

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL **DATE:** September 17, 2001
FROM: CYNTHIA J. KURTZ, CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: APPROVE A RESOLUTION ADOPTING A FEE-FOR-SERVICE
EXPANDED MASH PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council approve a resolution authorizing a Fee-For-Service expanded Maintenance Assistance and Services to Homeowners (MASH) Program. This action would allow MASH to provide services to limited income senior citizens, as well as persons with disabilities, who may be in need of the service to maintain an independent living arrangement.

BACKGROUND

MASH continues to be very effective in achieving it's primary purpose: maintaining and improving the City's affordable housing stock; providing minor home repair; adding handicap access ramps; and, doing yard cleanup services for limited-income homeowners. The program has consistently met annual goals.

The secondary purpose of the MASH program is to provide economic opportunities for low-income residents by providing on-the-job work experience, job training and placement services that lead to a living wage and positive career path. To enhance this component of the program, MASH partnered with the National League of Cities (NLC) Workforce Development for Poverty Reduction Team (herein referred to as NLC Team). The NLC Team meetings identified several program modifications to enhance the job experience for the participants. The City Council, in its November 13, 2000 action approved those program enhancements. The enhancements were: 1) an additional 10 FTEs for the program, 2) expanding the wage rate to \$7.50 per hour for qualified trainees who meet specific requirements, and 3) development of an expanded MASH program that would offer services to low and moderate-income seniors who need assistance to maintain independent living, but who do not qualify for MASH services under the federal income guidelines.

This report and Council's approval of the attached fee schedule represents the final piece of the last action item recommended by the NLC Team. That action item as stated by the NLC Team is:

“...A cost-based fee-for-services MASH program (minor home repair, yard clean-up, addition of handicap ramps, etc.) *beyond* the funding and design limitations of the current program, to local residents in need of the service, with a particular focus on low- and moderate-income seniors and persons with disabilities who need the assistance to maintain independent living.”

Rationale: Based on the NLC Team's findings, the waiting list for MASH services is extensive, with demand well exceeding the present level of funding. A local review of the availability of similar services on a cost basis reveals a significant unmet need. Interviews with potential users of such a service reveal a general reluctance to hire independent “handypersons” to come into their homes to do minor home repairs, due to the fear of inviting an “unknown” person without an affiliation or sponsorship into their residences. This concern was particularly acute for frail elderly and handicapped persons. To potentially address this issue, a public fee-for-service MASH service could be made available, particularly utilizing experienced MASH trainees and graduates.

Program Logistics

MASH will work with the Pasadena Senior Center and code enforcement unit to provide minor home modifications designed to help the senior citizen and disabled residents remain in an independent living setting. The MASH services will include, but are not limited to, installation of grab bars, ergonomic door handles, wheelchair ramps, lowering of counter tops, etc. MASH will also be available to assist with assembling of items that seniors and disabled residents may have purchased from retail establishments, such as furniture, appliances, exercise equipment, etc.

If council approves this fee for service program, staff will meet with the senior center to finalize logistics of the program. The MASH services will be available through: 1) a referral by the senior center, 2) a direct call from the senior or disabled resident to the MASH office, or 3) through a referral by the code enforcement staff.

MASH supervisory staff will meet with homeowners who request services and provide the homeowners with a written estimate/bid for work to be performed. The homeowner may choose to use MASH to perform the work.

The program will be publicized through such media as advertising at the senior center, sending advertisement mailers to all senior center members, articles in the senior center brochure, In-Focus articles, presentation to the Senior Commission, Star News articles, etc.

Staff expects to finalize the logistics of the program before December 2001 and provide actual services by January 2002. Staff will perform a one-year evaluation and present those findings to Council.

Fees will reflect actual cost for staff time. Because of potential liability issues, the program will always utilize a minimum of two crewmembers when they are dispatched to perform work. Given the need to use two staff people (one supervisor and one trainee) staff anticipates the rate to be \$28.88 per hour. The fee will increase another \$6.77 for each additional trainee assigned to a job. That is, if the job requires 3 people (one supervisor and 2 trainees, it will cost \$35.65 per hour. Additionally, staff believes the service fee should not exceed the original estimate for the work. Therefore, the MASH staff will hold the cost of the repairs to the given quote on the estimate sheet.

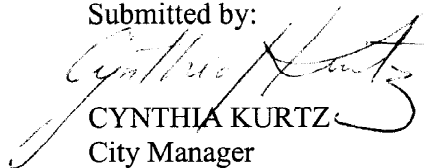
Although the hourly rate may be slightly higher than market rate for small projects, it is anticipated that MASH crews will be less expensive for several reasons. First, the MASH program will send two workers to every job, thus completing the work in a more timely manner than a single handyman. Secondly, MASH will not require a minimum cost or minimum number of hours. Contractors frequently require a minimum of 1 or 2 hours work or a minimum fee of \$50 regardless of the length of time needed. MASH crews will charge in increments of ½ hr with no minimum. Thirdly, MASH crews will not charge travel time.

In addition, the fact that MASH crews are city employees provides an additional level of safety and security to members of the community who may be fearful of allowing strangers into their homes.

FISCAL IMPACT

The approval of this recommendation will not impact city funds. This program will be strictly a cost based fee-for-services program for the public. The attached resolution allows the Finance Director to set fees for work performed outside of the city structure.

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