



## City Council

### Briefing on 2019 Thurston County Homeless Census Preliminary Results

**Agenda Date:** 6/4/2019  
**Agenda Item Number:** 6.A  
**File Number:** 19-0472

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**Type:** information **Version:** 1 **Status:** Filed

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#### **Title**

Briefing on 2019 Thurston County Homeless Census Preliminary Results

#### **Recommended Action**

##### **Committee Recommendation:**

Not referred to a committee

##### **City Manager Recommendation:**

Receive a briefing on the preliminary results from the 2019 Thurston County Homeless Census.  
Briefing only; No action requested

#### **Report**

##### **Issue:**

Whether to receive a briefing on the results of the 2019 Thurston County Homeless Census?

##### **Staff Contact:**

Anna Schlecht, Community Service Programs Manager, Community Planning & Development Department, Housing Program, 360-753-8181.

##### **Presenter(s):**

Anna Schlecht, Community Service Programs Manager  
Keylee Marineau, Thurston County Homeless Coordinator

##### **Background and Analysis:**

The Council will receive a presentation on the preliminary results of the 2019 Thurston County Point in Time (PIT) Count of Homeless Persons. More commonly referred to as the "Homeless Census", the PIT is how we learn who is homeless and why. The City contracts with Thurston County to fulfill the County's obligation to conduct the annual PIT Homeless Census. The attached "Point in Time Homeless Snapshot for Thurston County 2019" presents the data that is available at the time of publication of this staff report. Also attached is "Thurston County - 14 Year Trends in Homelessness 2006 - 2019," which charts some of the changes over the past 14 years.

**Initial Thurston County PIT Results:** In short, the PIT found 800 homeless people willing to participate in the 2019 Homeless Census. This represents a 4 percent or 35 person decrease from

2018, but an 81 percent or 359 person increase since the baseline year of 2006. The number of people staying in emergency shelters went down 29 percent or 97 people, going from 333 in 2018 to 236 in 2019. This reflects the temporary loss of beds at Salvation Army and the non-participation of Union Gospel Mission which receives no public money for its shelter program and therefore is not compelled to report. The number of unsheltered people increased 24 percent or 74 people from 2018 number of 320 to 2019's number of 394. The number of people in transitional housing stayed relatively static at 170 in 2019, down from 182 in 2018.

**PIT Background:** The PIT Homeless Census is the nationwide tool for understanding homelessness in our local communities. The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) gathers all the state's data in "The 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress" report, which was presented to Congress in December 2018. This report shows the West Coast having the highest national rates of homelessness in the nation, with the exceptions of New York and Massachusetts. Washington State made the top five list of having the most homeless people per capita.

**Olympia's Role:** Since 2006, the City has participated in the annual Thurston County Homeless Census, and has been contracted by Thurston County to coordinate over half of these annual efforts to mobilize census workers to survey our unsheltered neighbors across the County. The City's role is motivated by two factors: 1) a commitment to being a strong regional partner in facing a regional issue; and, 2) a keen need for accurate data to guide our local homeless response efforts. State and federal mandates govern the PIT methodology, setting rules about the definitions of homelessness and requiring identifying personal information to prevent counting people twice. The broad results of these annual PIT Counts are presented in the "Thurston County - Point in Time Homeless Counts 2006 - 2019."

**Thurston County's Regional Leadership:** Thurston County Homeless Coordinator Keylee Marineau will present on the importance of accurate data to guide our region's strategic goals from the "Thurston County Five Year Homeless Housing Plan Summary," which outlines the regional strategies to address homelessness. Ms. Marineau will also report on community concerns about the accuracy of the annual PIT Homeless Census results, which are perceived by some as being a count of willing participants rather than a comprehensive count of all unsheltered homeless citizens. Next year in 2020, Thurston County will resume the coordination role in the regional PIT Homeless Census, and will encourage other cities to step up to mobilize PIT census workers in their respective communities.

**Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):**

All Olympia neighborhoods have a compelling interest in homelessness and ensuring a comprehensive regional approach to conducting the annual PIT Homeless Census.

**Options:**

- 1) Receive a preliminary briefing on the 2019 PIT Homeless Census results.
- 2) Delay receipt of a preliminary briefing on the 2019 PIT Homeless Census and wait until the results are finalized.
- 3) Do not receive the briefing

**Financial Impact:**

The City negotiated a \$25,000 contract with Thurston County (County's Homeless Housing Program

funding) for the City to conduct the Census. Additionally, the City will invest another \$3,000 of City funding, along with \$3,266 in City staff time authorized by City supervisors to encourage broader participation in the PIT Homeless Census. Final costs will be presented at the time of the final report.

**Attachments:**

2019 Thurston County Point in Time Homelessness Snapshot  
2006 - 2019 Thurston County 14 Year Trends in Homelessness  
Thurston County 5-Year Homeless Housing Plan Summary  
2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress