

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2021**

MINUTE ORDER NO. 15

**SUBJECT: COMPASSIONATE EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS AND
PATHWAYS TO HOUSING FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING
HOMELESSNESS IN EAST COUNTY (DISTRICT: 2)**

OVERVIEW

The high cost of living, the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, and our failure to produce enough housing for our population have significantly harmed all San Diego County communities. District 2 is home to some of the lowest income communities in the County, including Lemon Grove, El Cajon and Campo, all with a median household income of under \$55,000, far below the County median income of \$95,100. These conditions have resulted in a 79% increase in first-time homeless individuals in 2021 who need behavioral health services, sheltering, and long-term solutions in order to regain stability.

East County has the largest number of people experiencing homelessness in San Diego County outside of the City of San Diego. Although specific data is hard to come by, over 4,350 East County residents received services to prevent or end their homelessness over one year, from June 1, 2020, to May 31, 2021. This included more than 1,850 families with children. Immediate and sustained help for people experiencing homelessness is a crucial component of revitalization and the renewal of safe, thriving communities for all. There is no city government to provide emergency sheltering or related support services to homeless individuals in the unincorporated areas. Although the County is the default agency to address homelessness in these areas, historically, few resources have been deployed in unincorporated communities.

Recently, the County has taken several important steps to establish trauma-informed outreach to those living on the streets, coordinating efforts with cities and regional organizations, expanding and funding supportive services. These efforts are substantial, but more is needed to uniquely and adequately support the residents of East County. There are currently no shelters in the unincorporated areas of District 2 and there is only one privately run emergency shelter for the homeless within the 2,000 square miles of District 2. In order to get individuals connected to resources and off the streets, establishing emergency sheltering solutions is crucial.

The current tool that the County utilizes to temporarily get individuals in East County off the street is the Regional Hotel Assistance Program. While it has had some success, unfortunately there are limited hotels participating in the program, and few in East County. In addition, this program is operated with a “scattered-site” model, where the County has no ability to provide on-site centralized services such as security, case management, meals, and behavioral and medical care. Without comprehensive services and case management, some participants end up back on the streets.

Shelters with wrap-around services where individuals don’t have to travel to get the care they need will fill current gaps in our homeless response system. Shelters serve as a place of initial and short-term placement, in transition to the County’s Local Rental Subsidy Program and other longer-term solutions. Action today initiates first steps in identifying appropriate locations for emergency shelters, safe parking, and services to address individuals’ and the communities’ needs.

Action would also ensure there is flexible funding to support outreach workers in their efforts. A flexible funding source is necessary to support core needs that other public funding sources do not cover, such as: emergency night stays at nearby hotels, clothing, medicine, hygiene items, health care, storage, security deposits, transportation, auto repairs, and immediate payments for items that individuals may need from a convenience store. Currently, County outreach teams don't have a funding mechanism for these costs, so it is critical that a funding source is established to strengthen successful contact with homeless individuals on the spot and remove barriers to obtaining shelter and housing. The funding should be an incentive for individuals to engage with case management and contingent on them working with outreach workers on a housing plan.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

SUPERVISOR JOEL ANDERSON

1. Find that the proposed actions are not a project pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines sections 15060(c)(3) and 15378 and are exempt from CEQA pursuant to Guidelines section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the proposed actions may have a significant effect on the environment.
2. Authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, while Zoning Ordinance amendments are being developed, to work with the developers and community partners to identify properties, buildings and concepts for low-barrier emergency shelters, safe lots and associated services in East County, preferably in the unincorporated area, and return to the Board within 120 days with identified locations, funding and an implementation plan.
3. Authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to evaluate current resources and gaps and develop a program with flexible funding to address barriers to housing stability and report back on effectiveness annually.
4. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to create a plan to enhance outreach and case management direct services including robust data collection and analysis in East County and return to the Board in 120 days.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

East County has the largest number of people experiencing homelessness in San Diego County outside of the City of San Diego. 1 It is estimated that over 4,350 East County residents received services to prevent or end their homelessness from June 1, 2020, to May 31, 2021, including approximately 1,850 families with children. Further, according to the Regional Task Force on Homelessness, there was a countywide spike in 2020 of San Diegans 55 years and older using emergency shelters, with 36 percent of these individuals reporting a physical disability and almost 25 percent reporting a substance use disorder. To address the varied needs of East County residents at-risk of or experiencing homelessness, it is imperative to ensure the availability of adequate types of shelter and housing, case management, supportive services, and dedicated flexible funding sources. Feedback from individuals at-risk of or experiencing homelessness, impacted residents, and community partners will be critical to the successful development of compassionate emergency solutions and pathways to housing for people experiencing homelessness in East County. A robust data analysis to identify the populations in East County that encounter the most barriers to stable and affordable housing will support efforts to advance equity and should include (but is not limited to) datasets by age, veteran status, race/ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Aligning, expanding, or providing new services, programming, shelters and/or housing to address the gaps identified through a robust data-analysis will maximize the opportunity for equitable outcomes amongst all East County residents and allow for future and ongoing evaluation.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with today's actions. Today's actions may result in future fiscal impacts based on recommendations resulting from today's action. Any such recommendations would need to be considered and approved by the Board.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

Enhanced street outreach and the developing of emergency sheltering options for homeless individuals will help to support businesses by ensuring that there are safe and clean venues for patrons and residents of the community.

ACTION:

ON MOTION of Supervisor Anderson, seconded by Supervisor Fletcher, the Board of Supervisors took the following actions:

1. Found that the proposed actions are not a project pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines sections 15060(c)(3) and 15378 and are exempt from CEQA pursuant to Guidelines section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the proposed actions may have a significant effect on the environment.
2. Authorized the Chief Administrative Officer, while Zoning Ordinance amendments are being developed, to work with the developers and community partners to identify properties, buildings and concepts for low-barrier emergency shelters, safe lots and associated services in East County and countywide, preferably in the unincorporated area, and return to the Board within 120 days with identified locations, funding and an implementation plan.
3. Authorized the Chief Administrative Officer to evaluate current resources and gaps and develop a program with flexible funding to address barriers to housing stability and report back on effectiveness annually.
4. Directed the Chief Administrative Officer to create a plan to enhance outreach and case management direct services including robust data collection and analysis in East County and countywide, if an assessment has not already been done on the areas, and return to the Board in 120 days.

AYES: Vargas, Anderson, Lawson-Remer, Fletcher, Desmond

State of California)
County of San Diego) §

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



Signed
by Andrew Potter



OCTOBER 19, 2021