



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: Community Services
Department No.: 057
For Agenda Of: August 31, 2021
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Time: 90 minutes
Continued Item:
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department George Chapjian, Community Service Director 805-568-2485
Director(s)
Contact Info: Dinah Lockhart, Deputy Director 805-568-3523

SUBJECT: Proposed Homeless Encampment Resolution Strategy

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Risk Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive a presentation on homeless encampments in Santa Barbara County, which identifies key strategies and priority areas to address unsheltered homelessness;
- b) Approve and adopt the Encampment Resolution Strategy, including the Encampment Response Protocol;
- c) Provide direction on resources for implementation of the Encampment Resolution Strategy, including the Encampment Response Protocol;
- d) Direct staff to allocate up to \$1,482,500 in restricted federal 2021 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to implement FY21/22 Encampment Strategy as directed, unless other State or federal funding becomes available and return to the Board with a Budget Revision Request to appropriate funding at a future Board Hearing; and
- e) Determine that the recommended actions are not the approval of a project that is subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(2) and (5), finding that the actions consist of general policy and procedure making and organizational or administrative activities of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes to the environment.

Summary Text:

This item is on the agenda for the Board of Supervisors consideration of the Encampment Response Protocol. Staff’s report includes a discussion of support services and facilities to implement an encampment resolution strategy, as well as the broader homeless services and facility needs provided in the Board adopted Phase II Community Action Plan, that are needed to support persons living in encampments or have been relocated. Resolving encampments will require a coordinated regional vision backed by intense services, shelter and housing expansion. The proposed Encampment Resolution Strategy is based on local and national best practices, and includes action steps to respond to unsheltered homelessness in the County. An encampment strategy is needed at this time to address the proliferation of encampments and the unhealthy and unsafe conditions that unsheltered homeless persons are exposed to, and the increased risk of fire, environmental impacts, and compromised public spaces. The availability of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, as well as secured and anticipated state and federal funding initiatives through COVID-19, present a unique opportunity to respond to the increased presence of encampments, and to assist the unsheltered population.

The Encampment Resolution Strategy is a 3-year effort (2021-2024) with the goal of resolving 45 encampments of varying size and impact. The proposed Encampment Resolution Strategy relies on an effective system of care that can ultimately provide shelter, housing and services to meet the needs of persons experiencing homelessness. Components of the system of care that are critical to resolving encampments are:

1. Increasing access to shelter
2. Leveraging long-term rental subsidies
3. Creating new permanent housing units with supportive services
4. Robust outreach and engagement
5. Sustained adequate funding

The Encampment Response Protocol and Team provide the framework and specifics of assessing and resolving encampments. The County will prioritize strategies addressing unsheltered homelessness that are humane and invest limited resources wisely, and result in long term solutions.

Staff recommends the approval and adoption of the Encampment Resolution Strategy, Encampment Response Protocol and direction to allocate \$1,482,500 in restricted ARPA funding for implementation in the 21/22 fiscal year. Staff is also seeking direction on additional resources to fund the strategy and protocol components for further consideration by the Board of Supervisors. Further discussion of the allocation of ARPA funding is anticipated in October 2021.

Background:

On February 23, 2021, the Board of Supervisors adopted the Phase II Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness. The hearing included a presentation on the state of homelessness, including the impacts and considerations for addressing encampments. At the Board hearing, Supervisors requested the Community Services Department (CSD) return with a directed approach and strategy to address the growing number and impact of encampments.

Unsheltered homelessness in Santa Barbara County rose 37% (by 330 individuals, from 893 to 1,223) between the 2017 and 2020 Point in Time Counts (PIT) of persons experiencing homelessness. A PIT was not conducted in 2021 due to COVID-19. Based on data collected through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the County experienced a 34% increase in unsheltered homelessness between 2020 and 2021. This increase was due in part to the reduction in shelter capacity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The public health emergency has resulted in an increase in encampments, which communities have been struggling to address nationwide. Local community partners and county departments monitor encampments and have reported over 100 locations of unsheltered persons using a new mapping software. In 2020, County Fire reported impacts that included 401 non-fire emergency medical services calls, and 47 fire-related calls; a total of 21 encampments were inspected by County Fire in 2020.

