

City of Olympia

Current Homeless Response/Affordable Housing Initiatives

February 2018

- **Home Fund Levy** – In October, the City Council voted to place this ballot proposal on the February 2018 election. The proposal was approved by voters. Implementation plans are being developed for the program.
- **Homeless Response Coordinator** – TO date, the City's homeless and affordable housing responses have managed with existing staff duties and responsibilities. In February, the City Council will consider partnering with Evergreen Christian Church to create a Homeless Response Coordinator to be able to focus efforts on these pending issues, and more.
- **Public Safety Funding Package** – this proposal received voter approval in fall 2017 and among other things includes mobile mental health outreach and services for downtown, plus continuation of our community court which keeps minor offenders out of the criminal justice system – many of whom are poor or homeless.
- **Thurston County's Cold Weather Task Force** –the Cold Weather Task Force, including Olympia, is working with several other possible entities to provide some warming center equivalent and a real time shelter coordination system this winter so that beds do not go unused and a warm space is available for the most vulnerable. Union Gospel Mission and the Community Care Center are presently serving as day center options. The Salvation Army is actively exploring options for opening a day center as well. A cold blue (extreme weather event) sheltering plan has been developed and put into operation by the County in February 2018.
- **CDBG** – The City is looking at allocating up to \$350,000 for its CDBG program in 2018 plus reallocating another \$300,000-400,000 from 2017. Many of these dollars in the past have gone to fund low income housing and housing related services.
- **Family Support Center**- the Mayor and City Manager have been working with the Family Support Center for several months to help them develop a master plan and funding package to eventually build a new facility with attached housing to serve even more homeless families.
- **Fair Housing Assessment**- This effort is being done in conjunction with the County and the Thurston County Housing Authority to identify barriers and biases to low income renters and residents, including discrimination against the poor. A joint hearing was held in October with City Council action set for 2018.
- **Community Care Center** – In addition to a \$200,000 grant from the City, we fast tracked the permits on this facility and will continue to work toward its success. Four members of the city staff including the Police Chief, Deputy Fire Chief and others serve on an advisory board to help manage and support it. The City Council approved an additional \$35,000 for staffing support for the Center from 2017 CDGB funds.
- **Ambassador Program** – The budget has increased to \$460,000 and includes both the outreach to street dependent people in the downtown but also employment opportunities on the clean team for disadvantaged young people. In 2018, the City took over the program to improve oversight, coordination, and effectiveness.

- **County Mental Health Outreach (Telecare) and Triage Center** – these two County programs got their start up in 2017 and we are working mostly through OPD to increase effectiveness in serving mentally ill persons, many of whom are homeless. This includes not only mental health services but referrals to series such as housing.
- **Revisions to the Church Tent Encampment Ordinance** – With input from Just Housing, Interfaith Works and others, City staff has drafted changes to the church encampment ordinance to make it more palatable for host churches to consider. City officials have also mentioned the possibility of the City paying for porta potties and garbage at these tent sites. Mayor Selby has met with church leaders of local churches to solicit their help.
- **Missing Middle** – City Planning Staff have been actively working with the neighborhoods, stakeholders and the Planning Commission to develop a package of development regulation amendments that will encourage the production of a variety of infill housing types ranging from accessory dwelling units to four-plexes. The Planning Commission is holding a public hearing on March 19 with City Council action planning for April.
- **Property Tax Exemption** – Mayor Selby requested, and City Council, approved a referral to the Land Use & Environment Committee to extend the property tax exemption for low income and market rate housing projects beyond the current boundaries (predominantly downtown). The Land Use & Environment Committee will also review the possibility of reducing or eliminating impact fees for qualifying projects serving low income individuals and families. If approved by City Council this could facilitate construction of more assist and market rate housing.
- **City's Ad Hoc Housing Committee on Housing Affordability** – The Committee held nine meetings to look at priorities for spending City HOME fund dollars- if a sales tax levy is placed on the ballot and passes, and possible ordinances related to renter notifications, among other initiatives.