



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: 3rd District Supervisor
5th District Supervisor
Department No.: 011
For Agenda Of: 1/19/16
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Time: 30 Mins
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: 4/5

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Board Member(s) Supervisor Doreen Farr
Supervisor Steve Lavagnino
Contact Info: Erin Weber, 568-2192 and Cory Bantilan, 568-2187
SUBJECT: Shelter for the Homeless During El Nino

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

- a) Receive and file a report on the current status of sheltering the homeless population Countywide during the impending El Nino storm;
- b) Authorize the Community Services Department Director, within the authority of the Purchasing Agent under Government Code section 25502.5, to enter into agreements for new temporary day shelter services in both North and South County;
- c) Approve Budget Revision Request 0004324 to increase appropriations of \$37,000 in Community Services Department, Housing Division, General Fund for Other Charges for expanded Freedom Warming Center services funded by release of Committed Contingency Fund Balance; and establish appropriations of \$91,000 in Community Services Department, Housing Division, General Fund for Other Charges for new temporary day sheltering services funded by release of Committed Contingency Fund Balance; and
- d) Determine that these actions are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b) (3), finding that the execution of these actions are covered by the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment, and where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment, the activities are not subject to CEQA.

Summary Text:

This item is before the Board to provide an update on current efforts to shelter the homeless during the El Nino storm season. Additional resources are needed to 1) extend the current Freedom Warming Center contract, which provides night shelter, by \$37,000; and 2) establish a new temporary day time shelter program (\$91,000). The Third and Fifth District and local partners are asking the board to authorize use of up to \$128,000 funded by release of Contingency Fund Balance to shelter our most vulnerable community members through the end of the extended operational period (April 29, 2016). Funding will only be released from Contingency Fund Balance for services rendered and up to the authorized amount. After the El Nino season, County Housing and Community Development Division (HCD) staff will return to the Board with an outcomes report, including use of funds.

Background:

Current Warming Center Night Shelter Program Contract Extension

The County Housing and Community Development Division (HCD) currently administers a contract with Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara (USSB) in the amount of \$50,000 to operate the Freedom Warming Centers Program (“Warming Centers”), which provides basic shelter for homeless from extreme weather overnight. The mission of the Warming Centers is to save lives and reduce suffering for our neighbors without homes. Guests include, but are not limited to, those with chronic terminal illness, mental illness, physical disabilities, as well as foster youth, veterans and senior citizens. USSB is the fiscal agent and Freedom Warming Centers coordinate staffing.

The Warming Centers’ operational period, or “activation season,” is from November 15, 2015 through March 31, 2016. USSB is requesting an amendment to the Purchase Order to extend the end date of the activation season from March 31, 2016 to April 29, 2016 considering the El Nino storm predictions.

The Warming Centers open at one or more partner churches - located in Santa Barbara, Isla Vista, Goleta, Carpinteria, Santa Maria and Lompoc - when any one of the following conditions occur in that location(s):

- 1) An overnight temperature of 35 degrees or less is predicted;
- 2) There is a greater than 50 percent chance of rain predicted for two consecutive days; or
- 3) There is a greater than 50 percent chance of rain predicted with temperatures less than 40 degrees.

The Warming Centers draw upon a pool of 26 trained employees and are responsible for compliance, collection of data, property maintenance of shelter space used as Centers, enforcement of rules, daily set-up and take down, supervision and security. The Centers are open overnight for 12 hours from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Warming Center staff notifies partner agencies of activation 48 to 72 hours in advance based on an aggregation of multiple weather forecasting sites. Congregation church sites available for use rotate weekly and each congregation provides volunteers to assist with hospitality and meals.

So far this operational period, the Centers have been activated 27 nights countywide (out of a total 50 budgeted nights) and have provided 1,200 shelter beds to over 500 unduplicated individuals Countywide. For comparison, at this same time last year, the Centers had only been activated 13 times. Of its \$50,000 contract with the County, USSB has invoiced HCD for \$27,000 to date. (The County’s contribution accounts for approximately 40 percent of the Freedom Warming Centers’ total budget.