County staff receive weekly calls to remove encampments across incorporated and unincorporated Santa Barbara County. Many camps have gone undisturbed following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, resulting in large areas of belongings and debris. The CDC considerations for encampments remain in effect. The consideration states “if individual housing options are not available, allow people who are living unsheltered or in encampments to remain where they are”. Current encampment response includes significant investments in street outreach, primarily funded through one-time infusions of State Coronavirus relief funding. Outreach with intensive service provision and shelter capacity, both congregate shelter and non-congregate shelter (such as motel stays), have proven to be successful in achieving long-term housing placement for former encampment residents.

Over the past two years, service providers involved in encampment response, such as CityNet, Good Samaritan Shelter, County Multi-Disciplinary Team, have given feedback about encampment engagement and response processes based on their experiences. The Phase II Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness incorporates a key action to create a coordinated encampment response across public agencies, and highlights both protocol and procedural steps for successfully resolving encampments. Over the past several months, County departments reviewed policies published by other communities and drafted a protocol based on existing practices and expertise. To incorporate the comments and recommendations by local jurisdictions, the draft protocol was provided to city staff from local jurisdictions in the County, and is the subject of a working committee of the Elected Leaders Forum to Address Homelessness. A review of the draft protocol by service providers and County departments was presented during the July 2021 Elected Leaders Forum.

Unsafe conditions for persons remaining unsheltered include risk of fire, impacts on public recreation areas and the environment, safety of the greater community and visitors, and concern for the health and safety of those experiencing homelessness. These concerns have been identified through an increase in calls for law enforcement service, the need for sanitation services and removal of biohazard, and the deterioration of public spaces. The economic, social, and overall health impacts of COVID-19 have worsened the condition for persons experiencing homelessness. The public health emergency has made encampment management even more complicated and challenging. There is a need to address crisis through shelter, housing and services as well as a plan for reducing the number of encampments.

Some key lessons learned and best practices from other communities are listed below:

- Allow ample time for comprehensive engagement
- Understand the population at the site and their needs (number of persons, persons with disabilities, pets, transitional age youth, number of people living in cars)

- Document outreach consistently to assess needs and interests in housing and/or services
- Understand the laws/regulations in the area (streets, sidewalks, parks, private property, and other public land)
- Identify resources that can be offered: housing, storage, trash disposal, transportation, hygiene trailers, safe needle drops, COVID-19 testing and vaccinations
- Understand the community's (members of the encampment) informal leadership to facilitate buy-in on housing options
- Start identifying the housing options available before engagement clean-up begins
- Once a site is cleared, outreach teams should conduct regular checks and outreach to anyone who has settled in the previously cleared site
- Ensure that an after-action report is written to provide data on overall housing placements, services offered, other accomplishments, effective best practices used, and lessons learned

Significant considerations to addressing this complex problem include:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance
- Recent legal decisions including *Martin v. Boise*, *Blake v. City of Grants Pass*, *LA Alliance v. City of Los Angeles*
- Field experience of County Public Health, Fire, and Sheriff
- Community impacts
- Best practices and guidance from other communities and experts in the field

Recent successful exits from homelessness to temporary and permanent housing placements have resulted from best practices such as consistent engagement by trained providers, emphasizing case management in the field, focus on a housing and services plan, and employing best practices like progressive engagement and more accountability in the coordinated entry system for housing navigation. Encampment resolution efforts in Isla Vista have relied on some of the best practices outlined in this proposed strategy and have shown the need for all components in order to achieve successful resolution. Time for engagement, understanding of the population and access to a variety of shelter/housing options including non-congregate resulted in 31 individuals accepting alternative shelter and other critical services. Sites were closed through placement eliminating the need for forced removal by law enforcement.

