



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:** November 10, 2020  
**Placement:** Departmental  
**Estimated Time:** N/A  
**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:**  
**Vote Required:** Majority

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Department George Chapjian, Community Services Director (805)568-2467  
Director(s)  
Contact Info: Dinah Lockhart, Deputy Director (805)568-3523  
**SUBJECT:** Encampments of Persons Experiencing Homelessness in Isla Vista and  
Temporary Emergency Sheltering Option for COVID-19 Response

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: YES

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

**Risk Concurrence:**

As to form: YES

**Recommended Actions:** That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive and file a presentation regarding homeless encampments in Isla Vista and potential option for temporary emergency sheltering as a response to COVID-19;
- b) Provide conceptual approval of the option outlined in this report regarding temporary emergency shelter and navigation support services;
- c) Direct staff to return with an agreement or agreements to facilitate the establishment and operation of a temporary emergency shelter in Isla Vista;
- d) Provide other direction, as appropriate; and,
- e) Determine that the recommended actions are not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(4) and (5) as the action consists of organizational, administrative or fiscal activities of government that do not involve any commitment to any specific project and that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

**Summary Text:**

Encampments of persons experiencing homelessness have been growing in the parks of Isla Vista during the public health emergency, resulting in an unsafe environment for campers and the community at large.

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Conditions include risk of fire, concern for the environment and safety of the greater Isla Vista 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 parks due to work delays or cancellations caused by encampment activity. According to a County Fire Inspection of Homeless Encampments Notice of Determination/Violation dated October 26, 2020, there is “significant potential for the fire and life hazard conditions associated with the inspected homeless encampments to adversely impact life, property, and the environment” and is “requiring Isla Vista Recreation and Park District to abate the fire and life hazard by completing the following: (1) remove all combustible material and debris associated with the inspected homeless encampments, and (2) eliminate the unpermitted use of open fire on all IVRPD property” by November 20, 2020.

Staff’s presentation will provide an overview of the County’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on individuals and households who are experiencing homelessness. The discussion will include a presentation of the impacts of current homeless encampments in Isla Vista, needs that have been identified, and an option to temporary emergency shelter to respond to this unique area and community.

Considerations from the Center for Disease Control and other legal considerations recommend not dispersing persons living in encampments without alternative options when feasible. The Public Health Department recognizes the need for shelter and appropriately distanced sleeping arrangements as a means to protect homeless individuals. Much like the temporary emergency shelters at Santa Maria High School and through Project Roomkey, a temporary emergency shelter in Isla Vista would prevent and protect the community from the spread of COVID-19. Existing encampments are often densely populated with multiple unrelated households in a small area. A temporary emergency shelter would require contracting with a service provider, securing a location, identifying funding and all logistics and operations. The purpose of a temporary emergency shelter, with support services, is to address concerns for the health and safety of those experiencing homelessness, as well as concern for the environment and safety of community members and visitors.

A solution being used to address homeless encampments in other areas of California is the use of non-congregate shelter in ‘pallet houses’. This approach addresses several unique challenges of addressing the needs of persons experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. The presentation will also bring the Board current with discussions between the County, participation of County departments and community providers. A temporary emergency shelter project would be time limited, not to exceed six (6) months. In order to maximize the success of clients’ transition to a stable housing placement, the program would implement a ramp down in the final 60 days of program operation, to incrementally reduce the number of emergency sheltered program participants through attrition, thereby ensuring program participants are assisted with services and safe exit and housing options. The continuum of care currently has access to unprecedented funding and anticipates additional Federal and State funding.

The Board is being ask to receive and file a presentation on homeless encampments in Isla Vista, including response options, such as actions taken by other California communities to similar situations, and provide direction to staff. Staff will return to the Board on with an agreement or agreements to facilitate the establishment and operation of a temporary emergency shelter in Isla Vista. Such a program will include a ‘housing navigation’ objective at its core, which will provide a housing or shelter option to encampment

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residents during the proposed term of the temporary shelter operation between December 2020 through June 2021.

