



## **CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT**

---

MEETING DATE: August 21, 2012      ITEM NUMBER:

SUBJECT:            NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT TASK FORCE UPDATE

DATE:                AUGUST 14, 2012

FROM:                CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

PRESENTATION BY:    RICK FRANCIS, ASSISTANT CEO

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:    Muriel Ullman - 714-754-5167

---

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommended that the City Council receive and file this informational report outlining the success of the first six months of operation.

### **BACKGROUND:**

In January, 2011, the Costa Mesa City Council established the Homeless Task Force (HTF) in response to a series of incidents in the Lions Park vicinity. These incidents included: multiple encounters between the homeless population, library, and community center patrons; and a variety of complaints from adjacent property owners and park users. Business owners in the City also complained about homeless individuals who slept on their property at night and loitered in front of their businesses during the day. Many of the people encountered were mentally ill or suffering from substance abuse. The Task Force mission statement focused on "Establishing realistic strategies and making recommendations that addressed the needs of the Costa Mesa community, residents, businesses and the homeless."

Housing and Community Development staff simultaneously organized an In-House Coordinating Committee. This was done to identify partners not involved directly with the Homeless Task Force and to include them in a future strategy. These parties included the relevant City and County departments, nonprofits, churches, probation, and parole. This body met at the Donald Dungan Library on a weekly basis and formed strategies to deter chronic criminal offenders and assist those individuals seeking mental health and /or sober living aid. These community partners worked cooperatively and engaged in issues such as providing alternatives to food sharing in City parks, client referrals, follow-up on

citizen complaints, more vigorous prosecution of municipal code violations and alternative storage areas for goods owned by homeless residents.

The HTF adopted nine goals dealing with the homeless issues (Attachment A). It also made the following findings in regards to homelessness in the city:

1. Many of the tools to work toward a solution existed, but they were spread across multiple agencies and lacked coordination.
2. Lions Park needed enforcement resources.
3. The City had the opportunity to partner with the church community on collaborative solutions.
4. Mental illness and substance abuse were critical factors in homelessness.
5. The number of recovery homes, the lack of health services, and the lack of regional, permanent supportive housing exacerbated the homelessness problem.
6. Chronic, criminal offenders were allowed to remain on the street because of overburdened correctional system and lack of City presence in court.
7. Several motels harbored repeat offenders and had the highest percentage of police and fire service calls in the City.
8. Unattended property was left out in public, open spaces (parks) causing a nuisance and a confiscation burden for CMPD.
9. Inadequate coordination between City Departments and outside agencies hindering nuisance abatement and allowing chronic homeless and/or offenders to "slip through the cracks."

The City began to address these findings during the duration of the HTF. Actions included:

- Hiring two park rangers who specifically addressed the Lion's Park issues
- Working with the local churches to create a storage/check-in center for local Homeless individuals
- Working with County to develop an ongoing mental health outreach team for the city
- Developing partnerships with local residents and business owners to collaborate and reduce the impacts associated with chronic individuals
- An ongoing integrated law enforcement/legal strategy to ensure that chronic offenders are prosecuted to the greatest extent of the law
- Working with the First Step House and outside agencies to eliminate dropping off of intoxicated homeless subjects in the City

After the Homeless Task Force ended, the City wished to continue implementing this collaborative strategy. However, it became apparent that many of these unaddressed community problems spilled over to the entire city. Issues surrounding homelessness were integrally related to untreated mental illness, and drug addiction, lack of affordable housing, and an overburdened correctional system. Chronic offenders received multiple citations, yet continually returned to

the City due to early release dates and lack of a City presence in Court. Several deteriorated motels in the City harbored repeat offenders who directly contributed to the vagrancy issues plaguing the City. They were often in violation of their Conditional Use Permit and suffered from serious code violations. Yet, these problems were not addressed collectively due to communication/accessibility barriers between departments. The City also lacked a coordinated complaint/referral system for these types of community issues.

After several intra-departmental discussions with CMPD, City Attorney's Office, Development Services, & CEO's office, the CEO decided to consolidate several of these problem areas under the umbrella of the Neighborhood Improvement Task Force, which was commissioned in February 2012.

## **ANALYSIS:**

### Overview of the Neighborhood Improvement Task Force

Some of Costa Mesa's most chronic challenges—problems associated with homelessness, troubled motels, rehabilitation homes, parolees, and other crime attractants—are now being aggressively addressed in a coordinated, sustained multi-departmental/multi-agency effort. The City's Neighborhood Improvement Task Force (NITF), established in February 2012, comprises representatives from a variety of city and county departments (police, fire, code enforcement, health, etc.), and was formed in order to develop and implement a versatile strategy for the city's most vexing problems.

The Task Force adopted the following vision statement:

"Our vision is to create and sustain a dynamic framework for improving the quality of life for Costa Mesa residents, business owners and visitors. We will seek broad-based solutions to achieve a healthy and safe environment for our diverse community".

More precisely, the Task Force organized its goals around five areas: Homelessness, motels, problem properties, citywide policies, and law enforcement/legal strategies. Since February, Task Force members have collaborated with governmental and nonprofit partners to successfully implement a variety of policies designed to reduce blight and improve the quality of life in Costa Mesa.

The Neighborhood Improvement Task Force meets weekly to discuss strategies, implementation, success stories, and challenges. The Task Force identified the City's 12 most problematic motels and began regular inspections to ensure they would comply with city, state, and federal regulations. It implemented a multi-faceted, incentive and enforcement based approach to dealing with the city's homeless population—especially in the Lions Park vicinity—with a team that

includes police officers, the city attorney, park rangers, mental health workers, code enforcement officers, social workers, and church volunteers. The Task Force is also developing court-tested ordinances to help reduce the difficulties associated with recovery homes.

#### NITF Goals/Recent Accomplishments

As stated previously, the NITF adopted the following five goals as a measure of the group's progress.

- Goal 1: Reduce Homelessness
- Goal 2: Improve Motel Standards
- Goal 3: Minimize Nuisances from Problem Properties
- Goal 4: Develop Citywide Policies and Ordinances to Improve Quality of Life
- Goal 5: Better Utilize Law Enforcement Resources to Protect the Public's Health and Safety

Attachment B contains a list of the aforementioned goals along with action items completed or currently in progress as well as a summary of the City's efforts to address problems caused by chronic offenders (Attachment C). A brief summary of accomplishments is listed below:

#### 1. Homelessness/Housing/Mental Health:

- The NITF and the Churches Consortium has reunified three homeless persons with their families over the last six months.
- The NITF and the Churches Consortium provided outreach, engagement, and a storage facility/check-in center for Costa Mesa homeless residents.
- The NITF organized weekly, voluntary assistance at both Lions Park and the Donald Dungan Library from the Orange County Health Care Agency and local nonprofits such as Veterans First.
- Based on Police Department referrals, the NITF is developing a short term housing *voucher policy* for homeless individuals wishing reunification with family members.
- The Housing and Community Development and Police Team work together to monitor vagrancy complaints and homeless referrals.
- The City allocated \$600,000 in HOME funds to the Housing Authority for a supportive housing project, and it is currently developing a financing strategy which will be presented to City Council in the next few months.
- The Police Department will be partnering with the Orange County Health Care Agency PERT (Psychiatric Evaluation Response Team) Program on an ongoing basis to utilize the services of a mental health specialist trained in psychiatric crises and who will be deployed with patrol officers on a weekly basis.

## 2. Motels:

- The NITF is working on preventing the abuse of motels as long-term living establishments including an ongoing, interagency focus on motels with the highest number of public safety and code enforcement service calls to achieve long-term problem resolution including alternative uses, nuisance abatement, etc.
- Legal Counsel is developing a nuisance abatement ordinance with one key tenet being the prevention of abuse of motels that serve as long-term living quarters.
- The NITF organized an interagency inspection of two properties, revealing unsanitary and hazardous living conditions including non-operable smoke detectors, noxious fumes, fire hazards due to hoarding, public health issues such as presence of insect infestation, inadequate toilet and hand washing facilities, and overcrowded unhygienic living conditions.
- Thorough documentation is on-going.

## 3. Problem Properties:

- The NITF has focused its efforts on properties which have received multiple complaints from adjacent residents and calls for service to the police.
- Several problem properties are being remediated to bring them into compliance with health and safety codes, while two other properties are scheduled for demolition with the occupants being relocated.
- Legal Counsel is developing a nuisance abatement ordinance with provisions to address chronic disturbances of peaceable enjoyment primarily in residential areas.
- Two new code enforcement officers are being hired to assist with problem properties.

## 4. Citywide Policies:

- The NITF halted multi-site recovery home meetings at one location, which had been a nuisance to neighbors (as evidenced by complaints made to the City).
- The City adopted an ordinance preventing improper bicycle parking in public right-of-ways.
- The NITF is drafting an ordinance to address unattended property.

## 5. Law Enforcement/Legal:

- The Police Department discovered a homeless encampment near Moon Park. At NITF's request, Caltrans and the County of Orange quickly cleaned the area and installed fencing to prevent future encampments from being established.
- The NITF has created a sub-committee which tracks chronic offenders in the city, and is working on strategies to prevent chronic offenders from

continuing to engage in illegal activity through prosecution of municipal code violations.

- Since February, 112 citations and 24 arrests have been made related to these specific offenders.

In conclusion, the NITF will continue to build momentum and work towards the ultimate goal of making Costa Mesa a healthier community for residents, visitors and businesses. By adopting broad-based and creative solutions, City staff and community partners are coming together to create a dynamic framework for change.

**ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**

At this time, the City Council is being asked only to receive and file this report. Programming/Funding Recommendations will be recommended at a later date.

**FISCAL REVIEW:**

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

**LEGAL REVIEW:**

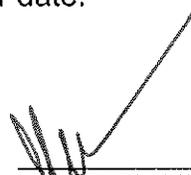
There is no legal review required at this time. Several of the recommendations will involve new ordinances and be presented to the City Council on a case by case basis.

**CONCLUSION:**

Staff recommends that the City Council receive and file this report and entertain these funding recommendations at a later date.



RICHARD FRANCIS  
Assistant CEO



MURIEL ULLMAN  
Homeless Coordinator

- Attachment A: Homeless Task Force Goals  
Attachment B: Short, Medium & Long Term Goals and Completed/Ongoing Activities  
Attachment C: Chronic Offenders Summary

## Attachment A

### Goals of the Homeless Task Force

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 & Provision of Alternate Storage Facilities

Goal 3: Institute proactive problem resolution with regard to High Crime/Vice Motels which Cater to Transient Population; Enforcement of local codes and ordinances at problem Halfway/Sober Living Homes

Goal 4: Centralize Homeless Services Coordination

Goal 5: Integrate law enforcement, mental health and legal strategy as a collaborative approach to homelessness

Goal 6: Research Permanent Supportive Housing and Possible Access Center for Costa Mesa Homeless Residents

Goal 7: Review Interim Housing Options

Goal 8: Develop a Metrics System to Monitor Reductions in Homelessness

Goal 9: Promote Lions Park as a Local Venue for Special Events and Change in Facilities to more Creative Usage

## SHORT, MEDIUM & LONG TERM GOALS AND COMPLETED/ONGOING ACTIVITIES

The Neighborhood Improvement Task Force adopted five broad goals as a measure of the group's progress:

- Goal 1: Reduce Homelessness
- Goal 2: Improve Motel Standards
- Goal 3: Minimize Nuisances
- Goal 4: Develop Citywide Policies and Ordinances to Improve Quality of Life
- Goal 5: Better Utilize Law Enforcement Resources to Protect the Public's Health Safety

There are several categories which fall under the broader goals as well as action items, time frames (whether the action items are short term, medium term, long term, completed and/or ongoing) and funding sources/resources needed. For purposes of this discussion, time frames are defined as follows:

- Short Term is defined as 6 months
- Medium Term is defined as 12 months
- Long Term is defined as 12-24 months

### **NITF GOAL 1: REDUCE HOMELESSNESS**

#### **Category 1: Housing**

**Action Item: Program Development/Tenant Based Rental Assistance and Supportive Housing**

**Time Frame: Medium-Long Term**

**Resources: HOME Funds (Housing Authority) & MHSA funds**

Housing Authority staff reserved HOME funds for potential supportive housing projects. Staff is also working with the County of Orange to discuss possible use of Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funds for a jointly funded project.

#### **Category 2: Public Services**

**Action Item: Removal of Railing at Library**

**Time Frame: Completed**

**Resources: Existing**

To prevent the storage of unattended property outside of the Donald Dungan Library in Lions Park, the City has removed the railing outside its entrance and

put up bollards. The Churches Consortium distributed information to the homeless about available free storage at the nearby The Crossing Church.

**Action Item: Moon Park Clean Up**

**Time Frame: Completed**

**Resources: Existing**

The County of Orange and Caltrans removed debris from under the freeway overpass by Moon Park following the discovery of a homeless encampment.

**Category 3: Homeless Research/Comparable Cities**

**Action Item: Ongoing Research in Best Practices in Other Cities**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

**Resources: Existing**

City staff has reached out to several cities including most recently, the cities of Fort Lauderdale, Florida and Santa Monica to learn about their family reunification system and strategies to address homelessness to refine a policy that balances the needs of the community with the homeless residents.

**Category 4: Outreach/Reunification**

**Action Item: Storage/ Check-in Center Established February, 2012**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

**Resources: Churches Consortium (private)**

The Check-in Center was established by the Churches Consortium to provide an alternative storage site for the Costa Mesa homeless population so that the costly citation and confiscation process can be reviewed as a last resort. The Center is located at The Crossing Church. Besides offering storage for the Costa Mesa homeless, church members and volunteers work with some of Costa Mesa's homeless residents in an attempt to link them to services. 115 persons have used the Check in Center since January 2012.

**Action Item: Reunification Program – Churches Consortium & City of Costa Mesa**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

**Resources: Churches Consortium (private); General Fund (maximum \$5000)**

The Homeless Reconnection Program initiated by the Churches Consortium and The Lighthouse Church reunited two homeless people with their families. With the help of the Lighthouse Church, one man was reunited with his sister in Indiana and is currently employed at a barbecue assembly plant near his sister's home. The Churches Consortium reunited a young man with his grandmother in

Riverside. The man had been homeless for 48 hours and had lived in Costa Mesa for 23 years.

The Police Department and CEO's Office are developing transportation/motel voucher assistance for homeless persons who wish to be reunited with friends or family out of the area or who are attending a valid Sober Living Program. Priority will be given to Costa Mesa Homeless Residents as defined by the City Council, as well as Police Referrals. All participants will have to go through a rigorous screening process. Vouchers will also be available to those newer arrivals that have been referred by either Police or Churches Consortium to provide alternatives before they take up permanent residency on the streets.

**Action Item: City/ Church Consortium Church Referral Program**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

**Resources: Churches (private)**

The City, in particular, the Costa Mesa Police Department, has partnered with the Churches Consortium on several initiatives including the Check-in Center and linking the homeless in Lions Park to services. City staff also refers churches wishing to provide services to the homeless in Costa Mesa Parks to the Churches Consortium so that they can work together to find more appropriate venues for their work. Most recently, two different out-of- area churches were referred to the Consortium by City staff regarding their desire to institute food sharing programs in Costa Mesa parks. They were successfully redirected and are working with the Consortium on other church programs.

**Action Item: Library Code of Conduct**

**Time Frame: Completed**

**Resources: Existing**

The City works closely with the Donald Dungan Library to assist the librarian in dealing with homeless clients. The Library recently adopted a code of conduct to ensure civility of the library as an institution for learning and information. The code ensures that the library and all fellow patrons are shown similar levels of respect.

**Action Item: Mental Health Outreach/Psychological Evaluation Response Team (PERT)**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

**Resources: Orange County Health Care Agency, Various Social Services Providers**

The City has partnered with a variety of County and private mental health providers to assist City staff in dealing with its homeless population. Although they have limited staff, these organizations have targeted their resources to

specific areas in Costa Mesa and work alongside the librarian, the Police Department and the Churches Consortium to better address the problem.

Between January 2012 and May 2012, the Orange County Health Care Agency made 109 contacts and 11 linkages including 9 housing placements. The Mental Health Association made 42 contacts and 52 engagements with Costa Mesa homeless between March 2012 and April 2012.

Additionally, staff met with the Orange County Health Services Agency several times over the last six months regarding enlisting additional services for mentally ill homeless and at-risk Costa Mesa residents. Within the next 60 days, the County will be assigning a "PERT" clinician to ride along with Police Department Staff and respond and follow up to psychiatric emergencies in the City.

**NITF GOAL 2: IMPROVE MOTEL STANDARDS/CONDUCT ONGOING COORDINATED INSPECTIONS**

**Action Item: Motel #1 Inspection**  
**Time Frame: Completed**  
**Resources: Existing**

Interagency inspection of Motel #1 was conducted by Public Health, Code Enforcement, Police, Fire and CEO's staff. The Property was referred to these departments for follow-up as well as other outside agencies such as Adult Protective Services. Conditions included lack of functioning smoke detectors, infestation, older adults living in unhygienic conditions, and illegal drug use.

**Action item: Motel #2 Inspection**  
**Time Frame: Completed**  
**Resources: Existing**

Interagency inspection of Motel #2. Conditions included lack of functioning smoke detectors and substandard living conditions relative to the existing long term tenants.

**Action Item: Research on Conditional Use Permit (CUP) Conditions for Motels**  
**Time Frame: Short**  
**Resources: Existing**

The City Attorney is looking into the possibility of developing a new ordinance designed to prevent the abuse of motels for particular long term living/business arrangements

### **NITF GOAL 3: MINIMIZE NUISANCES FROM PROBLEM PROPERTIES**

**Action Item: Inspect and Evaluate Problem Properties for Violation of Health and Safety Codes and Licensing Requirements.**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

**Resources: Existing**

Since March, 2012, NITF staff has begun tracking problem properties for interdepartmental follow-up. During this time period, the City inspected and investigated five (5) problem properties with major health, safety and code violations including trash and debris, violation of sober living license requirements, excessive noise, long term parking of RV's on on-street parking spaces and other nuisances. One home has been demolished and City Departments (including the City Attorney's office) are tracking new cases at each NITF meeting. CEO's staff also met with the owner of several Costa Mesa recovery homes based on neighborhood complaints. Noise coming from the homes has been abated.

### **NITF GOAL 4: DEVELOP CITYWIDE POLICIES AND ORDINANCES TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE**

Improving the quality of life in Costa Mesa requires the collaborative efforts of residents, businesses, City departments, the faith-based community and outside agencies.

These efforts include a multi-faceted incentive and enforcement approach, which includes the implementation of several ordinances designed to treat many unaddressed community problems that spill over to the entire City.

**Action Item: Sex Offender Ordinance**

**Time Frame: Completed**

**Resources: Existing**

This Ordinance was enacted to exclude sex offenders from City parks and youth sports fields owned and operated by the City.

**Action Item: Sober Living Ordinance**

**Time Frame: Short Term**

**Resources: Existing**

This Ordinance is designed to place certain condition on sober living homes located in the City.