Discussion:

Encampment Response Protocol

The purpose of the homeless encampment protocol (Attachment A) is to provide increased clarity and coordination around all aspects of encampment responses for property owned and/or controlled by Santa Barbara County. All interventions will include health and safety measures, and will be based on health and safety risks, available resources, and capacity. As the Encampment Resolution Strategy moves forward, increased partnerships and opportunities for collaboration and sustainable funding are necessary to address encampment issues. The use of these measures would help ensure:

- Defined roles and responsibilities;
- Coordination and management of limited resources;
- Prioritization of encampments based on defined criteria;
- Consistency of procedures; and
- Collection of data and metrics to measure the effectiveness of reducing encampments.

The following principles, specific to addressing encampments, have also informed the development of the protocol:

- It is not safe or healthy for people to live unsheltered.
- Adequate safe, accessible, and supportive shelter and housing of all types, including permanent supportive and affordable housing, is the solution to homelessness.
- Low-barrier pathways to permanent housing (including, but not limited to: emergency shelter, bridge housing, and rapid rehousing) are the best solution to addressing encampments.
- People may sleep and live in encampment settings alone or as a collective for many reasons, including a sense of community and safety.
- Community member concerns about encampments within their neighborhoods, including those related to health, sanitation, and safety, should be addressed.
- The County must balance the interests of unsheltered residents with the interests of other community residents.

Across the country and in Santa Barbara County, there is great variation among encampments in resident characteristics and social structure. For example, one encampment may be a couple with a pet, another could be a group of 7 adults all with independent sleeping sites that choose to camp in close proximity for perceived security or sharing of basic necessities. Each group may have a well-defined set of mutually agreed-on and enforced rules while other groups may be loose congregations that have little to no organization or cohesion.

The protocol creates an Encampment Response Team comprised of staff from Community Services, Public Health, Fire, Sheriff, and a homeless outreach worker. The field team will assess existing encampments reported for health and safety risks, provide education on hazards, and provide linkages to shelter and services. Other departments such as Public Works, General Services, Code Enforcement, Agricultural Commissioner, and County MDT (Be Well, Public Defender, Public Health, Social Services, Community Services) will be engaged depending on assessed needs and locations. While many departments have funded positions to participate in encampment response, a new Encampment Response Coordinator to track reports of encampments, deploy the response team, coordinate interventions, and manage logistics when closure is recommended is part of the year 1 allocation of restricted ARPA for the 21/22 fiscal year (Table 2).

Criteria for evaluating encampment sites include:

- Potential danger to life and property
- Proximity to residents (homes/apartments)
- Directly impacting sensitive environment/water quality
- Prevents public use of parks/right of way
- Other extreme risks such as consistent criminal activity or very disruptive behavior

Interventions to address encampments include but are not limited to

- Engage in focused outreach and case management
- Enact temporary health and safety measures
- Activate cleaning
- Initiate closure and removal

The strategy proposes a goal of resolving 15 encampments per year of the three-year strategy, for a reduction of 45 encampments. Fulcrum mapping software will be utilized for mapping, data collection,

and reporting. The cost per resolved encampment is \$43,000 in year 1 of the protocol. **This cost does not include costs of shelter, housing and other on-going support services as this can't yet be calculated on a per encampment basis.**

Encampment Resolution Strategy and Integration with Phase II Community Action Plan

The proposed Encampment Resolution Strategy integrates with the guiding Phase II Community Action Plan and relies on the following components to provide shelter, housing and services to persons experiencing homelessness:

1. Increasing access to shelter
2. Leveraging long-term rental subsidies
3. Creating new permanent housing units with supportive services
4. Robust outreach and engagement
5. Sustained adequate funding

Increase access to shelter

Increasing access to shelter is a key element of a successful encampment resolution strategy. Recent court decisions have highlighted the importance of available alternate shelter. Consequences of not focusing on the shelter and housing needs of the individual experiencing homelessness may result in the same people returning to the same place or disperse nearby days or weeks later, none any closer to permanent housing.

