



TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
DATE: August 22, 2017
ITEM #: 32.
SUBJECT: Homeless Update - Homeless Action Plan

Recommendation for Action:

Staff recommends that the City Council receive a report from staff and the Council's Homeless Subcommittee related to development of a comprehensive Homeless Action Plan, and provide feedback on framework and preliminary recommendations.

Staff Contact:

Paul Navazio, City Manager, (530) 661-5800, paul.navazio@cityofwoodland.org

Fiscal Impact:

The FY2017/18 budget includes an appropriation of \$100,000 in support of the city's initiatives related to homelessness. In addition, last year's budget included \$75,000 to support of the city's Housing First Pilot project, including costs associated with targeted outreach efforts and securing of short-term supported housing. Housing First project funds are also matched by up to \$100,000 in funding provided by Yolo County.

This report includes preliminary recommendations related to both selected grant opportunities that may increase funding available to help address homeless issues as well as a preliminary list of initiatives and activities that will guide priorities for expenditure of available funding.

Background:

Similar to trends experienced throughout the state and region, the City of Woodland continues to experience significant impacts associated with what appears to be a growing homeless population. Last year, the City formally endorsed the "Housing First" model and allocated funding to support a pilot project – in collaboration with Yolo County – that is largely based on the successful Bridge to Housing project from West Sacramento. The goal of the Housing First model, which is also endorsed by U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is to shift focus (and funding) from shelters and field services to permanent supportive housing.

The City of Woodland's Housing First Pilot Project, initiated in April of 2016, includes three components: homeless outreach, identifying temporary transitional housing units, and ultimately permanent supportive housing for the city's chronically homeless population. The pilot project has a goal of placing 8-12 homeless individuals by the end of this year. This report provides an update on potential funding opportunities being pursued in the hopes of securing housing units that have thus far proven to be the greatest challenge in implementing this pilot project.

While city staff, in collaboration with Yolo County's Homeless Coordinator, continue to prioritize implementation of the Housing First pilot program, staff is increasingly concerned with the impacts and issues associated with the growing homeless population. Not only does the city continue to receive referrals and complaints from businesses and residents, but our reactive response to issues associated with homelessness is placing increased burden on staff and resources, often at the expense of resources budgeted for other city programs and activities.

Accordingly, staff across all city departments have been convening meetings to discuss issue and impacts and formulate specific strategies with the goal of better managing the impacts of homeless while we continue to focus on long-term solutions to homelessness. This report presents a framework for development of a comprehensive Homeless Action Plan to more proactively guide how we address issues associated (but not limited to) homelessness. Some of the projects and strategies being recommended are already beginning to be implemented, while other are still being evaluated.

Staff will continue to refine the specific elements of the plan in consultation with the Homeless Sub-committee as well as the larger community of stakeholders.

Included as an element of the draft Homeless Action Plan is the acknowledgement that any successful comprehensive approach requires partnerships - not only between the City, County and service providers – but also with the larger community, to include businesses, residents/neighborhood groups, and – importantly – the homeless community itself.

Discussion:

The following section summarizes the key element of the draft Homeless Action Plan. The Plan is being developed to focus on three broad goal areas:

1. Securing Permanent Supportive Housing
2. Temporary Shelters / Housing – Expand Availability and Capacity
3. Managing Issues Associated with Homelessness

Permanent Supportive Housing

Securing permanent housing with wrap-around services is the focus of the City’s Housing First Model. Elements include coordinated outreach to identify the needs of the chronically homeless population, identifying temporary housing units and skills training as a first step to transitioning from homelessness, and, finally, placement of individuals into permanent supportive housing.

Last year, the City contracted with Fourth and Hope to perform homeless outreach services in support of the Housing First project. Starting this past July, the city no longer contracts directly with Fourth and Hope for as this activity has been largely incorporated into grant-funded outreach services contracted with Fourth and Hope by Yolo County. An estimated 11 outreach staff are being hired and deployed through these various grants.

Grant Opportunity through the Partnership HealthPlan of California’s Innovation Grants on Housing RFP

Partnership HealthPlan (PHC) last month released an RFP to support projects that will expand access to housing for Medi-Cal members enrolled with PHC. PHC has allocated \$25 million for one-time funding opportunities that will support the health and health care needs for its Medi-Cal members in the 14 counties PHC serves. Approximately \$2.3 million is available in Yolo County and the City of Woodland is eligible for \$679,971 in grant funding. Staff has identified to projects that are being included as part of the countywide grant application:

Housing First Pilot Project – The City would purchase one to two residential units to house chronically, unsheltered homeless adults on an interim basis; provide wraparound services in partnership with other partners; and help enable participants to transition to longer term housing arrangements including but not limited to permanent supportive housing.