**Action Item: Bicycle Parking Ordinances**  
**Time Frame: Completed**  
**Resources: Existing**

This Ordinance will require that bicycles be placed in bike racks when they are available in public parks. The City is presently conducting a bike rack survey to determine the need for additional racks. It is expected that additional bike racks be placed in Lions Park within the next thirty (30) days.

**Action Item: Unattended Property Ordinance**  
**Time Frame: Short Term**  
**Resources: Existing**

The goal of this ordinance is to not have personal property left on public rights-of-way. Unattended property will be removed and stored for a period of time, and abandoned property will be disposed of.

**Action Item: Nuisance Ordinance**  
**Time Frame: Short Term**  
**Resources: Existing**

The City Attorney's Office is working on broadening the scope of what constitutes a nuisance and adding fines to properties which have excessive calls for police service.

#### **NITF GOAL 5: BETTER UTILIZE LAW ENFORCEMENT RESOURCES TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC'S HEALTH AND SAFETY**

**Action Item: No Smoking Ordinance/Smoking Citations**  
**Time Frame: Completed**  
**Resources: Existing**

From January, 2012 to May, 2012, 90 citations have been issued for smoking in the park. The City Attorney is working on keeping the court from dismissing tickets and securing larger fines for repeat offenders.

**Action Item: Park Crime Statistics**  
**Time Frame: Ongoing**  
**Resources: Existing**

From January, 2012 to May, 2012, 143 citations have been issued for open alcohol containers in public spaces. Additionally, there have been 510 criminal incidents between January and June of this year.

**Action Item: Complaint Referral System**  
**Time Frame: Ongoing**  
**Resources: Existing**

Thanks to the collaborative efforts of the Costa Mesa Police Department and NITF members, complaints from the community are regularly triaged to ensure responsiveness to both residents and businesses. Over the past several months, NITF staff has responded to complaints at Lions, Wilson and Moon Parks, private homes, and businesses. NITF staff meets regularly, upon request, with property owners, renters and businesses to enlist their help in addressing some of these issues and to come up with a creative problem solving approach.

**Action Item: Law Enforcement/Legal**  
**Time Frame: Ongoing**  
**Resources: Existing**

The NITF has created a subcommittee which tracks chronic offenders in the city, and it is working on a strategy to prevent chronic offenders from continuing to engage in illegal activities through prosecution of municipal code violations and non enforcement responses where appropriate.

Attachment C provides more details regarding legal and enforcement efforts.

## CHRONIC OFFENDERS SUMMARY

Until recently, violating the Costa Mesa Municipal Code held no consequences. Ineffective enforcement has led to a number of individuals who commit many nuisance offenses with impunity. Continued nuisance behavior with no consequences degrades the quality of life in the City of Costa Mesa. For approximately a year now, the City has made a focused effort to enforce its regulations, with a special emphasis on chronic offenders. The City's goal is to get the chronic offenders off the streets and not committing offenses. This will be more likely to occur if they are in custody or if they have accepted assistance and are on the road to rehabilitation.

It is important to note that the City is enforcing its regulations against anyone who violates its code, not just the chronic offenders. However, consistent with constitutional principles of criminal justice, repeat offenders can be treated differently. An individual who has committed 10 or 100 offenses will usually be punished more harshly than an individual who has committed 1 or 2 of the same offenses.

### Who is a Chronic Offender?

The City of Costa Mesa has identified 28 individuals and classified them as *chronic offenders*. Chronic offenders are identified as those who cause major nuisances in the community. This would include individuals who: 1) Have been arrested and cited numerous times for public nuisance and related violations along with other crimes; 2) have been troublesome and repeatedly harass local businesses, customers, and residents; 3) chronically trespass on private properties; 4) chronically consume alcohol and drugs in public; and, 5) have been involved in numerous verbal and physical altercations with members of the public.

