

4

LATE
DIST

Katherine Douglas *Public Comment - LWVSB*

From: Jacquelyne Alexander
Sent: Monday, October 7, 2024 3:20 PM
To: sbcob
Cc: Katherine Douglas
Subject: FW: LWVSB Letter Re: Proposed Changes to Encampment Response Protocol
Attachments: LWVB Encampment Response Protocol Letter - BOS 10.9.24.pdf
Importance: High

Please add to today's late distribution for tomorrows hearing for D4.

Thank you!



one COUNTY | one FUTURE

Jacquelyne Alexander
Chief Deputy Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Barbara
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407, Santa Barbara, CA 93101
t: 805.568.2245 f: 805.568.2249
jalexander@countyofsb.org

Sign up for news and announcements from the County at www.countyofsb.org.

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: The information contained in this electronic message and any attachments to this message are intended for the exclusive use of the addressee(s) and may contain confidential or privileged information. If you are not the intended recipient, or the person responsible for delivering the e-mail to the intended recipient, be advised you have received this message in error and that any use, dissemination, forwarding, printing, or copying is strictly prohibited. Please notify the County of Santa Barbara immediately by replying to this email or calling (805)568-3404 and destroy all copies of this message and any attachments.

From: Jesús Armas
Sent: Monday, October 7, 2024 2:07 PM
To: Jacquelyne Alexander <jalexander@countyofsb.org>
Subject: FW: LWVSB Letter Re: Proposed Changes to Encampment Response Protocol

Here it is.

From: Megan Turley <megan.elizabeth.turley@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, October 5, 2024 9:59 PM
To: Steve Lavagnino <slavagnino@countyofsb.org>; Das Williams <DWilliams@countyofsb.org>; Bob Nelson <bnelson@countyofsb.org>; Laura Capps <lcapps@countyofsb.org>; Joan Hartmann <jHartmann@countyofsb.org>
Cc: Pamela Flynt Tambo <pambotambo@gmail.com>; Vicki Allen <vickipallen@yahoo.com>; Jesús Armas <jarmas@countyofsb.org>
Subject: LWVSB Letter Re: Proposed Changes to Encampment Response Protocol

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Chair Lavagnino, Members of the Board of Supervisors,

Please find attached a letter from the League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara regarding possible revisions to the Encampment Response Protocol on your agenda for October 8, 2024.

Regards,

Megan Turley

Chair, League of Women Voters Housing Committee

housing@lwvsantabarbara.org | <https://www.lwvsantabarbara.org/>



October 6, 2024

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

RE: Recommendations regarding possible revisions to the Encampment Response Protocol;
Agenda Item D-4 October 8, 2024

Chair Lavagnino, Members of the Board of Supervisors:

The League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara appreciates the opportunity to provide input on possible revisions to the County's Encampment Response Protocol.

The League has a position of supporting "government and community programs and policies to assist individuals and families experiencing homelessness or about to become homeless in meeting their basic human needs." As such, we are concerned about the potential changes to the County's encampment clearing protocol, specifically the recommendation "to delete any statement that suggests encampment resolution may only be initiated following demonstration that shelter beds are available" and the suggestion to decrease the noticing period for encampment clearing from 72 hours to 48 hours.

We disagree with the board agenda letter that, "utilizing the flexibility made possible by the Court's decision is not incompatible with, nor does it compromise, the underlying premise of treating the unhoused humanely." While these guidelines are no longer legal prerequisites, they **remain prerequisites to maintaining a humane and cost-effective protocol** for addressing encampment resolution in our County.

The data bears this out. In cities like [Los Angeles](#) and [San Diego](#), expensive anti-camping policies have led to almost no individuals successfully transitioning to permanent housing with over 80% of encampments repopulated in just two weeks. Additionally, [research published in the Journal of American Medical Association](#) suggests that repeated involuntary relocations of unhoused individuals results in an increase of negative health outcomes and even death, particularly for those struggling with addiction. **Removing people from an encampment and giving them nowhere to go is not sound policy.**

This proposed change in protocol is not just ineffective and inhumane, it is damaging to our chances of receiving continued funding for homelessness services in our county. As the County



works towards Prohousing Designation from HCD, it is important to keep in mind that to be eligible, we must enact best practices consistent with the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness' (USICH) Principles for Addressing Encampments ([HCD Addendum to Prohousing Designation Program](#), page 3).

USICH's guidance on addressing encampments humanely and effectively is not only based on up-to-date data, our ability to align with its recommendations **will determine if we continue to receive state and federal funding to address our community's growing housing and homelessness crisis.**

Prohousing Designation jurisdictions are eligible to apply for the Prohousing Incentive Program, and receive priority processing or funding points when applying for multiple state funding programs. Going forward, **in order to continue to receive competitive grant dollars, this designation is essential.** With \$16.52 million in competitive funding awarded for the county's shelter- and person-centered efforts, the county cannot afford to go backwards on this issue.