Housing Facilitation Project – The City will provide pre-development funding to Woodland non-profits: Friends of the Mission (FOM) and Woodland Opportunity Village. FOM will be assessing the viability of a vacant parcel for a future permanent supportive housing development while Woodland Opportunity Village will conduct a site selection analysis to find a location to accommodate development of a “micro housing” units on a one-acre site for chronically homeless individuals and couples.

Temporary Housing / Shelters

A second component of the Homeless Action Plan seeks to expand availability and capacity of shelters to serve Woodland’s Homeless population. This includes maximizing capacity of existing shelters (i.e. Fourth and Hope), evaluating opportunities to establish new shelter(s), continuing to partner with the faith-based community in support of a Winter Shelter, and pursuing establishment of a daytime shelter.

With the recent focus at the federal, state and local level on permanent supportive housing as a means to “solve” the homeless crisis, shelter services have fallen out of favor as funding is being redirected to more permanent housing needs. The relative lack of shelter capacity – both over-night and daytime – is a contributing factor to the increase of homeless individuals living on the streets, city parks and private property. And while not every homeless individual is suited for accommodations provided by shelters, additional resources in this area is likely to reduce the number of individuals with “no place to go”, and would facilitate provision of services and transition to temporary and/or permanent housing.

The Homeless Action Plan contemplates prioritizing recommendations that would lead to expanded shelter services within Woodland.

Managing Impacts Associated with Homelessness

For the last few years, the city has experienced a measurable increase in homelessness. This increase is not only measurable in a visual manner, but also supported by statistics compiled by the police department when responding to calls for service known to be related to homeless suspects.

In 2016 WPD spent a minimum 2754 hours, or 114 continuous days and 18 hours, on transient/homeless related calls. This number is based solely on three specific calls for service types; transient camps, panhandling complaints and general homeless complaints. All of these are citizen initiated and the number does not include the additional time officers may have taken to book property, write reports or collaborate with other agencies to get services for our transients. These numbers also do not include any calls classified by dispatch as any other call type (5150 W&I, public intoxication, urinating/defecating in public etc.) or any officer initiated calls. This also only accounts for one officer, but many of these calls required two or more officers depending on the scope and details of the call.

From January through May of 2017 WPD spent 990 hours, or 42 days and 6 hours, on the same transient related calls. Of the 904 total arrests made by WPD in Jan-May 2017 388, or 30 %, were transient/homeless related.

As noted above, these statistics do not include calls that are related to homeless issues but not correlated to them through CAD or police reports. Additionally, these statistics do not reflect calls for service related to homelessness which other city departments either respond to or work with, including code enforcement, parks and recreation, community development, to name a few.

Whereas speculation can attempt to explain why there has been such an increase in homelessness and homeless related criminal activity, it appears that the fact the city is both the hub for services, and the location of the county's only shelter, are major contributing factors. In order to find ways to mitigate the homelessness issue, the city must find and adopt innovative ways to address the issues while striking an appropriate balance between protecting the constitutional and human rights of the homeless, versus enforcing the law and protecting the well-being and rights of businesses, residents, and visitors.

It should be stressed that homelessness is not a crime and neither the City of Woodland nor the Woodland Police Department are attempting to criminalize homelessness. However, some homeless people, certainly not the majority, do engage in criminal activity and/or in activities that diminish the quality of life and endanger the health and safety of the community's citizens and visitors. This is why it is important that any adopted strategies must be holistic in their approach, stressing counseling, affordable housing, substance dependency counseling, and mental health resource referrals over enforcement.

However, non-compliance with the law and/or allowing criminal activity to take place should not be tolerated either. Finally, it must be noted that no strategy or action plan will completely eliminate the homelessness issue in the city, as this is a national problem that statistically is worse in the State of California.

Homeless Action Plan – Preliminary Recommendations

As presented in the draft Homeless Action Plans, a series of preliminary recommendations are being put forth as a means to better manage the impacts of homelessness in our community. While these recommendations arise from a discussion of specific issues and concerns raised by staff, business and residents, many of the recommendations could prove beneficial across multiple problem areas.