The key factor used is the repetitive nature of the individual's conduct and his or her disregard for compliance with established laws. In addition, it is important to note that while most on the current list have a long history of local arrests and citations, some individuals can be, and have been, added to the list if they cause major disruptions over a short period of time. For example, one individual came into the community from another city, and within a week had committed a number of nuisance offenses. This individual was added to the list of chronic offenders due to the frequency and severity of offenses in a short period of time.

The list of chronic offenders is fluid, so the 28 individuals that are on that list as of the drafting of this report may not be the same people in a month, six months or a year from now. The criteria for being on the list, however, remain constant. Individuals who accept assistance and/or comply with the law are removed from the list.

### Types of Offenses

The chronic offenders commit a variety of offenses. These offenses include municipal, penal, business and professions, vehicle, and health and safety code violations.

**However, the Costa Mesa City Attorney only has the authority to prosecute municipal code violations such as: drinking in public, smoking in the park, urinating in public, unlawful camping, being in the park after dark, and scavenging. All other violations are prosecuted by the District Attorney's Office.**

#### Penalties for Violations

From January, 2012 to the end of June, 2012, the Costa Mesa Police Department recorded the criminal history of the chronic offenders. In that time period, the chronic offenders received a total of 112 citations, and the Police Department conducted 24 arrests among those individuals. While the City's ultimate goal remains rehabilitation and getting as many Costa Mesa homeless individuals off the streets and into productive lives, the immediate goal is to reduce the amount of nuisance offenses being committed throughout the City. To that end, enforcement of the municipal code has become more aggressive, in particular against chronic offenders. Some of these offenders have been serving sentences between 10 and 270 days, depending on the number and type of offenses. Out of the 28 individuals on the chronic offender list, 20 have served or are serving jail sentences, and several others have outstanding arrest warrants. One individual has agreed to attend Homeless Court.

The majority of the offenses consist of drinking in public/being drunk in public, public excretion, smoking in the park, being in the park after dark and illegal camping. In some cases, individuals have been charged with Penal Code violations, such as indecent exposure and trespass/breaking and entering.

The Neighborhood Improvement Task Force has instituted a method for confidentially tracking the chronic offenders. This method allows the City to see at a glance how many arrests and citations each individual has received, broken down on a quarterly basis, and the sentences received for convictions. The quarterly breakdown also allows the City to track the individual's progress and, if appropriate, to remove him/her from the chronic offender list.

The severity of the penalty is a function of the violation(s) committed as well as the individual circumstances surrounding the case. These penalties have ranged from a probation sentence, a fine, or a jail sentence. If an offender fails to appear in court, they can be picked up on a bench warrant and have their case heard at County Jail. In some cases, when there are also violations of the Penal Code, the sentence may be longer than six months, the maximum allowable sentence for municipal code violations.

As noted above, the length of a jail sentence can vary from a few days to a few months, with time off for good behavior. Hence, many individuals are continually arrested and rearrested, only to be back on the streets within days of their prior arrest due to the number of offenders who appear before our court system. This problem has been further exacerbated by the State realignment program brought forth by AB 109, which shifts the responsibility of housing tens of thousands of inmates from the state prisons to the county jails.

### Collaborating to Find a Solution

Due to the unpredictability of the overburdened judicial system, the City has developed a multi-faceted legal strategy, which includes having a stronger presence in court. Tracking and prosecuting chronic offenders aims to remove people from the community who are particularly disruptive. Since March of this year, the City Prosecutor has vigorously prosecuted six (6) chronic offenders.

Some of chronic offenders have the option to attend Homeless Court. Homeless Court is a collaborative court, and its goal is to connect homeless individuals with the appropriate resources to prevent them from living on the street. Currently, the City Attorney is establishing a relationship with Homeless Court to better inform decision-making and sentencing with respect to the Costa Mesa chronic offenders.

Additionally, the City has been collaborating with a number of state and county organizations who perform outreach to homeless individuals. Some of these collaborations have resulted in offenders being either reunited with family or placed in housing or sober living facilities. Summaries of the results achieved by these organizations are provided in the Council Agenda Report, as well as in Attachment B thereto.