



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: January 12, 2018

AGENDA OF: January 23, 2018

DEPARTMENT: City Manager

SUBJECT: Declaration of a Homeless Shelter Crisis (CM)

RECOMMENDATION: Resolution declaring a Homeless Shelter Crisis in the City of Santa Cruz.

BACKGROUND: California Government Code Sections 8698-8698.2 allow for the legislative body of a city to formally declare a shelter crisis within the city when a situation exists “where a significant number of persons are without the ability to obtain shelter, resulting in a threat to their health and safety.” Declaring a Homeless Shelter Crisis enables the city to suspend any state or local regulatory statute, regulation, or ordinance prescribing standards of housing, health, or safety to the extent that strict compliance “would in any way prevent, hinder, or delay mitigation of the effects of the shelter crisis.” The declaration enables the city to enact alternative health and safety standards to be operative during the shelter crisis, consistent with ensuring minimal public health and safety. The declaration also grants immunity from liability for ordinary negligence in the provision of emergency shelter.

The latest biennial point-in-time homeless census, released in July 2017, demonstrated that unsheltered homelessness has grown in our community. Countywide, 2,249 homeless individuals were counted with about 80% of them unsheltered, living in cars, on the streets, parks or encampments. In the City of Santa Cruz (City), 1,204 homeless individuals were counted and of them, 934 were unsheltered (78%). Per capita, homeless individuals make up 1.9% of the City’s population, one of the highest unhoused-to-housed ratios in the state.

Compared to the 2015 point-in-time count data, the City saw an increase of 373 homeless individuals, which comprises the majority of the total countywide growth of 430 individuals in the two-year period. Further, in 2015, the countywide unsheltered rate was 69%, 11 percentage points lower than today. As evidenced by the data, as visible in our streets and parks, and as communicated through frequent public testimony and City staff, unsheltered homelessness is a substantial challenge for our community.

The May 2017 City Council Homelessness Coordinating Committee (HCC) report extensively discussed the impacts of homelessness on individuals experiencing homelessness and the greater community and posed 20 recommendations to provide short-term relief through support of emergency services and long-range permanent solutions, through creation of additional shelter and service capacity (summary of HCC Recommendations attached). The City Council, in its

adoption of the 20 recommendations, also articulated its interest in enhancing shelter options expeditiously and directed exploration of a declaration of a State of Homeless Emergency.

DISCUSSION: Since the adoption of the May 2017 HCC Report, the City has taken extensive action toward implementation of the 20 recommendations (summary of progress attached). The City has also accelerated efforts and partnership on realizing two of the longer-range recommendations: a day services center and a year-round navigation center homeless shelter. The City Manager has been regularly reporting to the City Council on the City's three-phased approach to complete these recommendations that will first provide a safe, secure temporary managed campground to provide some immediate relief to street homelessness, and progressively transition to an interim building site for a day services/navigation center, and then to establishment of a permanent building for a day services/navigation center shelter. Modeled on the City of San Diego's approach to street homelessness, the three-phased plan is rooted in the philosophy that these services are provided to serve as exit points from homelessness and will be supported and serviced toward that end. The City is working in close partnership with the County of Santa Cruz on immediate health and human services and the creation of mid- and long-term shelter/day services.

With City staff working toward the opening of the first phase, the temporary managed campground at 1220 River Street, staff recommend that the City Council, by resolution, formally declare a Homeless Shelter Crisis. By doing so, as allowed under State law, the City may move more quickly, efficiently and economically to establish the temporary managed campsite. The declaration provides some relaxation of standards that might prevent or delay the opening of the temporary managed campground and provides a measure of liability immunity for ordinary negligence. The declaration may also prove useful in opening the interim building site for the day services/navigation center shelter.

There is another mechanism under state law available to cities: the Declaration of a Local Emergency, predicated upon findings of the existence of conditions of disaster or of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property. The City declared local emergencies for the winter storms of 2017 and the tsunami of 2011. Staff will discuss this mechanism at the January 23, 2017 meeting, but for the purposes of facilitating the managed campground, at this time, staff is recommending the Declaration of a Homeless Shelter Crisis.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact.

Submitted by:

Tina Shull
Assistant City Manager

Approved by:

Martín Bernal
City Manager

Attachments: Resolution

California Government Code Sections 8698-8698.2

Homelessness Coordinating Committee Recommendations Summary

Implementation Summary