The following highlights some of the key recommendations within this element of the plan:

1. Creating the Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST). / re-deploy Police Officers to patrol downtown, city parks and encampments to deter illegal activity.
2. Consider hiring a full time licensed professional to assist with homeless and at risk youth referrals and counseling.
3. Review our current ordinances/city practices regarding shopping carts, camping, and solicitation (panhandling) to mirror successful ordinances in other cities and communities in the region and the country.
4. Install cameras (POD's) at selected parks and locations around the city.
5. Contract for private security services at library and other city facilities
6. Work with service providers to ensure transients who arrive in Woodland from other communities have a means to return to their communities of origin.
7. Explore innovative programs between the city and the homeless community where there is a collaborative relationships benefitting both, such as: jobs, rewards for community service, etc.

1. Establish Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST)

In order to proactively address the pressing homeless issues, establish an inter-departmental team to coordinate prioritization and response to issues associated with the homeless population. HOST is modeled after similar successful programs that have taken root in other cities in the U.S., including some in California. HOST is a proactive approach to addressing peoples' needs using appropriate resources before they reach a state of crisis, begin to violate laws or ordinances that typically result in admission to an emergency room, emergency psychiatric facility or result in an arrest or citation.

Under the direction of the police department the HOST team will be staffed by two (2) full time WPD officers, and will be supported by additional city staff, including:

- Battalion Chief of Fire Marshal
- Code enforcement officers
- Public Works (Streets and Utilities)
- Parks Maintenance personnel,
- A representative from CalTrans and Union Pacific Railroad (as needed),and
- Licensed counselor/case worker (proposed)

Currently, the majority of calls for service regarding homeless issues handled by city departments are reactive, meaning we are always playing catch up instead of making headway. The proposed HOST team will attempt to change that. The Homeless Outreach Street Team or HOST will operate in the Downtown area as well as locations where homeless encampments are typically located. The team will also coordinate response to homeless issues across the city.

The HOST team will work hand in hand with other city stakeholders to achieve the following goals:

- Fewer arrests and citations
- Reduced jail bookings
- Increased safety in the downtown area and other areas of the city

- Reduced EMS transports and Emergency Room usage
- Reductions of people in crisis
- Increased case managed clients
- Increased enrollments in an Assessment and Homeless Management Information System
- Increased opportunity for permanent housing
- Identification of key services gaps and needs
- Building a case for policy change(s)

Ideally, the Downtown patrol/HOST team will shift from preventive patrols in the downtown core of our city, to homeless outreach as needed through daily contacts. The patrol portion will be accomplished through foot patrol, bike patrol, or vehicle patrol, depending on specific needs. This will not only serve as a visible presence downtown, but it will also greatly enhance relations between business owners, citizens, and the police department. Additionally, the patrol portion will allow officers to come in contact with our homeless population since the majority of it is concentrated in our urban core/downtown.

Enforcement of criminal laws and ordinances will always be an option for the HOST, but only after documentation shows that outreach and voluntary compliance were attempted and not successful. The exception will be circumstances where subjects are actively engaged in violent crimes or any activity that is likely to cause serious injury to others.

It is anticipated that the HOST team members will meet once or twice a month to discuss strategies, share ideas, and plan specific targeted outreach and/or enforcement operations. At least twice a month, if not more, the full HOST team will assemble and do a “boots on the ground” operation. These operations can take place anywhere in the city where a need has been identified and not necessarily downtown. Every month, the HOST team will provide a report to City Staff and Council that will include any initiatives worked on, any outreach and enforcement operations the team participated in, and any recommendations to City Staff for policy and/or ordinance changes. Finally, the HOST team will develop a tracking system that will enable the city to identify and assess individuals based on risk factors in order to provide them with targeted outreach and assistance. The database will also document any and all outreach efforts taken before enforcement.

2. Hiring a full time licensed counselor to assist with homeless/at risk youth referrals and counseling.

One of the keys to the success of the HOST program is the availability of licensed/professional counseling and referral services. Hence staff is exploring the possibility of adding one professional licensed counselor/case worker FTE. This person would likely be housed at the Police Department and will have a twofold purpose. First, he/she will serve as a member of the HOST team. This person will go out as needed with officers or the HOST team to provide real time/on the spot referral or crisis intervention services. Whenever not on the streets, this person will assist in tracking outreach and referral services for the homeless population, including providing counseling services at the PD. The second area this counselor will serve is as a resource for the city’s YGRIP program.

3. Review our current ordinances/city practices regarding shopping carts, camping, and solicitation (panhandling) to mirror successful ordinances in other cities and communities in the region and the country.

