



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: March 28, 2019

AGENDA OF: April 9, 2019

DEPARTMENT: City Council

SUBJECT: Rescind Lot 24 Approval for Safe Sleeping, Revise Ross Camp Closure Plan and Form an Expert Panel on Homelessness (CN)

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) Motion to rescind the City Council approval of Parking Lot 24 as a site for a safe sleeping or camping.
 - 2) Motion to confirm the April 17, 2019 closure of the Ross Camp with alternate shelter needs to be met by maximizing the spaces in the 1220 River Street camp and fully utilizing other existing shelter options throughout the county including the VFW and Laurel Street Shelter, and the possibility of lodging vouchers.
 - 3) Motion to form an ad hoc Expert Council on Homelessness with nine subject matter experts and community members, nominated by the Mayor and ratified by the City Council, to advise the City Council on homelessness policy and actions incorporating education and community outreach and engagement, in furtherance of City-adopted policy regarding homelessness including the *All-In Plan*, the *Homelessness Coordinating Committee 20 Action Recommendations* and the 2x2 Committee.
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BACKGROUND: The City of Santa Cruz and its partners in the County of Santa Cruz and others have been focused on addressing homelessness with the adoption in 2015 of the *All In – Toward a Home for Every County Resident Plan* and adoption of the City of Santa Cruz *Homelessness Coordinating Committee 20 Action Recommendations* in May 2017. The City of Santa Cruz Public Safety Task Force Report completed in 2013 also provided recommendations related to homelessness. On January 23, 2018 the Council adopted a resolution declaring a Shelter Crisis to provide flexibility in the provision of shelter resources. On February 18, 2018 the City of Santa Cruz adopted supporting a three-phased implementation plan to achieve increased permanent shelter capacity:

Phase 1: Managed Camp (4 months) – referred to as the “River Street Camp”

Phase 2: Interim Homeless Facility (12 to 24+ months)

Phase 3: Permanent Navigation Center (shelter with supportive services)

This collective body of analysis and policy constitutes the current adopted framework for the City of Santa Cruz in working towards addressing homelessness within city limits and in partnership with Santa Cruz County for the next several years. It should be noted that the *20 Action Recommendations* from the Homelessness Coordinating Committee focused on the visible, adult unsheltered population. Further, the policy position of the City is to continue to work toward efforts that seek equal participation from all jurisdictions for homeless services and programs, both in terms of funding and also in terms of the location of those services.

These adopted policies agree on the primary targets and activities to address and eliminate homelessness in Santa Cruz County and the city. Broadly these targets and activities include the following and are collectively referred to as the “Continuum of Care,” which works to resolve the crisis of homelessness, to house people as quickly as possible, and meet service needs along the way.

- **Prevention Services.** Prevention services focus on providing access to housing and services to divert people from homelessness in the first place.
- **Housing Options.** Housing options provide a menu of options to end people’s homelessness. City and County efforts focus on best practices, including rapid rehousing and providing more permanent supportive housing and affordable housing designed to meet a variety of populations and circumstances.
- **Supportive Services.** Supportive services focus on helping people cope with the personal, family, economic, and health challenges often interlinked with homelessness.

Efforts at implementing policy objectives and adopted recommendations are conducted through countywide structures including the Homeless Action Partnership (HAP), the Leadership Council of the Smart Solutions to Homelessness, the 2x2 Committee between the City and the County, and the internal City Homelessness Coordinating Team. These entities work together to advance effective approaches to ending homelessness in Santa Cruz County and the City. Integration and collaboration are key for all these implementing bodies, especially in regard to priorities, funding, and evaluation including community-wide performance benchmarks and measurable indicators.

Current Status on Homelessness Efforts

An extensive Homelessness Update (attached) was provided to the City Council on December 11, 2018, and included a review of progress on the City’s 20-Action Recommendations, the *All In* effort with county partners, emergency winter shelter efforts, and State funding anticipated to be available.

On February 12, 2019, the City Council received a staff update on homelessness with a recommendation to adopt a plan jointly crafted by the 2x2 Committee and adopted by the County Board of Supervisors to close the Gateway Plaza Encampment (Ross Camp) by March 15, with expanded outreach and shelter options. This motion was approved by a majority of the City Council, with Councilmembers Glover, Krohn and Brown voting against.

At that same meeting, Councilmember Glover proposed a broad *Action on the Issue of Homelessness* that directed staff to agendize a variety of homelessness-related issues including:

declaring a local state of emergency due to homelessness (directed to be agendized at the next Council meeting); identifying locations for a transitional homeless encampment; removing overnight parking restrictions on Delaware Avenue (directed to be agendized at the next Council meeting); drafting an ordinance and policy to allow the establishment of transitional homeless encampments; pursue leasing the UCSC building at 2300 Delaware Avenue for a Safe Parking program; review the reopening of public facilities and bathrooms; examining City ordinances on camping/sleeping, trespassing, urination/defecation; and, providing data about citations and stay-away orders issued for Santa Cruz Municipal Code violations for conduct in parks, obstructing sidewalks and benches (and after dark), sitting, lying, 24-hour stay away orders, smoking in public places, dogs downtown and elsewhere, arrest for three infraction, authority to reduce misdemeanors to infractions, open container, parking garage loitering, median loitering, safety enhancement zones, youth curfew laws, aggressive solicitation, and vendor licensing required for handicrafts. This motion also passed by a majority of the City Council with Councilmembers Mathews and Meyers and Mayor Watkins voting against.

