



JOEL ANDERSON
SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: August 27, 2024

16

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT:

REASSESSING ACTIONS RELATED TO THE COMPASSIONATE EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS AND PATHWAYS TO HOUSING FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELSSNESS IN EAST COUNTY IN LIGHT OF FORTHCOMING ENTERPRISE-WIDE ASSESSMENT OF COUNTY PROGRAMS ON HOMELESSNESS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

On October 19, 2021, the Board of Supervisors (Board) voted unanimously to direct County staff to take several actions included in a Board Letter entitled *Compassionate Emergency Solutions and Pathways for People Experiencing Homelessness in East County* to address homelessness. Based on this Board action, staff developed an Implementation Plan to collaborate with developers and community partners to identify suitable locations for emergency shelters and safe lots, create a flexible funding program to overcome housing stability barriers, enhance outreach and case management services, and improve data collection and analysis throughout the County.

A key part of this plan was the introduction of emergency shelter concepts, including sleeping cabins, safe parking, and Recreational Vehicle (RV) safe camping, with wrap-around services provided to those utilizing these facilities. These options were identified to provide immediate, compassionate solutions for individuals experiencing homelessness while addressing their long-term needs. These efforts led to the launch of the Magnolia and Bancroft Safe Parking programs in the unincorporated communities of San Diego.

Additionally, the expansion of Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities (HSEC) Regional Homeless Services saw an increase in outreach and social worker staffing positions in East County, ensuring more comprehensive support for those in need and the potential to move people into more permanent housing. HSEC also established Specialized Funding for Imminent Needs, a flexible funding program instrumental in giving staff the necessary resources to assist individuals in overcoming obstacles to stable housing.

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In March 2024, the Board approved and authorized additional actions, including the design, development, and construction of the Willow RV Senior and Family Parking Project. This project proposed 17 safe RV parking spots for RV owners experiencing homelessness, with on-site case managers to connect participants with needed resources and services, and housing navigation to help them transition to a more permanent housing solution. According to a recent update from HSEC and DGS, total construction costs for the site is estimated to be \$5 million, and annual operating costs to be over \$900,000.

On September 24, 2024, the Board is anticipated to receive the Enterprise-wide Assessment of Homeless Services Report from the Office of Evaluation Performance and Analytics. In this report, staff anticipates the assessments of 48 programs dedicated to preventing, addressing, or eliminating homelessness in the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), the Public Safety Group (PSG), and the Land Use Environmental Group (LUEG). This report will provide valuable information regarding the efficacy of County strategies to date and inform where future investments from the County will have the best impact moving forward.

As a result, I am recommending that County staff finish design and obtain the building permit for Willow RV Family and Senior Parking Project in order to be shovel-ready, and pause the construction phase while evaluating alternative options based on the upcoming program evaluations. Before committing over \$5 million to a site that only serves 17 households at a time, it is essential to review and understand the findings from upstream prevention programs and the cost analysis of existing homeless programs. This pause will allow the Board to make informed decisions based on the anticipated study's results, which may indicate more cost-effective approaches.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

SUPERVISOR JOEL ANDERSON

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to complete design and obtain the building permit, then place Willow RV Family and Senior Parking project on pause pending further analysis.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to review findings of the Enterprise-wide Assessment of Homeless Services Report and report back to the board with recommendations on cost-effective options to optimize its use of available resources to address homelessness.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed pause on the Willow Road RV Senior and Family Parking Project will ensure that the most cost-effective and sustainable solutions are used to address homelessness. This will allow the County to allocate limited resources more efficiently and address the diverse needs of vulnerable populations in a more equitable manner.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

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By reevaluating this project, the County ensures that its limited resources are allocated in a manner that maximizes impact and efficiency. This approach allows for a more thoughtful and equitable distribution of services, addressing the diverse needs of vulnerable populations while aligning with the most current legal and governmental guidelines. The pause reflects a strategic, forward-thinking approach that prioritizes long-term solutions and sustainability in the County's efforts to combat homelessness.