USICH's guidance states, in part:

"... clearing an encampment without offering housing and support does not solve homelessness in the short or long term. Instead, it simply moves people experiencing homelessness from block to block and from streets to jails. The resulting criminal records make it even harder for people experiencing homelessness to access shelters, find housing, and obtain jobs."

Our League agrees, and we further advise that evidence-based strategies with real track records of success should be prioritized whenever possible. We believe that your current protocol is already doing this – and in particular, considers input from people who have experienced homelessness, local community partners, housing experts, as well as the County staff who administer these protocols. Importantly, **there is no indication from staff that this protocol has hindered the county's ability to address immediate threats to public health and safety.**

The county's own community action plan to address homelessness presented to the Board in April of this year lists "Increased Inventory of Affordable Permanent Housing" as its number one priority, and notes that the pool of funding available for this priority is significant (\$134M). Nowhere in the action plan is there a mention of any of the protocol recommendations included in the board agenda letter, which begs the question: **which members of county staff, partners, and law enforcement were consulted before making this recommendation?**

We commend County staff for their diligent work to serve our unhoused neighbors, and want to highlight their efforts to ensure that 1,400 formerly unhoused people were transitioned out of

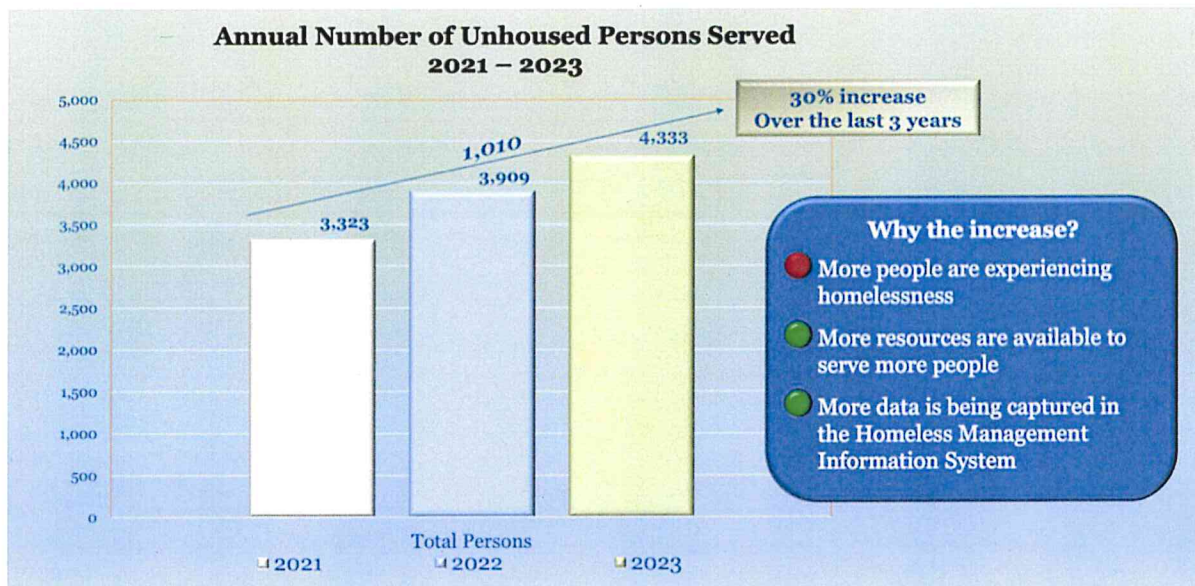


homelessness into permanent housing and 2,746 people were sheltered in interim housing last year alone.

More specifically to this protocol, 321 encampments were removed by county-led efforts, with 289 people relocated to shelter or housing, and 143 persons relocated to permanent housing (far exceeding Los Angeles's track record for the same time period). There was also a 13% decrease in calls for service to County Fire during this same period.

As the board agenda letter states, the **existing protocol already allows for enforcement when there are instances of criminal activities** within encampments. Thus, a change in this protocol is unnecessary, and effectively will allow for the criminalization of individuals simply due to being unhoused.

We encourage the County to continue to **focus on policies and protocols that have the greatest positive impact** on unhoused people, and our County as a whole. In 2023, 4,333 more people applied for homeless services, a majority for the first time. One of the most effective means of preventing and solving our current housing and homelessness crisis is by expanding the supply of deed-restricted affordable housing, which can provide permanent homes for those experiencing homelessness and for those at risk of becoming unhoused.



Source: County of Santa Barbara Annual Update on Homelessness Presentation, [April 23, 2024](#)



Additionally, our county has a significant number of temporary and permanent supportive housing units in the pipeline to be built in the next 2 years, including 300 permanent housing units currently under development. Our League believes that the county should **focus its efforts on continuing to investigate avenues to fund and build deed-restricted affordable housing** and on data-driven policies that 1) humanely and effectively house our most vulnerable community members and 2) are aligned with the state's funding priorities.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vicki Allen".

Vicki Allen,
Vice President, LWVSB Communications

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan Turley".

Megan Turley
Chair, LWVSB Housing Committee

Pam Flynt Tambo
Vice President, LWVSB Social Policy