



Finance Committee

City-Owned Emergency Housing Facility Operating Plans and Response to Public Health Emergency Briefing

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Title

City-Owned Emergency Housing Facility Operating Plans and Response to Public Health Emergency Briefing

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

The Finance Committee referred the topic of proposed city-owned emergency housing facilities to a study session so that Council could further review the plans for responding to this public health emergency.

City Manager Recommendation:

Receive a briefing and provide feedback and direction on the proposed City-owned emergency housing facility plans and the preliminary response to the public health emergency.

Report

Issue:

Whether to receive a briefing on and discuss the proposed city-owned emergency housing facilities and response to public health emergency.

Staff Contact:

Amy Buckler, Downtown Programs Manager, 360.570.5847

Presenter(s):

Colin DeForrest, Homeless Response Coordinator, 360.709.2688

Amy Buckler

Keith Stahley, Director Community Planning and Development Department

TJ Larocque, Providence Community Care Center

Meg Martin, Interfaith Works

Phil Owens, Sidewalk

Background and Analysis:

Homelessness is an issue of urgent public concern facing Olympia and the region. The latest Point-in-Time homeless census counted 835 people countywide, including at least 320 unsheltered

individuals. In addition to this annual count, City staff conduct predawn doorway counts, routinely finding approximately 130 people sleeping unsheltered within Olympia's downtown.

The City of Olympia is in the process of identifying and implementing solutions to address this increasingly challenging issue of homelessness and its related public health impacts.

On May 15, the City Council passed Resolution M-1942, directing immediate actions to address homelessness. The resolution directs staff to present options for legal camping and a day center(s), as well as work to support the Community Care Center.

In response, at the June 24 City Council meeting, staff presented a concept proposal for two City-owned emergency housing sites (**see attached slideshow**). On July 31, the Finance Committee discussed preliminary cost estimates and potential funding sources (**see cost sheets**). The Finance Committee directed staff to:

- Return for further discussion of the operation plan at the Aug. 21 Council Study Session.
- Hear from local providers doing this work if they think the proposal is feasible.
- Move forward with planning for the Nursery site.
- Reimagine the Martin Way site. Assess how this fits with the long-term, coordinated plan.
- Consider options for day center(s) and associated costs (can be smaller, dispersed sites.)
- Include providers' and homeless individuals' input on the project design.
- Work with the Coordinated Entry System to identify site residents.
- Think strategically about how to get the most out of the dollars.

Staff has subsequently been meeting with local service providers to address Council's direction and refine the proposal so that the emergency housing facilities are better integrated with local service provision and bolster the region's homeless service system overall. Staff, along with some local service providers, will present an oral report on the refined proposal at the meeting.

Estimated Costs

On July 31, staff reviewed a planning-level cost estimate for the two proposed City-owned sites. Costs will be refined along with the proposal. Note the following about the attached cost estimates:

- Operating costs:
 - Staffing is the lion's share of cost
 - Other setup costs are for basic services (e.g., hot water, toilets, meal service)
 - Estimated staffing plan represents an appropriate level of oversight to ensure success
 - Current proposal rotates staff between two sites
 - Total estimated \$900K for operating costs equates to \$31/night for each resident to have shelter, case management and a meal ($\$900/80 = \$11,250/365 = \$31$)
- Capital costs:
 - This is a planning level estimate - there is still much we don't know
 - Improvements are needed to provide basic hygiene services (e.g., hot water, toilets, power) which are important for wellness of individuals and the entire community
 - Capital projects are not cheap - the City pays prevailing wages and bids are coming in

- high due to high labor demand
- Costs do not include tiny structures - staff believes the City can get the material and labor donated
- On July 24, Council authorized purchase of 2828 Martin Way, pending a feasibility contingency period. This is a long-term investment toward permanent supportive housing using the Home Fund. Other uses such as an emergency housing facility or temporary shelter would be interim uses until a permanent facility is developed on the site.

Other Recent Actions to Address Homelessness

The immediate actions directed by City Council's resolution are the first actions in a homeless response plan that will include short, medium and long-term actions. City Council and staff will further flesh out the public process and scope for this planning effort in the coming months.

On June 5, the Council amended the City's Emergency Housing Ordinance to provide more flexibility for faith-based, non-profit and other government entities to host temporary encampments, subject to a permit. The Council held a public hearing on the changes on July 24; the Planning Commission will also hold a public hearing on the amended ordinance this fall. Staff has been meeting with several faith organizations about this option, although as of yet no application for an emergency housing facility has been received.

On July 17, the City Council declared a state of public health emergency relating to human health and environmental conditions caused by increasing homelessness. The City is committed to working with other jurisdictions and agencies in Thurston County to address this regional challenge. The ordinance declaring the emergency references statutory authority that allows the City more flexibility to act quickly in response to homelessness. The emergency will be in effect through June 19, 2021, at which point the City Council will review the conditions that gave rise to this public health emergency to determine if keeping it in place is warranted.

Neighborhood/Community Interests:

The community has a strong interest in addressing homelessness in our city and region.

Options:

Briefing and discussion only.

Financial Impact:

See planning level cost estimates attached

Attachments:

Proposed City-Owned Sites (slideshow)
Estimated Costs