



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

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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 and upon closing the hearing 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 and extending the sunset provision by three years 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 and COVID-19 and extending the sunset provision by three years.

Staff Contact:

Leonard Bauer, Director, Community Planning and Development Department 360.753.8227

Presenter(s):

Leonard Bauer, 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 City Council passed and adopted Ordinance No. 7146 on July 17, 2018, declaring a public health emergency related to homelessness (the Ordinance). The Ordinance requires review of the conditions that gave rise to the public health emergency by the City Council every six months to determine if those conditions continue to warrant keeping the Ordinance measures in place. If the Council finds that the conditions still exist, the Ordinance may be extended for an additional six months until the sunset date of December 19, 2021.

After considering public testimony and reviewing the conditions that gave rise to this public health emergency, the City Council found that the conditions still existed and passed and adopted ordinances declaring a *continuing* state of public health emergency relating to homelessness as follows:

- Ordinance No. 7179 - December 18, 2018
- Ordinance No. 7192 - May 7, 2019
- Ordinance No. 7207 - November 12, 2019

After considering public testimony and finding that the emergency relating to homelessness was continuing and increasing in the City of Olympia and was further compounded and exacerbated by the special dangers posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the City Council passed and adopted the following ordinances declaring a *continuing* state of public health emergency relating to homelessness:

- Ordinance No. 7243 - May 5, 2020
- Ordinance No. 7256 - November 2, 2020
- Ordinance No. 7277 - May 4, 2021

The City has been in the process of identifying and implementing solutions-based actions to address this increasingly challenging issue since first declaring a public health emergency. However, 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.

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.

Due to the continuing conditions that have given rise to this public health emergency and the necessity to keep in place the extraordinary measures authorized by the proposed ordinance to respond to this ongoing public health emergency, staff is proposing a three-year extension of the sunset provision to December 19, 2024.

This ordinance declaring a continuing public health emergency, if adopted after the public hearing, shall take effect immediately upon unanimous adoption, and the emergency will be in effect through May 4, 2022. 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 the Ordinance should be extended or amended to permit another six-month period.

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 and extending the sunset provision by three years to December 19, 2024.
2. Conduct a public hearing and move to take no action. The Ordinance declaring a public health emergency due to homelessness and COVID-19 shall sunset and end on December 19, 2021.

Financial Impact:

No immediate financial impacts.

Attachments:

Ordinance