Responsive to that action, City staff returned with agenda items to implement that majority-Council direction on February 26, March 12 and March 19. The rapid pace of this work—as dictated by a majority of the Council—excluded community participation in what were some of the most substantive and wide-reaching social, environmental and public safety policy changes our City has seen. Similarly, the dramatic implications of these proposed policies on our community were not fully vetted or understood. As a result, we hear steadily in thousands of communications to the City Council, that the community is confused and concerned about the direction of the City. Finally, the majority-Council direction of February 12th represented a substantial policy redirection from adopted City and County plans as outlined at the beginning of this agenda report and, which have been underway since 2015 and upon which the majority of City efforts have been focused.

On March 20, 2019 the County of Santa Cruz and HAP announced funding to address and provide funds for year-round emergency shelter, hygiene and day services, and a permanent navigation center in the north county. These awards directly track to the recommendations in the *All-In Plan* and *20 Action Recommendations of the Homeless Coordinating Committee* thus acknowledging the comprehensive policy approach by the City and County.

DISCUSSION: At this point, we feel it is imperative that the City's efforts on homelessness be deliberately realigned with the existing policy and direction and that the community become meaningfully engaged in understanding the complexity of the issues and providing input and advice. Homelessness is too large of an issue, with factors well beyond the City's scope, to forge ahead alone and without a larger guiding plan. We understand and agree that the Ross Camp should and must close, for the safety of all, but that necessity should not catalyze a dramatic trajectory change in policy and land use that will indelibly affect the future of our community. Doing so is a serious disservice to the thousands of families, individuals, businesses and visitors who have lived and invested in our community for so long. To continue to thrive, and treat the social challenge of homelessness appropriately, the City should expand the conversation, not rush to hasty policy-making.

To that end, we recommend three actions:

- 1) Immediately rescind the decision to use Lot 24 as a site for safe sleeping for camping, and at this time not consider any other sites for temporary homeless shelter programs.
- 2) Confirm the April 17, 2019 closure of the Ross Camp with alternate shelter needs to be met by maximizing the spaces in the 1220 River Street camp and fully utilizing other existing shelter options throughout the county including the VFW and Laurel Street Centers and meet any remaining need with lodging vouchers.
- 3) Form an Expert Council on Homelessness, an ad hoc advisory body, to provide informed policy and program recommendations and a platform for richer community engagement.

Expert Council on Homelessness

The County and City are poised to begin addressing homelessness with substantial resources and the possibility of additional funding from the State of California if our community can demonstrate success with the initial investments from the State. The City stands to lose significant momentum on addressing homelessness if it does not participate fully in these efforts consistent with policy that has been adopted and acted upon over the past two years.

For this reason and due to the extensive outpouring of communications from business, tourism, neighbors, educators, health care providers, homeless individuals, homeless advocates, nongovernmental service providers and others experienced in the field of homeless services, we recommend the establishment of an Expert Council on Homelessness (the Expert Council). The expert panel process is a respected method in the field of public policy, especially with regards to complex policy matters.

The Council will be convened to serve as a conduit for community engagement and education, and development of advisory opinions on homelessness matters referred by the City Council. The Expert Council will provide expertise on existing and emerging issues and best practices associated with sheltering and caring for Santa Cruz's most vulnerable citizens, playing an important role in being a resource for the community and local government leaders.

The Expert Council proposal meets the intent of the *All In Plan's* Strategic Priority 3: Integrating Systems and Community Support Action Strategy #6.

#6. Use facilitated community conversations, mediation, and public education for community problem and conflict resolution.

Composition and Charge

As proposed, the Expert Council will be appointed with nine experts as determined by education and professional qualifications in the following disciplines:

- Health care with special focus on the local system of homelessness care and solutions
- Education
- Employment and job creation
- Local business

- Neighborhood representative
- Community member with lived homelessness experience
- Behavioral health and/or addiction and treatment local system of care
- Policy and governmental expertise on homelessness
- Youth homelessness

It is recommended that after an application period, the Mayor would review and recommend appointments, for City Council ratification. The Expert Council will be convened in May or June 2018 and operate for an estimated 6-8 months.

In summary, the Expert Council will be an objective body with subject matter expertise to focus on education, studying the issues, community engagement, and providing qualified analysis and opinions on homelessness matters referred by the City Council. The Expert Council on Homelessness provides a first-of-its-kind community council to engage the community with city officials for open discussion on relevant approaches to homelessness, tactical advice and expertise, working evaluation, and problem solving.

FISCAL IMPACT: The Expert Council will incur costs in the form of meeting expenses (meeting rooms, materials and supplies, food), in addition to possible travel and lodging. Additionally, outside facilitation assistance may be needed to coordinate and manage meetings, craft meeting design, and provide general administration. It is estimated that this work would require a budget of \$30,000, and would need to be considered as an addition to the FY 2020 budget.

Submitted by:

Donna Meyers
Councilmember

Cynthia Mathews
Councilmember

Martine Watkins
Mayor

Attachments: December 11, 2018 Agenda Report on Homelessness
Summary of 2017 Homelessness Coordinating Committee Recommendations
Summary of 2015 *All-In* Plan