



Staff Report

File #: 21-221

Version: 1

Date: 5/17/2021

Item #: 1.2a.

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Steve Powers, City Manager

SUBJECT:

Initiatives to reduce homelessness and increase sheltering

Ward(s): All Wards

Councilor(s): All Councilors

Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods

Result Area(s): Natural Environment Stewardship; Welcoming and Livable Community.

ISSUE:

Initiatives to reduce homelessness and increase sheltering

RECOMMENDATION:

Information Only

SUMMARY:

May 17, 2021 Work Session Agenda Items:

- Update from Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance
- Parks operational plan
- Emergency declaration preview
- Sheltering status update
- Land use matrix preview
- Next steps

To help reduce COVID-19 exposure in shelters and spaces that face constrained capacity, camping is allowed in developed areas of two parks, Wallace Marine and Cascades Gateway. Community partners estimate between 200-300 persons are currently staying at any given time in each park. The City, non-profit agencies, and volunteers have worked together to remove garbage, address criminal activity, and establish small, managed alternatives to sheltering in parks. Still, as City parks

are not intended for human habitation and camping, the City will need to carefully conclude our Park Camping program.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

The Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance will provide information regarding regional collaborations to address homelessness.

City staff will update City Council on plans for concluding camping at Cascades Gateway Park and Wallace Marine Park. Order of operations and limitations will be included.

The City Attorney will review the draft extension to the emergency declaration related to Covid-19. The draft extends the authorization for the City to take certain actions to address the impacts of the pandemic, but does not extend the allowance for overnight camping in Cascades Gateway and Wallace Marine parks. The emergency declaration is scheduled for the May 24 City Council meeting (Attachment 1).

Next, staff will share work to date regarding sheltering (Attachment 2). This involves noting the nonprofit partners, financial resources and specific site locations available to add capacity to the sheltering network in Salem. Timelines and feasibility will be discussed.

Community Development staff will preview a draft land use zoning matrix, aimed at providing a comprehensive framework for siting vehicle, urban camping and warming shelters (Attachment 3).

Overall next steps shall be identified following Council discussion.

BACKGROUND:

Much like the rest of the U.S., Salem is experience rising levels of homelessness. The City strives to create a safe and livable community for all our residents, including people experiencing homelessness. There are many reasons a person may find themselves homeless. Contributing factors include significant past trauma, limited access to mental health support, addiction, loss of wages or employment, and limited affordable housing. The City alone cannot solve homelessness in our community. We need to work together to design programs to help prevent homelessness, create more support for those transitioning to permanent housing, develop more affordable housing, and reduce barriers for those trying to get into housing and transitional or emergency shelter. Housing and homelessness are one of our City's priorities and part of the [Council policy agenda <https://www.cityofsalem.net/citydocuments/city-council-policy-agenda-2020.pdf>](https://www.cityofsalem.net/citydocuments/city-council-policy-agenda-2020.pdf).

Attachments:

1. Draft Emergency Declaration (Resolution 2021-21)
2. Sheltering Update Status
3. Zoning Matrix Framework