



CITY OF FORT BRAGG

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COUNCIL COMMITTEE ITEM SUMMARY REPORT

MEETING DATE: June 21, 2017
TO: Public Safety Committee
FROM: Linda Ruffing, City Manager
AGENDA ITEM TITLE: **Consider Possibility of Preparing a Homeless Action Plan for Fort Bragg**

ISSUE:

In response to increasing public concerns about homelessness, the City of Fort Bragg is considering preparing a Homeless Action Plan. The Plan would be developed in consultation with social service providers (including the faith community), law enforcement, business owners, neighborhood residents, and homeless residents. The intent of the Plan would be to develop recommendations that will help our community address homeless issues more effectively.

SUMMARY:

The City of Fort Bragg has been grappling with issues surrounding homelessness for many years. We have a growing population of individuals and families in need of shelter, meals, and medical and social services. Homelessness has placed increasing demands on service providers- including law enforcement, medical services, mental health services, emergency shelters, feeding programs, and social services. Homelessness has secondary impacts which affect local residents and businesses. Issues relate to petty crimes, diminished quality of life, loss of business, adverse community relations, negative aesthetics, and impacts to economic development. It is clear that we need to do a better job of minimizing the negative impacts of homelessness—both on those who are experiencing it directly and on the community-at-large.

The delivery of homeless services is not a core City activity, but rather services are provided by Mendocino County, local non-profits and the faith-based community. The City has a role, however, in helping to facilitate the delivery of services. Furthermore, ensuring public safety is a core City responsibility and should be a cornerstone of the City's Homeless Action Plan.

The City of Fort Bragg has a long history of working with homeless service providers in our community to help address issues relating to homelessness. Along with a considerable investment of staff resources, the City's primary funding resource is the State Community

Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Over the years, the City has helped fund many facility and program improvements, including:

- Upgrades to the Hospitality House emergency shelter (on McPherson Street) including improvements to the kitchen, accessibility and fire safety improvements, energy efficiency improvements, alley house reconstruction, etc.
- Acquisition and rehabilitation of the Hospitality Center facility (on N. Franklin Street) for provision of services for homeless people, transitional housing, and a Wellness Center for mental health clients.
- Facility improvements, energy efficiency upgrades and equipment purchases for the Fort Bragg Food Bank (on N. Franklin Street).
- Upgrades to the kitchen and dining facilities at the Redwood Coast Senior Center (on N. Harold Street).
- Implementation of the Homeless/Mental Health Intervention Program (HMHIP) - a three-year long pilot program that provided wrap-around case management services to homeless individuals who were "frequent fliers" for both law enforcement and our hospital's emergency room.
- Rehabilitation of the Hospitality North transitional housing facility (on N. Harrison Street) including accessibility improvements.
- Annual fundraising through the "Mayor's Fund" to support the Extreme Weather Shelter which provides extra shelter beds and motel vouchers during inclement weather.
- Construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing developments in collaboration with the Community Development Commission of Mendocino County, Rural Communities Housing Development Corporation, Habitat for Humanity, and DANCO.

Despite all of these efforts, issues relating to homelessness in Fort Bragg persist and seem to be getting worse. According to recent data compiled by the Mendocino County Homeless Services Continuum of Care:

- ✓ In Mendocino County, the per capita rate of homelessness is 140/10,000 (compared to 30/10,000 in CA; 80/10,000 in SF; 18/10,000 in USA).
- ✓ In Mendocino County, 47% of the homeless have Substance Use Disorders.
- ✓ In Mendocino County, 41% of the homeless are experiencing Serious Mental Illness.
- ✓ 52.5% of Mendocino County households spend 35% or more of their income on housing.
- ✓ Rental vacancy rates in Mendocino County are at 3.4%.
- ✓ Only 28% of the Community Development Commission's rental voucher recipients are able to find housing.

With all this in mind, the City of Fort Bragg is considering preparation of a Homeless Action Plan. The concept is to engage stakeholder groups in deep conversation about the effectiveness of our efforts to address homelessness and to strategize about how we can sharply focus our resources and actions to be more effective. From this, we will draft a plan for addressing homeless issues in Fort Bragg. The hope is that our process and plan would also serve as a model for interagency coordination and prioritization throughout the County.

We have invited representatives from the following agencies and organizations to attend this initial meeting:

SOCIAL SERVICES & MENTAL HEALTH

- Mendocino County Department of Health & Human Services
- Redwood Quality Management Company/ Redwood Community Services
- Mendocino Coast Hospitality Center
- Redwood Coast Senior Center
- Healthy Mendocino Group
- Mendocino Food & Nutrition (Fort Bragg Food Bank)

FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY

- Mendocino Coast Jewish Community
- Coast Christian Center

MEDICAL SERVICES

- Coast Clinics
- Mendocino Coast District Hospital
- Ukiah Valley Medical Center

HOUSING

- Community Development Commission of Mendocino County
- Fort Bragg Community Development Department
- Mendocino County Department of Planning & Building Services

LAW ENFORCEMENT:

- Fort Bragg Police Department
- Mendocino County Sheriff's Office
- Mendocino County District Attorney's Office
- Mendocino County Public Defender's Office
- Mendocino County Probation Department

Each agency or organization has been asked to have a representative address the Public Safety Committee and respond to the following questions (3-5 minute time limit):

- 1. Is your Agency/Organization willing to participate in a 4-6 month planning process?**
- 2. What is the most effective thing that your Agency/Organization currently does to help address issues relating to homelessness?**
- 3. Name one or two things that you wish your Agency/Organization could do (assuming barriers were removed) that you think would really help with our homeless problems.**
- 4. What do you see as the three biggest obstacles to solving homelessness?**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff's recommendation is that the City move forward with preparation of a Homeless Action Plan. The planning process would be coordinated by the City Manager's office, with support

from the Community Development Department and the Police Department. We would focus separately, and concurrently, on each of the subareas identified above. Each participating Agency/Organization would initially participate in focused discussions within its core service area(s). Outreach would also be conducted to obtain early input from businesses, residents, and people experiencing homelessness. Once initial Homeless Action Plan priorities and actions are identified, we would reconvene all of the stakeholders for a collective vetting process and to obtain additional community input. It is anticipated that each group would have a monthly meeting (with teleconferencing available) plus some email communication in between meetings. The goal would be to have a draft Homeless Action Plan ready for review by the City Council by the end of the year.

ATTACHMENTS:

None.