



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: 11.15.11

ITEM NUMBER:

SUBJECT: HOMELESS TASK FORCE UPDATE

DATE: NOVEMBER 1, 2011

FROM: JEFF MATHEWS, HTF CHAIR AND MURIEL ULLMAN, NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT MANAGER

PRESENTATION BY: JEFF MATHEWS / MURIEL ULLMAN

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: MURIEL ULLMAN, 714-754-5167

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file.

BACKGROUND:

The Homeless Task Force was formed by the City Council in January, 2011 in response to a series of incidents in the Lions Park vicinity. Problems due to vagrancy included individuals sleeping in the park overnight, multiple encounters between the homeless population and library and community center patrons as well as a variety of complaints from adjacent property owners and park users. Business owners in the City also complained about homeless individuals sleeping on their property at night and loitering in front of their businesses during the day. Many of the people encountered were mentally ill and/or suffering from substance abuse.

The Homeless Task Force (HTF) has been meeting monthly since March, 2011.

They adopted a mission statement during the first meeting, charging the Task Force to:

“Establish realistic strategies and make recommendations that address the Needs of the Costa Mesa Community, Residents, Businesses and the Homeless”

The focus of the meetings has been how to develop practical solutions to Costa Mesa's homeless issues as opposed to creating services which will draw non-residents to the City. The Homeless Task Force has been instrumental in developing a definition of a “Costa Mesa Homeless Resident” in an effort to tailor homeless reduction actions towards our residents. Additionally, Vanguard University has developed a needs assessment which is an evaluative tool that identifies Costa Mesa's current homeless population. Finally, the Task Force has also focused on law enforcement and legal strategies which better address these unique problems.

Meetings have focused on a variety of topics including:

- Civility law (ordinance) review
- Homeless law enforcement combined with municipal code prosecution and mental health outreach
- Mental health and medical issues plaguing the homeless
- Financing strategies/funds available for supportive housing.

Committee members and Housing and Community development staff have also visited a variety of cities and/or non profit organizations including Pasadena, Carlsbad, Village of Hope in Tustin and Laguna Beach. Finally, several churches and social services have joined with our police force in focusing on Lions Park area and visiting the homeless population on a weekly basis.

Since the inception of the Homeless Task Force, several actions have been taken on both a formal and informal basis by both the City and its community partners. They are as follows:

- HTF has developed a definition of “Costa Mesa homeless resident” as well as a services of 9 goals and recommendations
- Ongoing voluntary assistance provided on a weekly basis at both Lions Park and Donald Duggan Library by both the Orange County Health Care Agency and local non profits resulting in over 180 engagements with mentally ill homeless, 10 linkages to housing and suspension of two week-end food sharing programs by the faith based community
- Working closely with Church Consortium to assist city in encouraging churches to work on HTF solutions vs. food sharing in Lions Park
- 100 arrests and 100 citations to individuals in the Lions Park vicinity
- Constant communication and follow-up between residents, Costa Mesa Police Department (CMPD), City staff and City Attorney regarding court referrals, stay away orders, citizen complaints, homeless service referrals
- Reunification of several homeless people with families
- Meetings with local liquor stores regarding responsible alcohol sales
- Community meetings with residents to ensure that complaints and chronic violators are being tracked by CMP
- Meeting with CMPD and other law enforcement agencies in an effort to prevent common practice of using Costa Mesa hotels and social services for non residents
- The hiring of two park rangers for Lions Park with future expanded duties to be determined at a later date

ANALYSIS:

Based on the cumulative meetings of the HTF as well as a special Goal Setting Workshop held by the HTF on Saturday, October 15, the following goals have been adopted:

- Goal 1: Define who is a Costa Mesa Homeless Individual
- Goal 2: To Protect the Health and Safety of Costa Mesa residents through enforcement of “Civility” Laws and provision of Alternative Storage Site
- Goal 3: Proactive Problem resolution with Regard to High Crime/Vice Hotels which cater to transient population enforcement of local codes and ordinances at problem halfway houses
- Goal 4: Centralized in-house homeless services coordination
- Goal 5: Integrating law enforcement, mental health and legal strategy as a 3-pronged approach to homelessness
- Goal 6: Create Permanent Supportive Housing and Possible Access Center
- Goal 7: Review Interim Housing Options
- Goal 8: Development of an Appropriate Metrics System to Monitor Reduction in Homelessness
- Goal 9: Promotion of Lions Park as a Local Venue for Special Events and Change in Facilities to more Creative Usage

Attachment A contains the above mentioned goals along with the action items recommended by the HTF to meet these goals. Some of the action items are underway and/or completed such as

the hiring of the park rangers, while others will require formal Council approval. These goals and recommendations of the HTF will be presented in a formal report to the HTF and the City council in January 2012 and February 2012 respectively.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

This report is receive and file. Programming/Funding Recommendations will be received at a later date.

FISCAL REVIEW:

There is no impact to the general fund at this time.

LEGAL REVIEW:

There is no legal review required at this time. Several of the recommendations will involve new ordinances and be presented to the City Council on a case by case basis. The first ordinance

CONCLUSION

It is recommended that the City Council receive and file this report and entertain these funding recommendations at a later date.

Jeff Mathews, Chair
Homeless Task Force

Muriel Ullman
Neighborhood Improvement Manager

Thomas R. Hatch
Chief Executive Officer

[Attachment A – Priorities](#)
[Attachment B – HTF Priorities Cost Matrix](#)