



PBIA Advisory Board

Briefing on Emergency Housing Ordinance

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Title

Briefing on Emergency Housing Ordinance

Report

Issue:

On June 5, the City Council adopted amendments to the City's Emergency Housing Ordinance

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Presenter(s):

Amy Buckler

Background and Analysis:

The City of Olympia's role in responding to homelessness is emerging. A Home Fund was passed in February that will provide about \$2.3m/year to construct permanent supportive housing (housing with wrap-around support services for addiction, mental health, etc.) for those most vulnerable in our community. This will not take care of everyone, but it is an important piece of a broader regional effort that is starting to materialize. However, it will be several years before a project will be completely built using the Home Fund. Meanwhile, hundreds of people are sleeping unsheltered in unmanaged situations throughout Thurston County.

The City Council has directed staff to explore immediate actions to provide more 24/7 managed camping options for those in our community who are experiencing homelessness. This will involve the establishing sites for emergency housing, as well as updating regulations to allow other organizations to do the same. This briefing is about the latter.

On June 5, the City Council adopted amendments to the City's Emergency Housing Ordinance to provide more flexibility for faith based organizations, not-for-profits and government entities to provide emergency housing facilities on their sites.

Background

The City of Olympia adopted its first Emergency Housing Ordinance (formally known as the

Temporary Encampment Ordinance) in 2008. These land use regulations were adopted largely as a response to Camp Quixote's occupation of City-owned property in downtown. The regulations were amended in 2011 to provide for a permanent encampment on County-owned property in Mottman Industrial Park known as Quixote Village. A single temporary encampment hosted by a faith-based organization was also allowed. However, no temporary encampments have been hosted by faith-based organizations since Quixote Village was established.

Emergency Housing Facilities in the form of tiny house villages are now a commonly accepted practice for responding to homelessness with emergency and transitional housing. Both the City of Seattle and the City of Eugene have seen multiple emergency housing facilities established in the past three years. See the attached White Paper for more information about this type of Emergency Housing.

Prior to June 5, the City of Olympia's Temporary Homeless Encampment regulations were very limiting when it came to these types of facilities. Only one facility on County property plus one additional facility that could move from church site to church site in the entire City was allowed. Based on the number of unsheltered people living in and around Olympia there appears to be a need for multiple facilities.

June 5 amendments included:

- Changing the name of the regulations to Emergency Housing Facility Regulations
- Eliminating the differentiation between types of Emergency Housing Facilities
- Increasing the number of Emergency Housing Facilities Allowed
- Allow facilities to be operated by or hosted on faith based, not-for-profit organizations and governmental entities
- Reducing barriers for clients
- Reducing barriers for host organizations

A link to the amended ordinance online is attached. Also attached for your convenience is a summary of what the regulations entail.

Next Steps

The amended regulations went into effect immediately, but only on an interim basis pending a public hearing. The City Council will hold a public hearing at their regular meeting on July 24, which starts at 7:00 pm in the City Hall Council Chambers. The intention is to adopt permanent regulations within six months.

Staff is actively working with religious institutions to create opportunities for siting emergency housing facilities on their property. Having regulations in place that allow for the creation of emergency housing facilities helps to facilitate these conversations.

Neighborhood/Community Interests:

Homelessness is an issue that affects the entire City.

Options:

Briefing only.

Financial Impact:

None at this point; however, the City may be asked to play a role in managing these facilities and in providing ongoing support services.

Attachments:

1. Summary of Ordinance
2. Link to Ordinance Online
3. White Paper with links to additional information about approaches to emergency housing facilities in other communities