As noted in the Community Action Plan adopted by the Board a goal is to build a system of care that has housing, shelter, and services to meet the needs of individuals and families, including the most complex cases. Recently proposed shelter projects that are not yet approved and/or fully funded will expand bed capacity. These projects include:

- leasing and potential future acquisition (funded) of a 50-bed shelter in Isla Vista
- relocation of pallet shelters to the Bridgehouse shelter campus in unincorporated Lompoc Valley
- proposed development of a 34-bed modular project in Santa Barbara

Shelter capacity can also be amplified, increasing flow through existing shelter, by increasing the percentage and pace of persons exiting to permanent housing from the homeless system. Eighty-nine (89%) percent of persons transitioning to permanent housing from the shelter system require a rental subsidy and services. This underscores the importance of investing in both shelter and housing to ensure each person in shelter has the opportunity for a positive exit. New one-time State funding has created an opportunity to reduce the gap between shelter need and shelter resources. In anticipation of new opportunities, there is a demand to identify sites and local match funding for an additional 100 beds leveraging the State of CA Homekey program. As those costs and/or projects have not been identified, they are not included or projected in this agenda letter.

Leverage long-term rental subsidies/vouchers

As persons from current sheltered and unsheltered living situations move into permanent housing, access to shelter and housing for persons living in encampments increases. The County and City Housing Authorities have been issued funding authority for 215 Emergency Housing Vouchers to support new permanent housing placements. Long-term rental subsidies must be combined with services to promote lasting housing stability. On August 17, 2021, the Board approved a contract with Good Samaritan Shelter to provide one year of those services to emergency housing voucher recipients. Both public housing authorities have affordable housing sites and Housing Choice Voucher programs to leverage for encampment resolution.

Create new permanent housing units

County staff are actively working with community partners, including both Housing Authorities and other stakeholders, to identify other potential projects for shelter and housing programs. The largest opportunity to increase permanent housing units is through the upcoming Homekey funding. The State of CA 2021-22 budget includes \$1.45B in funding for Homekey projects. As these steps are being taken, the community is on track to complete or otherwise progress with development projects such as West Cox Cottages in Santa Maria, Vera Cruz Village in Santa Barbara, and Hollister Lofts in the unincorporated area of South County between Santa Barbara and Goleta.

The gaps analysis (Table 1) conducted as part of the Phase II Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness calculated the beds, units, and subsidies needed in each region throughout Santa Barbara County:

Table 1: Estimated Gaps in Beds/Units by Region

REGION	TEMPORARY BEDS	RAPID RE-HOUSING SLOTS	PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING UNITS	LONG TERM SUBSIDY
SOUTH COUNTY Santa Barbara, Goleta, IV, Montecito, Carpinteria, Summerland	369	537	602	270
MID-COUNTY Lompoc, Santa Ynez Valley	61	155	76	69
NORTH COUNTY Santa Maria, Orcutt, Guadalupe	133	361	157	192
TOTAL CURRENT GAP	563	1,053	835	531

Based on 10/1/2018-9/30/19 data year; incorporates PIT, CES and HMIS data to represent gaps in each region. Data available to census tract or zip code based on unsheltered populations.

Robust outreach and engagement

Robust outreach and engagement services connect people experiencing homelessness with shelter and housing opportunities. A key best practice in encampment response is *consistent* outreach and engagement that includes individual case management and housing navigation. By developing sustained and progressive engagement, trust is developed between outreach worker and encampment resident, which will increase the likelihood that the encampment resident will accept the housing or shelter opportunity when it is offered. Successful street outreach requires collaboration among multiple stakeholders and strong coordination among teams. Approaches by teams should: permit ample time for engagement and rapport-building; allow for individualized case management; be client-centered, trauma-informed, and voluntary; be paired with availability of housing resources; and be transparent and consistent at every point of contact.