FISCAL IMPACT

A total of \$4.9 million was set aside in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Framework to support one-time construction costs associated with Willow Recreational Vehicle Senior and Family Parking Project. Approximately \$0.6 million in costs are anticipated to have been incurred by August 27, 2024, leaving a balance of approximately \$4.3 million available within the ARPA Framework for the construction project. These funds will be held while the project is paused as staff explore additional options for consideration. There may be fiscal impact associated with recommendations on alternative options for homeless solutions in the region that would be identified in the staff report back and would be subject to future Board actions. ARPA funds must be obligated by the Treasury's deadline of December 31, 2024. At this time, there will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

By ensuring that limited resources are allocated efficiently, and that the most cost-effective and sustainable solutions are implemented, the County can improve overall community stability and reduce the economic strain associated with homelessness. These efforts will contribute to a healthier, safer environment, which in turn can enhance the business climate by attracting customers, and new opportunities, ultimately fostering economic growth and development.

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

The County has undertaken several major initiatives in the past three years to intensify its efforts to address the region's ongoing homeless crisis. The tangible outcomes of these efforts have been substantial. For example, the launch of the Magnolia Safe Parking Program currently serves up to 17 households, while the Bancroft Safe Parking Program will serve 27 households on any given night. In March 2023, the County introduced the Pilot Shallow Rental Subsidy Program, providing a monthly rental subsidy of \$500 for 18 months to nearly 400 low-income seniors selected through a randomized selection process. Given that seniors aged 55 and older make up a significant portion of San Diego County's homeless population, this program represents a critical step in offering targeted support to one of the most vulnerable groups.

Last month, the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 in favor of the City of Grants Pass, determining that local jurisdictions enforcing anti-camping bans, even if homeless people have no other place to go, do not violate the Eighth Amendment's prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment. This ruling

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overturned the *Martin v. City of Boise* decision that restricted local jurisdictions' responses to homeless encampments since 2018. In addition to the Supreme Court ruling, Governor Gavin Newsom issued executive order N-1-24 on July 25, 2024, directing state agencies and departments to adopt clear policies that urgently address homeless encampments. Governor Newsom emphasized that local governments now possess the necessary tools and authority to address encampments and to assist those living in them by providing essential resources.

Additionally, in September the Board of Supervisors will receive the Enterprise-wide Assessment of Homeless Services Report from the Office of Evaluation Performance and Analytics. In this report, staff anticipates the assessments of 48 programs dedicated to preventing, addressing, or eliminating homelessness in the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), the Public Safety Group (PSG), and the Land Use Environmental Group (LUEG). This report will provide valuable information regarding the efficacy of County strategies to date and inform where future investments from the County will have the best impact moving forward.

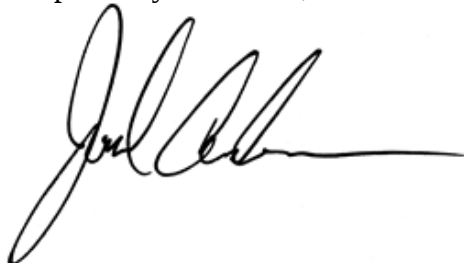
In light of these developments, it is essential that the County pause and assess the approach before committing additional resources to the Willow Road RV Senior and Family Parking Project. This pause will enable the Board of Supervisors to make informed decisions based on the anticipated Board-directed enterprise-wide homeless services assessment, which may indicate that there are now more effective approaches to consider as an alternative to Willow project.

I am, therefore, requesting that staff finish design and obtain the building permit, then place this shovel-ready project on temporary pause while County staff can explore alternative options to ensure the optimal use of available resources. This will allow the County to improve its efforts, ensuring they remain impactful and sustainable in addressing homelessness in our community.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed action supports the County of San Diego's vision of Live Well San Diego and aligns with the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan and Strategic Initiatives by providing safety for all communities and improving the well-being of our residents and environments. This action also reflects a commitment to fiscal responsibility and sustainability by ensuring that resources are allocated effectively to programs and projects that deliver the greatest impact.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel Anderson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

JOEL ANDERSON
Supervisor, Second District

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ATTACHMENT(S)

PDF Attachment – United States Supreme Court, *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson*

PDF Attachment – United States Supreme Court, *Martin v. City of Boise*

PDF Attachment – Governor Gavin Newsom, EXECUTIVE ORDER N-1-24