A committee consisting of representatives from a cross section of city staff is evaluating existing city ordinances and will be making recommendations for modifications consistent with the goals of the Homeless Action Plan. This committee will be tasked with identifying possible changes/amendments needed for current public order ordinances, or suggesting new ordinances. This committee will work in tandem with HOST as well as the City Attorney and come up with recommendations to City Council.

4. Install a POD at Selected Parks and other locations

In the past, the police department has installed overt camera surveillance systems (PODs) in areas of the city where high crime or violent/gang activity has been documented. This program has proven to be highly effective in deterring crime in those areas. Currently, Freeman Park is perhaps the main “node” of homeless activity in the city. Presently, citizens and

businesses constantly complain about overt drug use and criminal activity taking place at the park. This has been verified not only by police, but by other city departments staff members. The police department will install a POD at selected parks in attempt to deter criminal activity from taking place. The POD will be in a very visible location, where it cannot be tampered with, and its presence will be made known.

5. Initiate Pilot Private Security for Library and other City Facilities

The behavior issues at the library have tipped to the point that they are no longer manageable by our staff. In a recent patron survey, the #1 written in comment was regarding feeling unsafe coming into the library. A security guard would help monitor behavior in the library and be a consistent presence inside and outside the library. Security guards are being used at many libraries with positive results. The library requests that this necessary and vital change be made to our budget to keep our library patrons and staff safer by sending a message that we take incidents at the library seriously and want an environment where all people feel welcome

The library staff has worked hard to maintain the environment however; they are no longer able to keep up with the increase in loitering, sleeping, drug use, pan handling, inside and outside the library. In 2016 there were 150 CAD (dispatch calls) for service at the library. Of those calls 97 were calls for service at the library and the others were officer initiated. That is an average of 8 calls per month. The library calls the police for back up, when a patron is asked to leave the library for violating the behavior policy-most typically. The library also maintains an incident report log for staff to record negative interactions with patrons regarding behavior. Since February last year, we have logged 264 incidents with patrons, these range from waking up a sleeper, smoking on the porch, to patrons yelling, fighting, doing drugs, trashing the restrooms, all inside the library.

6. Enhance coordination with service providers to ensure clients who come to Woodland for services have means to return to community-of-origin.

Many individuals come to Woodland because it is the hub of social services for the County. Our outreach efforts have confirmed that several homeless individuals arrive in (or are brought to) Woodland because of the breadth of County services, access to medical/psychiatric care, addiction programs, access to shelters or due to the location of the County Jail and courts. Staff is evaluating initiatives to enhance communication and tracking of individuals to ensure ready-access to a means to return home. This program, implemented in numerous jurisdictions across this country in several formats, will attempt to send people back to their communities of origin and/or where they have relatives or loved ones. This program will be managed by the HOST and will be utilized based on needs assessments and other screening steps. This program may actually assist people who are in Woodland from other communities because they were either in jail or using the resources available in town but are unable to go back. *This program should not be used to send people indiscriminately to other jurisdictions to merely transfer the problem while getting rid of it locally.*

7. Explore innovative cooperation programs between the city and the homeless community where there is a collaborative relationships benefiting both, such as: jobs, rewards for community service, etc.

The Homeless Action Plan contemplates developing collaborative relationships with individuals within the homeless community to assist in addressing many of the concerns identified in this report. Whether it is taking responsibility for minimizing criminal activity, curtailing vandalism, maintaining parks and facilities used by homeless individuals, or providing opportunities for community service. Many jurisdictions have developed successful programs (for example, providing food or hotel vouchers in exchange for cleaning up areas around the city).

Commission/Committee Recommendation:

The draft Homeless Action plan has been discussed at the recent meeting of the Council's Homeless Sub-committee. The sub-committee will continue to provide guidance on plan development and implementation.

Conclusion:

When it comes to the homelessness situation in the city, no action is not an option. The current situation seems unsustainable for not only the business and the citizens, but also for those who are homeless in the city. There is

increasing amount of concern among community members that homeless issues have reached a critical point. By implementing a comprehensive Homeless Action Plan with increased coordination of city resources and stronger collaboration with community partners, the city will be in a better position to manage the impacts associated with our homeless population while at the same time continuing to focus on long-term solutions.

Staff recommends that the City Council receive a report from staff and the Councils Homeless Subcommittee related to development of a comprehensive Homeless Action Plan, and provide feedback on framework and preliminary recommendations.

Prepared By: Paul Navazio, City Manager



Paul Navazio, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

Description	Upload Date	Type
Homeless Action Plan	8/18/2017	Backup Material