Performance Measures:

The goals and performance measures (Table 2) based on the recommended Encampment Resolution Strategy are intended to: 1) ensure streets and open spaces are safe and clean; 2) meet the housing, shelter, and service referral needs of individuals experiencing homelessness; 3) improve the medical and behavioral health of individuals experiencing homelessness; and, 4) deliver coordinated services to effectively address and resolve encampments by developing efficient means to manage calls for service and prioritize resources, and effectively share information and coordinate resources countywide. The proposed Encampment Response Coordinator will track demographics in camps (persons assessed, persons enrolled in services, and persons in closed/cleared sites) to ensure there are no inequities or disparities in service and outreach. The proposed Coordinator will also convene after-action focus groups, including persons who have experienced homelessness and the proposed Encampment Response Team, to assess the processes in place and to improve implementation for persons in camps and experiencing homelessness.

Table 2: Goals and Performance Measures – Encampment Resolution

Goals

	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>
Number of encampments assessed	20	20	20
Number of encampments resolved	15	15	15
Number of persons identified in assessed encampments	50	50	50

Performance Measures

	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>
Participants in resolved encampments who accept alternate shelter/housing	60%	60%	60%
Participants who accept alternative shelter or services are permanently housed	60%	60%	60%
Resolved encampments not re-established at 3-months	90%	90%	90%
Resolved encampments not re-established at 6-months	80%	80%	80%
Resolved encampments not re-established at 12-months	75%	75%	75%
Reduce calls for service to encampment locations (incidents leading to service requests, reduce drug-related and criminal activity)	30%	40%	50%

Staff proposes a 6-month and 12-month report to the Board of Supervisors, outlining progress made, lessons learned, and recommendations based on months of a comprehensive strategy and response protocol and team. Implementation of the Encampment Response Strategy and Encampment Response Protocol requires identifying funding sources for each of the components. The acquisition of the new shelter in Isla Vista will need to be completed by December 30, 2021. The proposed shelter operations are only funded for the first year. Additional funding will need to be secured for operations and outreach. The American Rescue Plan, County general funds, new State funding, and/or other sources will need to be committed to address encampments.

Fiscal Considerations:

Full implementation of the key actions and activities of the Encampment Resolution Strategy and implementation of the Response Protocol is estimated at \$22,664,956 over a three-year period. This funding will be pursued via a request for ARPA funding, grants, state and federal funding sources.

Funding implementation of the Encampment Response Protocol specifically includes staffing, sanitation services, storage of personal property and the mapping software. Sanitation services, which is the actual cleaning and clearing of 45 encampments over 3 years, is \$1,125,000. Combined with personal property storage and contractor costs, a new position (Encampment Response Coordinator), and mapping software, the cost of implementation of the protocol is \$1,935,000 (Table 3).

Table 3: Funding Required for Successful Implementation of Encampment Response Protocol

Key action/Activity	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Estimated 3-year Cost
Encampment Response Protocol Coordinator	\$160,000	\$160,000	\$160,000	\$480,000
Encampment Response sanitation services (debris removal)	\$375,000	\$375,000	\$375,000	\$1,125,000
Storage of personal property and staffing for access to property	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$300,000
Fulcrum mapping software	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$30,000
Total	\$645,000	\$645,000	\$645,000	\$1,935,000

Funding for implementation of the Encampment Resolution Strategy also contemplates the expansion of shelter beds and services to address identified encampment needs and also integrates with the guiding Phase II Community Action Plan to address boarder homeless needs.

Table 4: Funding Required for Successful Implementation of Encampment Resolution Strategy

Key action/Activity	Estimated Capital or 1-time Investment	Estimated Year 1 Cost	Estimated Year 2 Cost	Estimated Year 3 Cost	Estimated 3-year Cost
Increase Access to Shelter: Complete 100 new shelter beds (3 projects) in a navigation center model	\$8,200,000	\$400,000			\$8,600,000
Unfunded Temporary Housing Operations Costs		Funded with One-time State Grant	\$2,467,780	\$2,467,780	\$4,935,560 (Project detail in Table 4)
Multi-Disciplinary Team Full Implementation		Funded with One-time State Grant	\$2,503,448	\$2,503,448	\$5,006,896
10 Street Outreach Housing Navigators		\$437,500	\$875,000	\$875,000	\$2,187,500
Total	\$8,200,000	\$837,500	\$5,846,228	\$5,846,228	\$20,729,956