**Background:**

In May 2020, reports of mounting impacts from encampments in parks in Isla Vista were brought to the attention of the County's Third District Supervisor and to the Community Service Department's Housing and Community Development (HCD/CSD)/Homeless Assistance Programs Team. A group of leaders and community representatives began to meet in order to better understand the impacts of the growing encampment footprint, and to plan solutions to address the impacts while considering CDC guidance for encampment management throughout the COVID-19 emergency. The group has continued to meet on a biweekly basis. The "IV Encampment Working Group" includes representatives from: Home For Good Santa Barbara County/Northern Santa Barbara County United Way, Food Not Bombs, Isla Vista Community Services District (IVCSD), Isla Vista Foot Patrol/Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office, the office of Santa Barbara County Third District Supervisor Joan Hartmann, the County's HCD/CSD/Homeless Team, Isla Vista Recreation & Park District (IVRPD), UCSB's Special Assistant for Isla Vista Affairs, Isla Vista Community Gardens, and the County Behavioral Wellness Department. The goal of the group has been to determine steps to assist persons experiencing homelessness and make open spaces safe for all to enjoy while considering CDC guidance.

Continuing homeless services during community spread of COVID-19 is critical. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides the following guidance:

Make plans to maintain services for all people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. To facilitate the continuation of services, community coalitions should identify resources to support people sleeping outside as well as additional temporary housing, including sites with individual rooms that are able to provide appropriate services, supplies, and staffing.

According to the Point-in-Time Count conducted on January 29, 2020, there was an increase in Isla Vista homelessness from January 2019 (33) to January 2020 (69). The 69 persons counted in 2020 were predominantly living in vehicles, not unsheltered in encampments. On June 30, 2020, outreach workers counted 44 persons experiencing homelessness throughout the census tracts in Isla Vista largely in encampments in parks. Current estimated of persons residing in four Isla Vista parks is as high as 80. The economic, social, and overall health impacts of COVID-19 have worsened the condition for persons experiencing homelessness. Santa Barbara County Fire has recognized extreme risk of fire danger in some of the parks with encampments. County Fire Department issued a Notice to Abate on October 26, 2020 to the Isla Vista Recreation and Parks District to prevent fire risk. IVRPD reserves the right to enforce any and all of its ordinances and policies but will, for the duration of the health emergency, attempt to use the criteria for intervention, levels of intervention, and operational approach set forth in their COVID-19 Encampment Management Policy (CEMP) approved in August 2020.

On September 23, 2020 a Request for Letters of Interest and Statement of Qualifications (LOI/SOQ) was released to affordable housing and shelter service providers in order to identify a qualified respondent if a temporary emergency shelter for unsheltered homeless households in Isla Vista was to be considered. Proposals were due on October 9, 2020 and Good Samaritan Shelter Inc. (GSS) was the only qualified

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respondent. GSS has experience successfully working with other chronically homeless communities, and can bring various interventions together to assist the Isla Vista encampment residents reach a positive housing placement. They have also assisted with COVID-19 sheltering in response to the public health emergency.

County representatives and stakeholders have identified the Isla Vista Community Center and adjacent parking lot owned by the Isla Vista Recreation and Parks District as a potential site. A potential option for temporary emergency shelter would serve approximately 50 individuals over a six (6) month period. In response to the eminent fire danger faced by encampment residents and adjacent residential and commercial structures, a shelter could open December 15, 2020 through June 15, 2021. In addition to shelter operations, essential services as defined by 24 CFR 576.102 would include case management, housing navigation, public health and behavioral health services, and links to substance use disorder treatment services, with the objectives of linking individuals to a permanent or safe housing resource and preventing community spread of COVID-19.

Persons moving from Isla Vista Parks will be informed of the time limited availability of the shelter. Case management and other support staff will identify the barriers to housing or other safe shelter options. Case managers will work with the shelter guest to resolve those barriers with urgency. As beds are available in other existing permanent emergency shelters, guest will be given the opportunity to relocate. In order to maximize the success of clients' transition to a stable housing placement, the proposed temporary emergency shelter will implement a ramp down in the final 60 days of program operation, to incrementally reduce the number of emergency sheltered program participants through attrition, thereby ensuring program participants are assisted with services and housing. In order to prevent the re-inhabitation of the Isla Vista Parks, the Isla Vista Recreation and Parks District will explore the options that are available.

A crucial element to a successful response to the public health and fire threat concerns faced by the Isla Vista homeless encampment residents will be the participation of County departments involved in both direct service and in assisting with any potential temporary shelter structures established in proximity to the current encampment sites.