Other contributing agencies include the Cities of Goleta and Santa Barbara, as well as the Santa Barbara Foundation.) The Centers are also seeing an increase in the number of individuals seeking shelter, especially during rain events. For example, during the first week of January, the Centers saw over 100 unduplicated individuals at the Santa Barbara site alone, which is twice the amount during temperature-activated (vs. rain-activated) weather. Based on these trends, USSB anticipates needing to activate more nights than usual this El Nino season. Therefore, **USSB is requesting to increase their contract by \$37,000 to support 15 additional night activations** (for an operational season total of 65 nights).

Proposed Temporary Day Sheltering Program

Although the aforementioned Warming Center Program provides critically needed shelter for the homeless during the night, the Third and Fifth Supervisorial offices, as well as community partners and County staff, are very concerned about the lack of day shelter options for the homeless during the El Nino season. Homeless who find shelter through the Warming Center program must vacate the site at 6:00 a.m. - rain or shine - due to day time programming schedules at the church sites. During a heavy or extended rain event, the homeless have no place to go during the day. Lack of day shelter during rain or cold weather may cause or exacerbate existing medical or behavioral health conditions. When the homeless do not find shelter, they risk death, suffering due to illness or hypothermia and often seek shelter at public places, including libraries and businesses, or end up in the emergency room or jail. It is imperative to provide day shelter for our local vulnerable populations, especially during the impending El Nino season. Failure to address this gap will have significant public health and safety impacts on our local community.

A survey of partner agencies has indicated that homeless shelter providers do not have capacity to meet this need by serving additional clients at their respective shelter locations, either overnight or during the day. Homeless shelter providers have long wait lists and are currently operating at maximum capacity. Therefore, additional resources are urgently needed to establish a temporary, intermittent day time shelter program during extreme weather events.

The proposed day time shelter program would be activated at two locations - one in South County and one in North County - from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. based on similar rain and weather activation criteria stated above through April 29, 2016. Day shelters would be activated at least 48 hours in advance when any one of the following conditions occur in that location(s):

- 1) A day temperature of 35 degrees or less is predicted; and/or
- 2) There is a greater than 50 percent chance of rain predicted for one day.

It is anticipated that 50-150 individuals may seek shelter at each location per activation.

Although a complete day shelter program proposal has not yet been finalized, the Third and Fifth District offices are working with community partners to identify two appropriate site locations, and organization(s) to provide staff supervision and coordinate outreach and communication, as well as meal donations and transportation, contingent upon additional resources. Good Samaritan Shelter has committed to provide staff in North County and USSB has expressed preliminary willingness to provide staff in South County. Day shelter will likely be provided at the Santa Maria City "Minami Center" in the North County and Earl Warren Showgrounds is being vetted for possible use in the South County. The Santa Maria and Santa Barbara Armories are also being considered as potential day sites, but one or both may ultimately be infeasible due to the activation process required each time by California Office

of Emergency Services and California Military Department, National Guard. Cost for use of the aforementioned facilities range from \$400 - \$800 per day. While still being refined, hourly rates for staffing range from \$14.00 - \$17.00 per hour.

The proposed day shelter program would offer a warm, dry and safe space and a meal for homeless individuals and may include existing homeless outreach services from County Departments, such as ADMHS, and/or clinic services from community organizations such as Doctors without Walls. Similar to the current Warming Center night shelter program, alcohol and drugs will be prohibited on the premise and clients will agree to abide by basic ground rules. Easy Lift and SMOOTH have committed to facilitate some transportation between the Warming Center church sites and day sites. Staff and partners will continue to explore additional transportation options to and from homeless shelters and other central public places, such as libraries.

Although it is difficult to ascertain, it is estimated that there may be a need for as many as **35 day time activations** between now and the end of April. The county wide estimated cost per day (including staffing and facility use in both North and South County) is \$2,600 for a **total approximate day shelter program cost of \$91,000**. One staff member would be provided for every 15-20 individual guests. These costs include a 12 hour period, plus 2 hours opening and closing, administration and management, liability insurance costs, workers compensation coverage, training, supplies, and food. Purchase Orders and/or contracts will be created as necessary. Funding will only be released from Contingency Fund Balance for services rendered and up to the authorized amount. Staff will continue the conversation with other jurisdictions to offset the costs to the county.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Budget Revision Request

Authored by:

Erin Weber, District Representative, Third District Supervisor Doreen Farr

cc:

George Chapjian, Community Services Department Director