

Date July 7, 2020

NB-24

To: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

From: Councilwoman Mary Zendejas, First District
Councilmember Stacy Mungo, Fifth District
Vice Mayor Dee Andrews, Sixth District
Councilmember Jeannine Pearce, Second District

Subject: Emergency Housing Incentive Program

RECOMMENDATION:

Request the City Manager to work with relevant departments to take advantage of upcoming, available external funding with the goal of creating permanent, non-congregate bridge housing for people experiencing homelessness and report back within 30 days on how the City can leverage external funding opportunities to support permanent non-congregant housing options in Long Beach.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the 2020 Point-in-Time Homeless Count reveal that Long Beach identified 2,034 people experiencing homelessness in January 2020, compared with 1,894 people in 2019. Our homeless population is growing and many are finding themselves without housing for the first time. Of the 2,034 people counted, only 452 are considered sheltered in emergency or temporary transitional housing. That number is not due to the lack of more beds being available. According to the most recent counts, Orange Ave. Winter Shelter (80 bed capacity) is 71 percent occupied, the temporary shelter at Silverado Park (70 bed capacity) is 57 percent full, and the Martin Luther King Jr. Park shelter was closed due to its low occupancy (average occupancy rate of 30 percent).

The City of Long Beach has been looking for ways to get non-congregate shelters on the ground for our unsheltered population and for those who have been infected with the COVID-19 virus. 133 units are online as part of the State/Federal funded Project Room Key (PRK). These rooms are for people who are over the age of 65, and/or have a chronic health condition. Currently, PRK has a 97 percent occupancy. The operation agreement is set to expire by July 31st, leaving limited to no options for those who have been brought into shelter, many for the first time in years.

Although PRK was begun under a need to house the most vulnerable during COVID-19 the program has merit for other reasons as well. There is fear amongst our unhoused that congregate housing will lead to COVID-19 infection, but that is not the only reason people refuse to use this type of service. Violence, sexual assault, theft, inability to stay with a partner

or animal companion are all reasons many of our unhoused population prefer to live in their vehicles or on the streets.

Long Beach has roughly 5,000 hotel and motel units, most of which have been left completely vacant as tourism has vanished during this pandemic. Homeless Services has maintained a list of motels that are willing to be converted into bridge, transitional, or supportive housing. The properties on that list that are currently vacant should be shortlisted to operate as non-congregate shelters and set up to be converted into fully functional bridge housing facilities.

This item seeks to create an incentive program for motels willing to open their doors to act as non-congregate shelters during this crisis. In the short term, this will help provide necessary units missing to provide shelter for those experiencing homelessness in Long Beach. This item seeks to be the first step in finding long term solutions for supportive housing. It primes the City of Long Beach to achieve goals set out in the December 2018 Everyone Home Task Force Report by making more cutting edge bridge housing facilities available to help people recover from homelessness for good.

This item was not reviewed by Financial Management due to its urgent nature.

FISCAL IMPACT

No Financial Management review was able to be conducted due to the urgency and time sensitivity of this item. Implementing this recommendation is anticipated to require a moderate level of staff hours beyond normal budgeted scope of duties and is expected to have a moderate impact on existing City Council priorities.

EQUITY LENS

This item will serve to protect and uplift all people experiencing homelessness which includes all gender identities, racial and ethnic groups, and ages. The truth, however, is that homelessness especially affects the Hispanic and Black communities. According to the 2020 Point-in-Time Count, make up 69.9 percent of those experiencing homelessness.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

Councilwoman Mary Zendejas





City of Long Beach Memorandum
Working Together to Serve

REQUEST TO ADD AGENDA ITEM

Date: July 7, 2020

To: Monique De La Garza, City Clerk

From: Mary Zendejas, Councilwoman, First District

Subject: Request to Add Agenda Item to Council Agenda of July 7, 2020

Pursuant to Municipal Code Section 2.03.070 [B], the City Councilmembers signing below request that the attached agenda item (due in the City Clerk Department by Friday, 12:00 Noon) be placed on the City Council agenda via the supplemental agenda.

The agenda title/recommendation for this item reads as follows:

Emergency Housing Incentive Program

Council District	Authorizing Councilmember	Signed by
2	Jeannine Pearce	
5	Stacy Mungo	
6	Dee Andrews	

Attachment: