



Agenda Report

City Council

Date: July 20, 2020
To: Brian Saeki, City Manager
From: Shannon DeLong, Assistant City Manager
Subject: Agreement for Emergency Shelter Services

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council:

- 1) Adopt Resolution No. 2020-46 allocating funding for an emergency shelter at the Whittier Uptown Senior Center and finding that the establishment of an emergency shelter at the Whittier Uptown Senior Center and finding that the project is categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15269(c) (Emergency Projects) of California Environmental Quality Act guidelines;
- 2) Authorize the City Manager to execute necessary agreements in substantial conformance to the attached, with The Salvation Army for operation of a temporary emergency shelter at the City's Uptown Senior Center for a cost not to exceed \$1,251,000 with supplemental terms for an increase if additional beds are necessary; and
- 3) Authorize the City Manager to expend up to \$250,000 for services, materials and purchases necessary to support the operation.

BACKGROUND

In July 2018, the Whittier City Council adopted a homeless action plan that included four goals:

Goal 1: Support local and regional coordination among the City, service providers and key stakeholders around housing and supportive services

Goal 2: Assist in increasing public awareness of the issues of homelessness

Goal 3: Ensure City policies support appropriate shelter capacity and affordable housing stock

Goal 4: Ensure the efficient use of existing homeless prevention resources and explore ways to enhance the coordination, utilization and efficacy of prevention resources

Goal 3 included three milestones pertaining to an emergency shelter:

3a.: Identify resources to increase shelter beds and increase the City's affordable housing stock

3e.: Identify underutilized City, County and State owned property that may be used for the development of affordable housing and enhancement of existing crisis and bridge housing programs

3g.: Facilitate, with nonprofit partners, the development of 100 Very Low Income homeless housing beds on one site or multiple sites across the City (for emergency shelter, bridge housing and permanent supportive housing).

In September 2018, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled, in *Martin vs Boise*, that it was a violation of an individual's civil rights (specifically, the freedom from cruel and unusual punishment) to enforce anti-camping ordinances in public spaces if a jurisdiction had insufficient shelter capacity.

In January 2019, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) oversaw the annual point-in-time (PIT) count for its service area, which includes the City of Whittier. LAHSA reported 232 persons experiencing homelessness in Whittier and not residing in shelters. In November 2019, City Net performed a census specifically of homeless individuals in the City of Whittier. It found 231 individuals who were experiencing homelessness and not in transitional or cold weather shelters.

On January 28, 2020, the Whittier City Council directed staff to release a request for qualifications (RFQ) to identify a service provider capable of operating a navigation center which would provide wraparound services to Whittier individuals seeking emergency (crisis) shelter.

On February 27, 2020, the final draft of the RFQ was posted on the City website and emailed to 17 service providers in the Southern California region. The RFQ was also sent to the Los Angeles County CEO's Office points of contact for the County Homeless Initiative, the Gateway Cities Council of Governments Homeless Coordinator, and to LAHSA, with a request for distribution to partners and potentially interested parties.

On March 17, 2020, the City declared a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, activated the City's Emergency Operations Center, and instituted operational, procedural and personnel changes, including changes to method and type of services provided to the public, in order to preserve public health and safety in compliance with the orders of the Federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Health Officer of the State of California, and the Health Officer of the County of Los Angeles. As a result of the Health Officer Orders and declarations of emergency, both branches of the Whittier Public Library, the Community Center, the Uptown Senior Center, the Transit Depot, the Palm Park Aquatics Center, and the Parnell Park Community and Senior Center have been closed to the public. The Police Department lobby and City Hall have been restricted to individuals with immediate City business only.

On March 24, 2020, the City Council directed staff to identify resources to protect the health and safety of Whittier residents experiencing homelessness, including identifying the locations and methods for opening up restroom and handwashing facilities and identifying potential City facilities that could be temporarily repurposed for use as an emergency shelter.

