

Agenda Report

January 11, 2021

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Department of Housing

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION TO ALLOCATE ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR WEATHER-ACTIVATED MOTEL VOUCHERS TO SERVE PEOPLE EXPERIENCING UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

- 1) Find that the recommended action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3), the "General Rule" that CEQA only applies to projects that may have an effect on the environment; and
- 2) Authorize an additional transfer of \$66,500 in Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) funding from the Department of Housing's Fiscal Year 2021 operating budget to the Public Health Department's Fiscal Year 2021 operating budget to provide weather-activated motel vouchers to people experiencing homelessness; and
- 3) Authorize the amendment to Contract #31552 with Union Station Homeless Services to increase the not-to-exceed amount by \$56,503 to provide weather-activated motel vouchers to existing clients who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness for a total not-to-exceed amount of \$285,648; and

BACKGROUND:

On December 14, 2020, the Department of Housing ("Department") brought forward an information item that provided an update on the status of the Bad Weather Shelter (BWS) and alternative shelter and cold weather services that would be provided to people experiencing homelessness this winter season. In light of the suspension of the Bad Weather Shelter due to COVID-19 safety-related reasons, the Department has been working diligently to mitigate foreseen emergency shelter challenges as safely and

strategically as possible with the City's collaborative partners in order to meet the cold weather needs of our unsheltered neighbors in alternative ways this winter.

Last season the Bad Weather Shelter served 55 people on its busiest night, a number that has been decreasing over the past several years due to an increase in emergency shelter resources outside of Pasadena. This winter Friends In Deed, the operator of the Bad Weather Shelter for over thirty years, along with Union Station Homeless Services (in collaboration with the HOPE Team) and the Pasadena Public Health Department (in collaboration with the PORT Team) will continue to provide cold weather relief and emergency shelter resources, albeit in different ways, which have been determined to be safer than site-based congregate shelter during the pandemic. Weather-activated motel vouchers will be provided through street outreach teams currently operated by each of these three agencies throughout Pasadena which are familiar and regularly engaging with the vast majority of people who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the City.

The Department is utilizing a multi-pronged approach to ensure a robust cold weather response as discussed in further detail in the balance of this report.

1. Increasing Access to Nearby County Weather-Activated Shelter

The Department will assist with actively publicizing information about the County of Los Angeles' winter shelter that is operating out of Loma Alta Park in Altadena so more people are aware of this available resource. Street outreach teams will proactively provide information about the County winter shelters to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and, if needed, they will assist with connecting people to transportation via ride share companies (e.g., Uber and Lyft) and Dial-A-Ride. The shelter will operate on a weather-activated basis. When open, clients are allowed to remain on site 24 hours a day. It is advised that anyone looking for updated information about the Loma Alta Winter Shelter, including whether or not it will be open on a given night, should call 211. Further, 211 also has updated information on all County-operated winter shelters throughout the region outside of Pasadena. The Loma Alta Park shelter has 47 available beds for single adults that are filled on a first-come-first-serve basis.

2. Friends In Deed Bad Weather Supplies

On December 14, 2020 City Council approved a \$25,000 allocation of Emergency Solutions Grant funds authorized by the CARES Act (ESG-CV) for Friends In Deed to purchase supplies and staffing to distribute cold weather supplies, such as ponchos/jackets, blankets, tarps and umbrellas, to address the urgent physical needs of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness during the winter season. This will include the distribution of warm clothing and cold weather supplies through street outreach teams and at regularly scheduled community meal programs. Friends In Deed outreach workers will distribute cold weather supplies at Pasadena Presbyterian Church's existing, twice weekly meal distribution program that is well

attended by people experiencing homelessness every Thursday and Sunday evening from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. On nights when the Bad Weather Shelter would have been activated (when the overnight lows drop below 40 degrees or there is a greater than 40% chance of rain), Friends In Deed outreach workers will also deploy a mobile outreach unit from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. to distribute cold weather supplies directly to people who are unsheltered. Outreach workers will also distribute cold weather supplies during their regular daytime schedule. This program is scheduled to begin the week of January 4, 2021. People can also call the Bad Weather Hotline for a recorded message at (888) 915-8111 with additional information.

