



**CITY OF**

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# **NEWPORT BEACH**

## **City Council Staff Report**

January 14, 2020  
Agenda Item No. 16

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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**TITLE:** Update on Addressing Homelessness

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**ABSTRACT:**

Since March of 2019, the City has been working on developing a number of plans and strategies to work with our homeless population. This report is an update of recent activity.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- a) Determine this action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because this action will not result in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly; and
- b) Receive and file.

**FUNDING REQUIREMENTS:**

There is no fiscal impact related to this update. However, the City continues to dedicate resources responding to homeless issues and exploring longer term solutions. As staff further develops and implements strategies, it is anticipated additional resources will be proposed in the next budget cycle for both immediate and long-term needs.

**DISCUSSION:**

In March of 2019, the City created a Homeless Task Force (HTF) to focus its efforts in addressing homelessness in the community. The HTF worked with Council and staff to develop strategies and assisted with defining the challenges and developing a multi-faceted approach to this complex issue. In September 2019, the HTF was reconstituted into an Ad Hoc Committee of the City Council including Mayor Will O'Neill and Council Members Brad Avery and Joy Brenner. The community members of the HTF, with significant expertise and experience in homeless issues and working with homeless individuals, continue to provide guidance and input to the Ad Hoc Committee.

The City has dedicated one full-time police officer as a Homeless Liaison Officer, re-allocated from existing resources in January 2017, and contracts with City Net for homeless outreach services. Additionally, in September 2019, a manager was re-assigned from the Library Department to be the City's Homeless Coordinator and oversee the City Net contract, focus the multi-departmental responses to homeless individuals and coordinate efforts with the County, neighboring cities and nonprofit organizations to implement solutions.

Through our focused efforts over the last several months and guidance and input from City Council and the HTF, we have a better understanding of homelessness in our City and an appreciation for the complexity in addressing the issues that are both unique within each city and also regional and statewide in nature. We currently estimate approximately 60 homeless individuals in Newport Beach, the majority of whom are chronically homeless, which is defined by the federal Housing and Urban Development Department as without shelter for over one year. The challenges of addressing the needs of the chronically homeless, each with a specific set of circumstances, means we need a variety of short- and long-term strategies that will involve both city and regional resources and partnerships. Below is an update of the strategies we are developing and implementing:

#### Temporary Shelter

The City Council continues to work on three pathways to providing temporary shelter with access to services for the homeless. The City is working with our neighboring cities to develop a regional approach to providing temporary shelter beds. This approach is supported at the state and county level, with state and federal funding available to assist with the costs of operating a regional shelter. The City also continues to consider the Corporation Yard at 592 Superior Avenue and 4200 Campus Drive as possible sites for a temporary shelter within the City's boundaries.

#### Permanent Supportive Housing

The Ad Hoc Committee is reviewing opportunities that may exist within the community to provide for Permanent Supportive Housing. This type of housing provides individuals who were previously homeless rental units with services on site to assist them with rental assistance, health care, treatment and employment skills. Permanent Supportive Housing is considered the long-term solution for the chronically homeless and efforts are underway across the county to develop these projects. Newport Beach has one such project for veterans, which opened in March 2018. The Cove houses twelve people and provides on-site veteran services and counseling. Other service models may include senior services and care, mental health treatment, or housing for transitional-age youth coming out of foster care. Different models and public-private partnerships are being explored.

#### Education

There are many root causes of homelessness and understanding the many different aspects of this complex issue is important for the community as well as for staff. The Ad Hoc Committee is working to educate the public in a variety of ways, so that understanding, and solutions can be developed. To that end, the Committee has provided the following to the community:

The City hosted the United Way in presenting Homelessness 101. This presentation provided information on the issue, how and why people become homeless and strategies for solving the issue for good.

The City has created “Say No to Panhandling Signs, Say Yes to Good Giving” signage. These signs will be placed in strategic locations in the City to encourage individuals to give to charitable organizations or the City to assist with providing assistance to homeless individuals.

On Wednesday January 29, 2020 the City will be hosting a Mental Health Forum to discuss how mental health issues relate to homeless issues. The meeting is free and will be held in the Civic Center Community Room at 6:30 p.m.

The Committee will be working on additional educational forums on a monthly basis and encourages the public to attend.

#### Police Enforcement

The Police Department continues to enforce the law; any illegal activity can lead to an arrest. The Police patrol places in the City in which there are on-going issues to deter illegal activity. The community has often voiced concerns with the activity at the Orange County Transportation Authority Bus Center and the police continues to enforce the closure of the center from 11:00pm – 5:00am daily and are patrolling or responding to calls on average three times a day.

#### Rapid Response Team

The City has created a Rapid Response Team lead by the City’s Homeless Coordinator and Assistant City Manager. This interdepartmental team provides a focused response to the City’s most vulnerable individuals. By understanding the interactions with all departments and the issues individuals are experiencing, staff can tailor a response to best serve the needs of the homeless individual.

#### Success Stories

Staff is committed to working with our homeless population and connecting them with the services they need to end their homelessness.

The City’s Homeless Coordinator and Rapid Response Team works closely with our outreach social services provider, City Net, to move individuals into housing. In the months of September, October and November, City Net engaged with 277 individuals (many of these are the duplicates as many homeless individuals require multiple contacts prior to agreeing to services), and five individuals were housed.

A 30-year homeless man at Central Library is now in an Anaheim apartment, a mother who is 97 and her 67 year old daughter are now in a Tustin apartment, a domestic violence survivor by the 73 Freeway is now housed in Riverside, and an evicted Newport Beach woman has been placed in a psychiatric treatment house in Costa Mesa with a housing plan in place.

Since March of 2018, City Net has had 37 individuals exit the street.

We will continue to work individually with our homeless population, through our Rapid Response Team, City Net and a myriad of resources including the county and non profit organizations, while also developing regional resources such as shelter bed space and Permanent Supportive Housing, to achieve short- and long-term solutions.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

Staff recommends the City Council find this action is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

**NOTICING:**

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the City Council considers the item).