



City Council

Public Hearing to Consider an Ordinance Declaring a Continuing State of a Public Health Emergency Related to Homelessness - First and Final Reading

Agenda Date: 11/12/2019
Agenda Item Number: 5.B
File Number: 19-1034

Type: ordinance **Version:** 1 **Status:** Passed

Title

Public Hearing to Consider an Ordinance Declaring a Continuing State of a Public Health Emergency Related to Homelessness - First and Final Reading

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Conduct a public hearing and move to approve the ordinance declaring a continuing state of public health emergency relating to human health and environmental conditions caused by increasing homelessness in our community on first and final reading.

Report

Issue:

Whether to conduct a public hearing and approve an ordinance declaring a continuing state of public health emergency relating to increasing homelessness in our community.

Staff Contact:

Keith Stahley, Director Community Planning and Development Department 360.753.8227

Presenter(s):

Keith Stahley, Director Community Planning and Development Director

Background and Analysis:

Homelessness is an issue of urgent public concern facing Olympia and the region. On June 14, 2018, the Thurston County Board of Health declared homelessness a public health crisis in Thurston County.

The Point-in-Time homeless census conducted in 2018 found at least 320 people sleeping unsheltered in unmanaged conditions countywide. In addition to this annual count, City staff

periodically conducts an early morning count of people sleeping on the street in downtown; routinely finding approximately 130 people living unsheltered within the core of downtown.

On July 17, 2018, the City Council passed and adopted an ordinance declaring a public health emergency. Since that date, the number of tents for homeless persons in downtown Olympia has increased substantially. Since first declaring a public health emergency, the City of Olympia has been in the process of identifying and implementing solutions-based actions to address this increasingly challenging issue.

Declaring a state of continuing public health emergency provides a factual basis for the City's present and existing public health emergency, and references statutory authority that allows the City more flexibility to act quickly in response to homelessness. Under the ordinance, the City may, for example, obligate funds, enter into contracts, or site facilities outside of normal time-consuming procedures.

After considering public testimony and reviewing the conditions that gave rise to this public health emergency, on December 18, 2018, the City Council passed and adopted Ordinance No. 7179, declaring a continuing state of public health emergency relating to homelessness. Subsequently, on May 7, 2019, the City Council held a public hearing and after considering public testimony and reviewing the conditions that gave rise to the public health emergency, the City Council passed and adopted Ordinance No. 7192 to continue the public health emergency.

Conditions necessitating a public health emergency continue to exist in the City, including widespread unsanctioned camping, threats of communicable diseases from unsanitary conditions, environmental degradation from human waste and garbage, illegal drug use, and improper use of public and private property throughout our community.

The above circumstances are and continue to present significant public health and safety issues for the entire community and necessitate urgent further actions to mitigate the conditions giving rise to this threat to public health and safety.

The continuing public health emergency ordinance shall take effect immediately upon adoption by a vote of a majority plus one, and the emergency will be in effect through December 19, 2021. In six months after adoption of this continuing public health emergency ordinance, the City Council will review the conditions that gave rise to this public health emergency to determine if this ordinance should be extended for another six-month period, with possible successive renewals until the sunset date.

Neighborhood/Community Interests:

Homelessness and its impacts affect the entire City.

Options:

1. Conduct a public hearing and move to approve the continuing ordinance declaring a state of public health emergency relating to human health and environmental conditions caused by increasing homelessness in our community.
2. Conduct a public hearing and move to take no action.

Financial Impact:

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No immediate impacts.

Attachments:

Ordinance