



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council **DATE:** November 8, 2021

FROM: Matthew Bronson, City Manager

PREPARED BY: Matthew Bronson, City Manager
Bruce Buckingham, Community Development Director
Greg Ray, Public Works Director/City Engineer
John Peters, Chief of Police
David Hale, City Attorney

SUBJECT: Homelessness Response Update

RECOMMENDATION

Receive an update on the City's response to homelessness in Grover Beach and actions the City is taking to address this issue and provide input and direction to staff.

BACKGROUND

Homelessness is a significant challenge in Grover Beach and throughout the South County and entire county. The Council has recognized the importance of addressing this challenge with the selection of Housing and Homelessness as a Major City Goal for FY 2021-23 which states:

Housing and Homelessness. Update City codes and standards to encourage housing construction to meet diverse needs; collaborate with developers and non-profits in efforts to increase overall housing stock with a priority on affordable housing availability; and partner with regional agencies and organizations to address homelessness and related sheltering issues in the city and region.

The City has a long-standing record of working with partner agencies and organizations on addressing homelessness in multiple ways. The City has secured over \$1,000,000 in past years in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for eviction prevention and security deposits administered by the 5Cities Homeless Coalition (5CHC) to prevent homelessness among Grover Beach residents. In the past year, the City has also received over \$450,000 in additional CDBG funding from the federal CARES Act to support the South County winter warming center, provide assistance to homeless individuals including mental health services, and expand child care opportunities which supports employment. The City also declared a homeless shelter crisis in October 2018 along with other jurisdictions in San Luis Obispo County given the increased number of unsheltered individuals in our communities. In addition to these City actions, the 5CHC has run a winter warming center for homeless individuals on a temporary basis in various locations in Grover Beach and Arroyo Grande over the past five years.

Given the increased challenges of homelessness in our communities and in recognition of the related Major City Goal, staff wished to update the Council on current and pending actions the City is taking to address this significant community issue. These actions are not taken in isolation but are being carried out in coordination with the County, 5CHC, and other cities given the extent and impact of homelessness throughout our communities. The City's overarching goals with

addressing homelessness are to demonstrate compassion with enabling unhoused individuals to obtain needed services and housing while ensuring order with maintenance and cleanliness of public spaces. Access to housing is particularly critical yet incredibly difficult given low housing supply in the region especially with rental housing. As an example, as reported by 5CHC the Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo County (HASLO) recently received more than 500 applications countywide in two months for securing one of 156 emergency housing vouchers which were fully leased in October. As the Council is aware, the City is working with People's Self-Help Housing (PSHH) and HASLO on a 53-unit affordable housing project on the Cleaver property on South 13th Street which will come to the Council for final approval in December.

The City's goals are complicated by the legal ramifications of the *Martin vs. Boise* case law which prohibits enforcement of camping prohibitions in public spaces if there is no designated shelter space or public space for unhoused individuals to go. This case law from the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals governs communities throughout the western United States and has a profound impact on the ability of local government to address homelessness particularly in areas like South County that do not currently have shelter space. Lastly, staff would convey that the Council has allocated up to \$800,000 in the City's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) \$1.6 million allocation towards homeless services and facilities to put additional City funding towards this issue.

Temporary Emergency Shelter at County Property in Grover Beach

One approach to the challenge of the lack of shelter space is creating a temporary emergency shelter. On March 16, 2021, the Board of Supervisors approved \$1.2 million in CARES Act funds to 5CHC for development of a temporary emergency shelter in South County which does not have shelter space as indicated above. 5CHC has proposed to install and operate a temporary shelter on County property at 286 16th Street in Grover Beach and co-located with other public facilities including the County Public Health Clinic and Alcohol and Drug Services along with a Superior Court courthouse. The shelter concept would use 100-square-foot "pallet homes" (also called cabins) that would be connected with 24/7 case management and support to clients. Attachment 1 provides images showing these pallet homes and Attachment 2 shows the location in relation to other public facilities along with the proposed site plan.

These pallet homes have been installed in numerous communities in California in recent years including Sonoma, Redondo Beach, Los Angeles, Riverside, and Isla Vista as emergency housing though have not yet been used in San Luis Obispo County. 5CHC is planning to install 20 of these pallet homes on this County property which would house 1-2 individuals in each unit (two individuals would be in a unit if they were a couple). 5CHC would also install bathing and bathroom facilities, administrative offices, communal spaces, shaded eating and resting area, and a storage area as shown on the site plan in Attachment 2. The facility would be managed and monitored 24/7 with 5CHC staff with security cameras and privacy fencing installed. The Grover Beach Police Department would be lead agency in responding to safety issues as needed. The facility would house individuals on a reservation rather than drop-in basis and designed to provide temporary transitional housing for up to 90 days along with wraparound services. Homeless individuals from throughout South County are eligible to stay at the shelter though there would be specific outreach within Grover Beach including at Ramona Park.

5CHC is the lead agency for this temporary emergency shelter in partnership with the County and City. On September 28, 2021, the Board of Supervisors adopted an ordinance establishing local standards and procedures for the design, site development, and operation of emergency homeless shelters at public facilities which authorizes this shelter location. The City Manager spoke on behalf of the City in support of this ordinance and shelter concept. 5CHC is now working with the County on the development review process to prepare the site for installation and

operation of the units in early 2022. Information about the shelter is available on the 5CHC website at <https://5chc.org/temporaryshelter/> with additional public communication to be shared as the facility is under construction at the end of 2021 and early 2022. The shelter will be operational through December 2022 unless the Board extends the enabling ordinance to allow this temporary shelter to continue depending on the success and impacts of this facility.

