



Agenda Report

Fullerton City Council

MEETING DATE: FEBRUARY 2, 2021

TO: CITY COUNCIL / SUCCESSOR AGENCY

SUBMITTED BY: KENNETH A. DOMER, CITY MANAGER

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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON HOMELESS INITIATIVES

SUMMARY

The City has undertaken many actions to reduce incidences of homelessness and continues to work with our regional partners on homeless shelters, programs and outreach and engagement efforts. This is an update on the City's efforts.

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file report.

PRIORITY POLICY STATEMENT

This item matches the following Priority Policy Statements:

- Infrastructure and City Assets
- Fiscal and Organizational Stability.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact to the General Fund.

DISCUSSION

Background and Homeless Efforts Update

Police Department

Created in 2012, the Fullerton Police Department's Homeless Liaison Officer (HLO) Unit is comprised of two officers dedicated to assisting the homeless population in Fullerton. Utilizing partnerships with various faith-based organizations, City Net and Orange County Mental Health, the HLO Unit's mission is to provide homeless individuals with opportunities to get off the streets and into shelters with the goal of obtaining permanent housing. HLO's conduct Homeless Outreach each week in partnership with these organizations and work every day to address the needs of the community.

The City is part of the North Orange County Public Safety Task Force which includes ten of the North County SPA cities. The Task Force was formed in 2017 and received a \$20 million grant for a four-year period, expiring this June 30, 2021. A portion of the funds were used to enhance homeless outreach / intervention. In February 2018, the North Orange County and the City of Fullerton contracted with City Net to assist HLO Officers with homeless street outreach and case management services as part of the City's Task Force.

City Response

Over the past years, the City has taken several actions to address homelessness and its effects on the community and has dedicated significant time and resources to regional collaboration efforts that has resulted in the development of two homeless navigation centers providing a total of 250 beds serving the North Orange County homeless population – the Placentia and Buena Park Homeless Shelters. The North SPA was also able to reach a settlement agreement in the Federal Court case involving homeless individuals which specifies the percentage of shelter beds that must be available in order to reinstate enforcement of the City's camping regulations on public property.

On July 2, 2019 City Council declared a shelter crisis and provided direction to seek state and federal funding to lessen the incidence of homelessness. City Council partnered with the Illumination Foundation to establish a facility in Fullerton that not only provides navigation center beds with wrap-around services but also provides recuperative care beds, which provide care for homeless patients after a hospital stay or emergency room visit.

City Council also approved two Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Programs (TBRA) focusing on rental assistance for seniors in mobile home parks at Rancho La Paz and Rancho Fullerton mobile home parks and Veteran's City-wide. While the TBRA program does not directly benefit people experiencing homelessness, the program is essentially a homelessness prevention program as seniors / veterans are vulnerable to becoming homeless.

On October 1, 2019, City Council approved a Safe Parking Program in partnership with the Illumination Foundation. The Safe Parking Program provided families and/or individuals who dwell in their vehicles with a safe and legal place to park, sleep at night, and ensure participant linkage and access to supportive services such as the Coordinated Entry System (CES). The six-month program was transferred to Pathways of Hope and recently terminated on December 31, 2020.

In August 2020, the Fullerton Navigation Center opened and is operated by the Illumination Foundation. Currently, the County of Orange is funding the Fullerton Navigation Center (all 150 beds) through February 2021. After February, City Council allocated CDBG-CV funds for operation of the Navigation Center for a minimum of three months for Fullerton connected persons experiencing homelessness.

Settlement Agreement / Encampment Clean-up

The City has been working with Judge Carter to allow for continued encampment enforcement and clean-up with the opening of the Fullerton Navigation Center. Starting on October 26, 2020 utilizing the County's Behavior Health Services Outreach Workers (Blue Shirts), City Net, the Judge's Outreach team consisting of Pastor Don Dermit, Volunteers of American and the Plaintiff's Counsel Brooke Weitzman, proactive outreach was conducted ahead of encampment cleanup at "hot spot" locations around the City. As part of these clean-ups the City has assisted by providing the necessary storage of belongings and provided clearance (clear ties to Fullerton, no violent felonies, and registrants) for entry into the shelters and coordinating transportation. Through this effort, over 125 homeless residents were placed into shelters (Illumination Foundation's Navigation Center, Buena Park Homeless Shelter, Bridges and the Salvation Army Shelter) or reunified with family members.

The City will continue to enforce the anti-encampment ordinance as long as there are shelter beds available. The enforcement is only considered after the person experiencing homelessness has been offered repeated services by the City, Police, County Mental Health and City Net and per the outreach and engagement policies set forth in the Settlement Agreement.

