the City's faith-based community
- 1 member from CityNet
- 1 member from American Family Housing
- 1 member from the City's Family Resource Center
- 1 member from the Westminster Police Department (Homeless Liaison Officer)
- 1 member from the Westminster School District (McKinney-Vento Outreach Coordinator)

This composition is subject to flexibility, based on the availability of personnel in these categories and based on feedback received during the Task Force's work.

The City Manager's Office will be responsible for coordinating the efforts of the Task Force, with primary support provided by the City's Economic Development Manager. Additional City staff will provide professional support to the Task Force as needed.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The fiscal impact to the general fund will be nominal, and will consist of staff time and City Attorney fees required to assist the Task Force.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Staff Report Regarding Homeless Update from September 11, 2019 City Council Meeting.

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Staff Report

File #: 19-214, Item #: 8.1

Meeting Date: 9/11/2019

Westminster City Council

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council
Thru: Eddie Manfro, City Manager
From: Eddie Manfro, City Manager
Reviewed by: Sherry Johnson, Finance Director
Prepared by: Alexa Smittle, Economic Development Manager

SUBJECT:

Status of Homelessness Efforts.

RECOMMENDED ACTION/MOTION:

Staff recommends that the Mayor and City Council consider the information presented and provide direction regarding future efforts.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION:

Homelessness in Westminster

The January 2019 Point-in-Time Count and Survey identified a total of 184 homeless in Westminster. Since the last Point-in-Time Count in 2017, the homeless population identified by the count in Westminster has doubled. Countywide, the total homeless population is 6,860, an increase of about 43 percent since the 2017 count.

Increases in the number of homeless can be attributed to a wide range of factors ranging from systematic federal reductions in mental health assistance to the high cost of housing, particularly in coastal areas like Orange County.

Regardless of the cause, most communities are experiencing similar issues among their residents. The City's Community Services and Recreation Commission has identified homelessness as an important issue currently impacting our parks. City staff receive regular calls and complaints about homeless individuals in the parks, public spaces, and living in cars on Westminster streets. In

response, the City's Police Department, Homeless Resource Officer, CityNet, Family Resource Center, Housing Division, and others work together to leverage available resources to address complaints while seeking to help those experiencing homelessness. Nevertheless, the ability to respond is limited in many cases, as Westminster does not currently have an emergency shelter nor adequate funding resources to provide the multifaceted assistance many homeless people require.

Potential Shelter Solutions

Staff has been researching options to address these limitations. Westminster is part of the Central Service Planning Area, or Central "SPA," along with Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, Fountain Valley, Seal Beach, Stanton, Santa Ana, Tustin, Newport Beach, Costa Mesa, and the adjacent unincorporated areas such as Midway City. This group has been meeting to discuss opportunities for coordinated regional solutions to homelessness and potentially shared funding resources.

Large-scale State and Federal funding sources to address homelessness funnel through the County of Orange and its Continuum of Care ("CoC") Board. These funds include Emergency Solutions Grants ("ESG") and the Homeless Emergency Aid Program ("HEAP"). Applications for these funds generally favor regional solutions. Therefore, a successful funding endeavor is likely to require a partnership with the County, CoC, and at least some Central SPA members. These conversations are also being initiated with the County by the Central SPA group.

Local funding sources not tied to the CoC include Community Development Block Grants ("CDBG"), Housing Authority funds, and future funding from the State's new Building Jobs and Homes Act that will be allocated beginning in 2020. It's important to note that each of these funding sources comes with rules for use. In total, staff believes that in 2020, approximately \$400,000 could be available through the Building Jobs and Homes Act (final guidelines have not yet been issued for this funding source), plus another \$400,000 from CDBG and Housing Authority funds for operation of a shelter. CDBG and Housing Authority funds are currently allocated to fund several programs and services in the City, including support for the Family Resource Center, the Summer Youth Program, Project SHUE, senior outreach and meals, and CityNet services.

On July 10, 2019, the City Council approved joining the Orange County Housing Finance Trust. The primary purpose of this Trust is to obtain and share funding for regional homelessness solutions. Though minimal funding currently exists, the Trust may be a future source of funds for cooperative solutions.

Emergency Shelters

City staff has been speaking to emergency shelter providers and other jurisdictions with shelters to better understand options for the operation of a shelter in Westminster. Depending on the services provided, a 75-100 bed shelter facility is likely to have an annual operating cost of anywhere between \$1.3 and \$2.0 million.

Locating and setting up an emergency shelter is an additional cost. For the last several months, staff has researched sites for lease and sale. Very few properties are available for lease or sale that are both large enough to accommodate a shelter, and are at least somewhat removed from a residential

neighborhood. Two property owners were approached, but not interested. A third is a willing seller, but the building itself is unusual, and capacity is likely to be 50 beds or less. Purchase and renovations were very loosely estimated at \$2.8 million.

Another consideration in location is zoning. In 2010 and 2013, the City amended its zoning code to allow for emergency shelters as follows. Emergency shelters are:

- Permitted by right in the P/SP (Public/Semi-Public) zoning district, including government owned properties, such as the Civic Center, and properties owned by utilities (e.g. Southern California Edison).
- Permitted by right through an Emergency Shelter Overlay Zone (ES zone) added to the M-2 (Medium Industrial) zoned parcels located along Goldenwest Circle.
- Allowed, but only with a conditional use permit (CUP), in the C-2 (General Business) and C-M (Commercial Manufacturing) zoning districts.

Chapter 17.400.053 (Emergency Shelters) was also added to the zoning code, which includes development and operational standards for emergency shelter uses. If the City implements an emergency shelter, it is likely the municipal code would need to be amended to accommodate the use.

Other Solutions

One of the ongoing discussions among the Central SPA group has been that emergency shelters are only a part of a holistic approach to homelessness. Crisis stabilization beds, rehabilitation beds, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing (“PSH”) are also needed. A true regional solution will require an increase in all of these facilities.

The City is currently committed to 45 permanent supportive housing units. The Della Rosa development will include 25 PSH units and 24 affordable units, and is under construction. The Westminster Crossing development will include 20 PSH units and 44 affordable units, and is expected to break ground near the end of the year. Housing Authority funds were contributed to both projects, at \$2.6 million for Della Rosa and \$5.5 million for Westminster Crossing to make these projects come to fruition.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None at this time.

ATTACHMENTS:

None.

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