Additional Opportunities for Shelter Spaces

In addition to this temporary emergency shelter, the City is working with other cities and 5CHC on potential sites in the South County area for shelter spaces both temporary and permanent. 5CHC has looked at potential sites for shelter space over the past 10 years throughout the South County area but has not been able to secure suitable and available property. A potential site for transitional housing, a winter warming center, and case management services and administrative offices was identified by 5CHC and People's Self-Help Housing (PSHH) in 2019 at the former Hillside Church in Grover Beach using approximately \$2 million in Homeless Emergency Aid Program grant funding from the State. This site did not move forward given a property ownership dispute and the funds were reallocated to support development of transitional housing for PSHH in Pismo Beach and case management and administrative offices for 5CHC in Grover Beach. However, the winter warming center facility was not addressed and remains an outstanding need.

5CHC is continuing its work to locate suitable and available property for sheltering spaces in coordination with local agencies. Such spaces could include a permanent winter warming center, youth and family shelter, day use shelter, and/or safe houses that are more residential in nature. Specific property locations have not been secured at this time though 5CHC is assessing options and funding availability to purchase such property. As stated earlier in the report, the Council has given direction to staff to use up to \$800,000 in ARPA funds this year to support homeless services and facilities in a flexible manner based on the needs. Since these funds are already appropriated in the City's budget, staff is working with 5CHC to commit some or all of these funds to purchase property for a shelter space in the area with final approval of the funding transaction by the Council. The City of Arroyo Grande has recently committed \$300,000 in ARPA funds towards purchase of property and/or development of homeless shelter space and the City of Pismo Beach is also open to considering a funding allocation towards this purpose as well.

Encampment Cleaning

In addition to the City's work to help homeless individuals access services and housing and create temporary and permanent shelter space, the City is also taking action on cleaning and trash removal at homeless encampments on public spaces to improve the appearance and safety of these areas. Such action was last done in 2015 and 2016 when the City cleaned and removed trash from homeless encampments near the train station along Highway 1 and the wooded area near North 4th Street and El Camino Real on the Grover Beach/Pismo Beach border. Since then, the *Boise* case law has placed additional limitations on actions that cities can take with regards to homeless areas on public property. Specifically, while a city can clean and remove trash from areas in public spaces where homeless individuals are located, a city cannot enforce camping prohibitions if there is no shelter or designated public space nearby for homeless individuals.

Being mindful of these limitations as well as the City's responsibility to maintain public areas, the City has recently initiated action once again to clean and remove trash from homeless encampment areas in the wooded area near North 4th Street and El Camino Real on the Grover Beach/Pismo Beach border. This area has had approximately 30-40 homeless individuals in recent years in densely wooded open space which is primarily City open space with some property in Pismo Beach and State Parks jurisdiction. The City moved forward with this work given the

Council's Major City Goal and an increase in resident complaints and service calls about public safety issues from this area including fire safety concerns given several small fires reported in this camping area. Several residents spoke about this issue at the August 23rd Council meeting and the Council subsequently asked staff to place an update on homelessness on a future agenda.

The Public Works Department has secured a contractor who began removal of vegetation to allow access for removal of trash in the main encampment areas on October 25 and will carry out trash removal and cleaning of active encampment areas beginning on November 8. All legal requirements regarding noticing of this upcoming work and disposition and storage of personal property are being followed with Public Works, Police, and Community Development department staff assisting in this effort. The City has worked with 5CHC on outreach in the encampment area to notify individuals of this work and connect them where possible to services and housing. Additional cleaning and removal of trash near encampments is being done by the private property owner at 950 El Camino Real which is the site of a future hotel project currently in development. Staff is also in contact with the City of Pismo Beach and State Parks about cleaning and trash removal work on their respective properties and will seek funding participation as warranted.

The estimated cost of this cleaning and trash removal work on the City's public property along El Camino Real is approximately \$75,000 which will likely be funded through ARPA funds, General Fund reserves, or the City's operating budget. Staff intends to bring an appropriation request to the Council as part of the mid-year budget review in February to cover the cost of this and additional cleaning work planned this fiscal year which includes Ramona Park. The work at Ramona Park is anticipated to occur in early 2022 to coincide with the timing of opening the temporary emergency shelter at the nearby County property on South 16th Street. These cleaning actions are important in helping better maintain the City's public spaces at the same time that the City is working diligently with partner agencies on viable shelter opportunities that will help homeless individuals in our community secure needed services and housing.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact from this item as a future agenda item would include an appropriation of funds for homeless encampment cleaning for this fiscal year.

ALTERNATIVES

The Council has the following alternatives to consider:

1. Receive an update on the City's response to homelessness in Grover Beach and actions the City is taking to address this issue and provide input and direction to staff; or
2. Provide alternative direction to staff.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

The agenda was posted in accordance with the Brown Act and a copy was provided to the 5Cities Homeless Coalition.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Examples of Pallet Homes
2. Temporary Emergency Shelter Location and Site Plan

Examples of Pallet Homes



Temporary Emergency Shelter Location



DRAFT SITE PLAN (V.5)

SITE NAME: PHASE ONE GROVER BEACH, CA

ADDRESS: REDACTED

POTENTIAL UNIT COUNT WITH 6FT SPACING:

TOTAL: 22 @ 100SF , 3 @ 100SF BATHROOM UNITS, 1 @ 400SF