Homeless Plan Committee

On July 2, 2019, City Council gave direction to establish an Ad Hoc Homelessness Task Force to develop a coordinated and collaborative response to homelessness in Fullerton. The Task Force, retitled the Fullerton Homeless Plan Committee (FHPC), was comprised of residents, service providers, faith leaders, business community, hospitals and colleges. The culmination of the FHPC's work was the development of a Strategic Plan for Addressing Homelessness in Fullerton. The FHPC recommended 20 goals regarding Emergency Housing / Navigation Centers; Permanent Housing and Regional Collaboration. The City continues to work on the recommendations contained in this report based on City Council direction and will provide an update on them in March.

Next Steps - Project Hope

Recently the City has taken advantage of an opportunity to reposition staff dedicated to homeless resources by converting the previous Homeless Outreach Coordinator position into two Homeless Outreach Case Managers (one position is funded through CDBG).

The role of the Case Managers will be to "Provide creative, comprehensive and compassionate solutions to help the homeless community navigate life's barriers". The Case Managers will be part of the City's Homeless Task Force, which also includes the Homeless Liaison Officers. The Task Force will work collaboratively to connect individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness with resources to

help them navigate the barriers they face in maintaining stable housing. Such resources include, but are not limited to, shelter, reunification with family members, mental and physical health services, addiction services and social services.

The North Orange County Public Safety Task Force will be rebranded as the North Orange County HOPE (**H**omeless **O**utreach and **P**roactive **E**ngagement) Team and includes the cities currently part of the Task Force. The HOPE Team will accept other North Orange County cities who wish to join. A consultant has been hired to assist the partner cities with a feasibility study of HOPE and the commitments (financial and staffing) needed from the partner agencies. While the expiration of the current funding for the North Orange County Public Safety Task Force is June 30, 2021, it is the City's goal to have a plan to implement Project HOPE in Spring 2021 and will be ready to commence operations by July 1, 2021.

Fullerton will host HOPE at a City-owned site next to St. Jude Hospital. The City will coordinate and fund all tenant improvements to the site both indoors and outdoors and then require partner cities and service providers to provide outreach and intervention staff and programs to our homeless neighbors in the region. The funding was approved through the Cities CDBG – CV funds. The proposed partner agencies include: Orange County Health Care Agency (OCHCA), Homeless Liaison Officers (HLO's) from partner jurisdictions, Outreach Workers, Case Managers, and a medical component. The HOPE center will provide a centralized home for stakeholders and create a synergy of collaboration amongst the partners, thus, creating a hub of innovation where ideas are shared and resources are pooled all to better serve people experiencing homelessness in Fullerton and surrounding communities. The Center will be for regional partners, staff and volunteers servicing the homeless population only.

The hours of operation for the HOPE center will be dictated by the level of involvement from partner agencies as well as funding but is anticipated to be 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily. Prioritization of calls for homeless outreach and intervention, including those in need of mental health services, will be completed through Outreach Grid. Outreach Grid is a HIPPA compliant app-based name registry which tracks law enforcement and outreach encounters with the homeless. Additionally, it allows for real-time bed reservation services in the Placentia and Buena Park shelters. This allows HLO's and other outreach workers to see what beds are available and overlay the need of the individual experiencing homelessness to confirm capability with the availability of a given resource. This application will effectively track outreach offering from initial contact, subsequent contact(s) and hopefully through re-housing. Additionally, Outreach Grid will provide HOPE partners with data on those who accept services and identify those who are service resistant. This data will help HOPE and other homeless service providers tailor services to be more effective with our service-resistive homeless population. Lastly, HOPE will actively seek partnerships with local hospitals and ambulance service providers to develop healthcare centered mobile response units. This will allow the HOPE team to provide low-grade medical intervention along with the other outreach services. Local hospitals are also being solicited to partner with HOPE by providing a nurse to partner with a paramedic to respond to the segment of the homeless population who are found to chronically utilize the emergency medical system for low-level ailments or chemical dependency illness. This provision will help reduce

the overburdening of our local Fire Departments who have seen an increase in medical related calls related to persons experiencing homelessness.

Overall, the concept of Project HOPE is to proactively address homelessness through extensive outreach and engagement with a strong partnership with mental health professionals. The goal is to lessen the first response of law enforcement to service calls involving a person experiencing homelessness as well as fire personnel responding to lower level medical calls. Finally, Project HOPE builds upon the regional collaboration of the North Orange County cities who have taken the unprecedented step of working together to address homelessness on a regional basis through the North Service Planning Area.

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 - Presentation