3. Friends In Deed Weather-Activated Motel Vouchers

The previously executed Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and Measure H contracts between the City and Friends In Deed to administer the Bad Weather Shelter program will be amended to revise the scopes and modify the budgets for the provision of non-congregate shelter using motel vouchers. This funding will be utilized to serve a limited number of households experiencing homelessness in Pasadena during this winter season. Motel vouchers will be provided to individuals engaged by their street outreach team and prioritized based on factors which place individuals at higher risk for hypothermia as well as serious illness or death from COVID-19. These motel vouchers will include transportation, if needed, and will be provided when the overnight temperature is projected to drop below 40 degrees or there is greater than 40% chance of rain. Regrettably, this program was not operational during the first storm of the season, but has become operational as of January 4, 2021.

4. Union Station Homeless Services Weather-Activated Motel Vouchers

The City previously entered into a Contract #31552 with Union Station Homeless Services for the provision of motel vouchers with one-time HEAP grant funding in July 2019. In order to expand the total number of weather-activated motel voucher resources available to people who are unsheltered, staff is recommending Council authorize an amendment to the existing contract in the amount of \$56,503 to provide a limited number of motel vouchers to people experiencing homelessness who are currently engaged in services provided by Union Station on nights when inclement weather is projected. High priority individuals engaged by the HOPE Team, such as people who have higher risk factors for hypothermia as well as serious illness or death if they were to contract COVID-19, will be able to access the vouchers administered by Union Station through their outreach liaison. Motel vouchers including transportation, if needed, will be provided when the overnight lows drop below 40 degrees or there is a greater than 40% chance of rain. This program is scheduled to begin the week of January 11, 2021 at the latest.

5. Pasadena Public Health Weather-Activated Motel Vouchers

The Council previously approved the transfer of \$75,000 from the Housing Department's Operating Budget to the Public Health Department's Operating Budget to administer motel vouchers to people who are receiving services through the PORT Team or the Department's Transitional Age Youth (TAY) and Geriatric Empowerment Model (GEM) Link programs which serve people experiencing homelessness. Over the past year, the availability of these funds has proved highly successful in breaking down previously siloed operations and has brought the departments closer collaboratively. In order to further expand the total number of weather-activated motel voucher resources available to people who are unsheltered, staff is recommending an additional transfer of \$66,500, from the Housing Department's Operating Budget to that of the Health Department, to provide temporary weather-activated shelter stays at local motels for existing clients and a limited number of outside clients to be referred by partner agencies. This transfer will increase the City's capacity to ensure timely access to available resources to a larger subset of clients. Motel vouchers including transportation, if needed, will be provided when the overnight lows drop below 40 degrees or there is a greater than 40% chance of rain. This program is scheduled to begin the week of January 11, 2021 at the latest.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

Approval of the recommended actions will provide weather-activated, protective non-congregate shelter at motels for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Pasadena during the 2020-2021 winter season. Approval of the recommended action is in accordance with the Pasadena Continuum of Care system, General Plan Housing Element, Five-Year Consolidated Plan, and Five-Year Public Housing Authority Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

The action proposed herein is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3), the "General Rule" provision of CEQA which applies to projects which may have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. Allocating additional funding to provide emergency shelter with weather-activated motel vouchers will not have a significant effect on the environment and, hence, is not subject to CEQA.

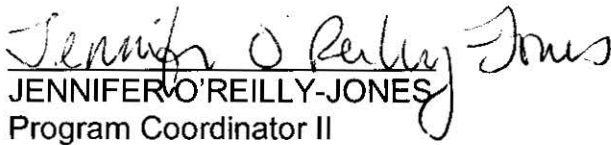
FISCAL IMPACT:

Approval of the recommended action will transfer additional HEAP grant funds in the amount of \$66,500 from the Department of Housing's FY2021 budget to the Public Health Department's FY2021 budget to provide weather-activated motel vouchers for people experiencing homelessness. The HEAP funds that are recommended to be used to increase the subject contract amount are included in the Department's Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget and are available for immediate use.

Respectfully submitted,


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