Table 5: Funding Breakdown of Unfunded Shelter/Temporary Housing Operations Costs

Unfunded Temporary Housing Operations Costs	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
New Shelter in Isla Vista	Funded with One-time State Grant	\$ 1,229,400	\$ 1,229,400	\$ 2,458,800
Pallet Shelters in Lompoc	Funded with One-time State Grant	\$ 219,000	\$ 219,000	\$ 438,000
Proposed Dignity Moves Project in Santa Barbara	Funded with One-time State Grant	\$ 1,019,380	\$ 1,019,380	\$ 2,038,760
	-	\$ 2,467,780	\$ 2,467,780	\$ 4,935,560

The funding amount includes \$8,600,000 in capital to fund the acquisition of the new shelter in Isla Vista, (previously allocated by the Board of Supervisors on June 1) and site improvements of permanent restrooms and showers at Bridgehouse (estimated cost \$1,200,000) and the County contribution of \$400,000 to the proposed Garden St. flag lot project (Table 4) to also address the broader sheltering needs identified in the Phase II Community Action Plan as well as support encampment resolution. Shelter operations and services currently only have funding allocated for 1 year. \$4,935,560 represents operations for year 2 and 3 for all three projects (Table 5). County staff continue to pursue all available funding to address homelessness. The State of California has included \$50M statewide for encampment resolution through an upcoming competitive award process.

The multi-disciplinary team (MDT) costs represent staffing needs for year 2 and 3 for Behavioral Wellness and the Public Defender. This team would grow to include additional clinical staff. The MDT is essential for complex cases where justice involvement and severe mental illness create barriers to accessing services and housing. Other street outreach efforts have also been a struggle to fund. With the ending of the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP), the system of care lost 8 full time outreach workers. State coronavirus relief funds are funding CityNet and Behavioral Wellness through June 30, 2022. Without additional funding, another severe reduction in outreach would occur, impacting efforts to address encampments and broader outreach efforts.

Fiscal Analysis:

Next steps Approval of Year 1 Funding (\$1,482,500) now for fiscal year 21/22 (Table 6) costs will allow an encampment coordinator to be retained to assist in the immediate day to day coordination of the critical field response encampment assessment and outreach services. Staff can also move forward with procurement process for sanitation services and storage. The articulated strategy to secure facilities and services will rely on a prioritizing approach to encampments with the resources available to fully execute the strategy outlined.

The \$1,482,500 is estimated to provide for the resolution of 15 encampments in year 1. The Encampment Strategy and integration with Phase II Community Action Plan strategies will be presented for ARPA funding consideration in October and will also include a discussion of known and anticipated state and federal funding.

Table 6 - FY21/22 Encampment Strategy – ARPA Funding Requested to be Allocated

Encampment Strategy	FY 21/22
Encampment Response Protocol Coordinator	\$160,000
Encampment Response sanitation services (Debris removal)	\$375,000
Storage of personal property and staffing for access to property	\$100,000
Fulcrum mapping software	\$10,000
10 Additional Street Outreach Housing Navigators (~ 6 months)	\$437,500
Garden Street Flag Lot Contribution	\$400,000
Total	\$1,482,500

Funding Sources	Current FY Cost:	Annualized On-going Cost:	Total One-Time Project Cost
General Fund			
State			
Federal	\$ 1,482,500	\$ 6,491,228	\$ 8,200,000
Fees			
Other:			
Total	\$ 1,482,500	\$ 6,491,228	\$ 8,200,000

Key Contract Risks:

No contract is included in this Board Letter.

Staffing Impacts:

The proposed Encampment Response Protocol will add a (1.0 FTE) Full Time Equivalent position in a department to be determined to coordinate the response team, interventions, approvals and logistics. The other staff dedicated to the response team will utilize existing departmental staff. The proposed outreach and engagement strategy is an expansion of the County's multi-disciplinary team.

Special Instructions: Please email an electronic copy of the Minute Order to Kimberlee Albers at kalbers@co.santa-barbara.ca.us

Attachments:

- A. Encampment Response Protocol
- B. Presentation

Authored by:

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