On April 22, 2020, the City Council intervened in a federal lawsuit involving the Orange County Catholic Workers and agreed to construct a navigation center to serve up to 60% of the number of persons experiencing homelessness in Whittier as identified in the 2019 point-in-time count. Under the terms of the settlement, once a shelter is operational, the City will resume enforcement of park curfew, anti-camping and other quality of life ordinances.

On May 12, 2020, the City Council reviewed proposals from potential Navigation Center operators and identified The Salvation Army as the preferred service provider. Council directed staff to negotiate a service provider agreement and initiate necessary environmental and planning processes to facilitate the establishment of the navigation center.

On June 14, 2020, the Planning Commission held a public hearing and approved Conditional Use Permit No. CUP20-0002 to increase the total number of beds from 37 to 187, within the existing hospitality house and existing Salvation Army Corps building, operated and owned by the Salvation Army at 7926 Pickering Avenue.

DISCUSSION

Following the previous direction of the City Council representatives from The Salvation Army and City staff have worked diligently to undertake the environmental and planning processes necessary to facilitate the establishment of the Navigation Center at The Salvation Army's property located on Pickering Ave.

In addition, The Salvation Army staff and the City have discussed The Salvation Army's extensive experience operating pop-up, emergency, and Project Roomkey shelters both prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the City's designated services provider for the provision of shelter under the terms of the settlement agreement with OC Catholic Workers, staff and The Salvation Army have reached an agreement to provide emergency shelter services at a City facility until the necessary tenant improvements can be finalized at the Pickering facility.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most recreational, educational and community facilities have been closed because of Health Officer orders. Because of the special health vulnerabilities of seniors, the Health Officer Orders strongly recommend that this high risk group continue to stay "Safer at Home." The City's services for seniors have shifted to phone calls, meal services and online resources in lieu of in-person recreational opportunities at the City's two senior centers. Therefore, the Uptown Senior Center, with its proximity to the Salvation Army's existing operations and to the Whittier Police

Station, has been identified as a strong candidate for temporary reuse as an emergency shelter. The facility is up to date with the necessary restroom and HVAC improvements and meets accessibility requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The parking lot and outdoor areas are situated appropriately to support any supplemental amenities necessary for temporary emergency housing on site, including a screened-off temporary shower trailer.

The Salvation Army proposes program case managers, housing navigators, 24-hour a day monitoring with both security guards and facility monitors, shower attendants and janitorial and cleaning services to meet the sanitation requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic. The City will arrange for security cameras, internet access, trash, utility, and food services to support the operation. The proposed term of the agreement to operate an emergency temporary shelter at the Uptown Senior Center is July 21, 2020 through January 31, 2021, at which point the City and The Salvation Army aim to have the Navigation Center operation. Individuals who have not transitioned to housing will be transitioned to the Navigation Center for continued case management.

The budget for the proposed emergency shelter is based upon a cost of \$50 per client per night. The attached agreement provides an immediate set-up for 100 clients, at a cost of \$900,000 for six months. The Salvation Army has staff capacity and the Uptown Senior Center has the physical space to house up to 139 individuals and/or adult couples. The initial operation is scaled for 100 individuals with the capacity to immediately expand in order to avoid a converse situation in which staff would need to be let go in the event that the facility is not filled to capacity. The City's costs to provide security cameras, internet services, trash, water, electricity, gas and meals are estimated at approximately \$200,000, with a contingency of up to \$250,000 depending upon the final number of clients housed at the shelter.

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost of the agreement is not to exceed \$50 per client per night, not to exceed \$900,000 for 100 people and not to exceed \$1,251,000 for 139 people. The City's costs are estimated at \$250,000. With the adoption of the attached resolution, total amount of \$1,501,000 is available for spending in General Fund's account (100-12-999-201 749062) for the Emergency Shelter.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Agreement with The Salvation Army
- B. Resolution No. 2020-46