County Departmental Support

- Public Health: support and guidance from Environmental Health Services, designated Public Health/Healthcare for the Homeless Nurse, Hazardous Materials/ Sharps Containers distribution and collection, Personal Protective Equipment, and additional staff to assist in screening/eligibility for Medi-Cal; Animal Services division.
- Behavioral Wellness: designated Mental Health Clinician to assist with outreach assessment during regularly scheduled hours (clinician to provide linkages to Mental Health/Substance Use Disorder services and ACCESS on site)
- Public Defender: staff advocates to support legal needs and relevant service linkages
- Probation: staff to navigate probation violations and assist with supportive housing and AB109 referrals
- Sheriff: law enforcement support in a collaborative effort to maintain safety at site in parks
- Department of Social Services: staff to provide outreach and linkages for those who qualify for benefits
- Planning and Development: issue of emergency permit by Director and other permitting processes.

- General Services: use of property documents and assistance through set-up logistics (ex: utilities) and insurance requirements
- County Fire: staff to provide guidance and support through logistics and for disaster planning/prevention and general safety
- Community Services: funding support and resources/linkages to coordinate with service providers
- District Attorney: staff to work collaboratively with Public Defender and Behavioral Wellness (through client pending charges) and provide service intervention with partner agencies

Funding for a potential temporary emergency shelter and outreach services is available through the federal CARES Act funding designated by the Board of Supervisors for ‘vulnerable populations’ which is available only through December 30, 2020. Federal Emergency Shelter Grant Coronavirus Round 1 (ESG-CV1) funding was awarded to Santa Barbara County as the Administrative Entity for the Continuum of Care from the State for emergency shelter and street outreach on September 17, 2020 in the amount of \$1,031,300. The utilization of ESG-CV1 to address the impact of COVID-19 on the health of homeless residents by operation of a temporary emergency shelter requires renewals of the public health department’s determination of need. The Board of Supervisors approved a contract for outreach services on October 20, 2020 with City Net for Street Outreach to persons residing in encampments with the remaining ESG-CV1 funding. City Net is actively conducting outreach to persons living in the Isla Vista encampments and connecting them to resources.

**Performance Measure:**

Good Samaritan has estimated that, if a temporary emergency shelter is pursued, approximately 15% of the anticipated 50 unduplicated persons served could be successfully navigated towards either a transitional housing opportunity, Rapid Re-Housing, or permanent supportive housing.

Table 1 summarizes the number of households to be served and percentage entering permanent housing. Program design, funding allocations within budgeted line items, and the characteristics of individuals and households served will vary, depending on the progression of the pandemic. CSD will provide the Board of Supervisors a summary of all COVID-19 homelessness response activities and outcomes.

**Table 1: Goals – Individuals/Households Served**

Goals

GSS will provide the following levels of services during the proposed operational period:

***Emergency Shelter***

	<b>Goal</b>
Total temporary beds	34
Total number of bed-nights made available	4,000
Total unduplicated number of persons served	50
Total unduplicated number of households served	40

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

Budgeted: Yes

**Fiscal Analysis:**

County CARES Act funds may be used to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 for people experiencing homelessness. They must be fully expended on or before December 30, 2020. ESG-CV1 funds for a potential temporary emergency shelter will be eligible for expenses incurred after December 30, 2020 through June 30, 2021. Cost of services delivered will be tracked by County departments for potential reimbursement.

**Key Contract Risks:**

The County assumes responsibility for the administration of ESG-CV and CARES Act in accordance with all federal and state requirements governing their use. In addition, it would be held liable if it or any provider to which it sub-grants funds is found to be non-compliant with applicable requirements.

An ESG-CV and CARES Act Program Sub-Recipient Agreement would be a cost-reimbursement contract. This allows CSD/HCD to disburse funds to aforementioned ESG-CV and CARES Act Program Sub-recipient(s) for eligible incurred costs to the extent prescribed by the Agreement. The County only reimburses ESG-CV and CARES Act Program sub-recipients for costs that are eligible under the Agreement and documented in a manner that is acceptable to the CSD/HCD. CSD/HCD staff assess the performance of sub-recipients to determine if the services provided are adequate and as outlined in the Agreement.

**Special Instructions:**

- 1) Please email an electronic copy of the Minute Order to Dinah Lockhart at [dlockhart@co.santa-barbara.ca.us](mailto:dlockhart@co.santa-barbara.ca.us).

**Attachments:**

- a) PowerPoint Presentation

**Authored by:** Kimberlee Albers, Homeless Assistance Program Manager