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## City Council

# Public Hearing to Consider an Ordinance Declaring a Continuing State of a Public Health Emergency Related to Homelessness and COVID-19 - First and Final Reading

**Agenda Date:** 5/5/2020  
**Agenda Item Number:** 5.A  
**File Number:** 20-0349

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**Type:** public hearing **Version:** 1 **Status:** Passed

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**Title**

Public Hearing to Consider an Ordinance Declaring a Continuing State of a Public Health Emergency Related to Homelessness and COVID-19 - First and Final Reading

**Recommended Action**

**Committee Recommendation:**

Not referred to a committee.

**City Manager Recommendation:**

Conduct a public hearing on the ordinance declaring a continuing state of public health emergency relating to human health and environmental conditions caused by increasing homelessness in our community. After closing the public hearing, move to approve the ordinance 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, Interim Assistant City Manager, 360.753.8227

**Presenter(s):**

Keith Stahley, Interim Assistant City Manager

**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. On May 7, 2019, the City Council after considered public testimony and having reviewed the conditions that gave rise to the public health emergency, passed and adopted Ordinance No. 7192 to continue the public health emergency. Subsequently on November 12, 2019, the Council passed Ordinance No. 7207, finding that the public health emergency relating to human health and environmental conditions caused by increasing homelessness in the City of Olympia was continuing.

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 public health emergency relating to homelessness has been further compounded and exacerbated by the special dangers posed by the novel coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic to persons who are homeless. The pandemic has been recognized as a public health emergency by federal, state and City declarations related to the danger posed by the COVID-19 virus.

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 ordinance declaring a continuing state of public health emergency relating to human health and environmental conditions caused by increasing homelessness and COVID-19 in our community.
2. Conduct a public hearing and move to take no action.

**Financial Impact:**

No immediate impacts.

**Attachments:**

Ordinance