Agenda Item #13.7
For Council Meeting of: October 22, 2024

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: MEGAN BASINGER, DIRECTOR, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
SUBJECT: EXTENSION OF PROCLAMATION OF LOCAL HOMELESS EMERGENCY

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Housing and Community Services Department that the Council, by resolution, approve an extension of Resolution No. 28839 which formally proclaimed a local homeless emergency within Santa Rosa.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On August 9, 2016, pursuant to the authority set forth in California Government Code Sections 8630 through 8634, Council, by Resolution No. 28839, formally proclaimed a local homeless emergency within Santa Rosa. Section 8630 requires that the Council review the need for continuing the local emergency at least every 60 days until such local emergency is terminated. (Section 8630 previously required review every 30 days.) Council has approved an extension of the proclamation of local homeless emergency on a regular basis since the original proclamation in August 2016. In light of the continuing conditions of homelessness within the City, staff is recommending that the Council maintain the proclamation in full force and effect at this time. If approved, this will be the seventy-sixth extension.

BACKGROUND

1. On August 9, 2016, the Council formally recognized a homelessness emergency within Santa Rosa through the following: 1) adopted Resolution No. 28838 declaring a homeless shelter crisis; 2) adopted Resolution No. 28839 proclaiming a local homeless emergency; and 3) by motion, directed the Mayor to submit a letter requesting for a gubernatorial state of emergency proclamation.

2. Government Code Section 8630 requires that the Council review the need for continuing the local homeless emergency (Item No.2), at least every 60 days until such local emergency is terminated.

3. Council has approved an extension of the proclamation of local homeless emergency on a regular basis in accordance with Section 8630 since the original proclamation in August 2016.

4. In light of the continuing conditions of homelessness within the City, staff is recommending that the Council maintain the proclamation in full force and effect at this time. If approved, this will be the seventy-sixth extension.

5. The City is engaged in a range of efforts to address homelessness as part of its Homelessness Solutions Strategic Plan, including increased investment in short and long-term solutions, improved coordination across City departments and with stakeholders, and participation in regional efforts with the Sonoma County Homeless Coalition (formerly known as the Sonoma County Continuum of Care, CoC). City investments to support persons experiencing homelessness include daytime drop-in services, street outreach, low-barrier housing-focused emergency shelters and a Safe Parking Program, a winter warming center, housing assistance, and supportive services focused on moving people from homelessness to housing. The City has also implemented the City Encampment Team, an interdepartmental team that proactively addresses the health, safety, and environmental concerns associated with encampments.

6. The declarations provide the City with greater flexibility to address the homeless crisis by waiving certain health, safety, and zoning restrictions for the use of public property (declaration of shelter crisis) or private property (declaration of local homeless emergency) to create additional shelter for persons experiencing homelessness.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On July 19, 2016, staff presented to Council three options for emergency declarations concerning homelessness, including declaration of shelter crisis, declaration of local emergency, and request for a gubernatorial state of emergency proclamation, and sought direction regarding Council's interest in pursuing these options. Council directed that staff return with documentation for all three options.

On August 9, 2016, the Council formally recognized a homelessness emergency within Santa Rosa through the following 1) adopted Resolution No. 28838 declaring a homeless shelter crisis; 2) adopted Resolution No. 28839 proclaiming a local homeless emergency; and 3) by motion, directed the Mayor to submit a letter requesting for a gubernatorial state of emergency proclamation.

Since the original proclamation in August 2016, Council approved extensions of the proclamation of local homeless emergency initially on a monthly basis, and, after Section 8630 was amended to extend the time for reviewing the emergency to no more than every 60 days, at least every 60 days.

ANALYSIS

1. A local homeless emergency continues to exist in Santa Rosa as described in Resolution No. 28839, adopted by Council on August 9, 2016, including as follows: (Note: the statistical information contained in Resolution NO 28839 has been updated with current data.)

   a. Sonoma County's 2024 point-in-time count identified 2,522 homeless persons on a given night, 1,577 (63%) of whom were unsheltered; and
   b. The 2024 point-in-time count identified 1,365 homeless persons in Santa Rosa which represents 54% of the total County-wide count, 701 (51%) of whom were unsheltered; and
   c. The community's homeless population includes veterans, women, children, persons with disabilities, seniors and other vulnerable populations; and
   d. There is a shortage of available and affordable housing units in Santa Rosa due to the very low rental vacancy rate; and
   e. Although current programs offered by the City and local non-profit service providers are providing assistance to many persons living without permanent housing, a significant number of persons within the City still remain without the ability to obtain shelter; and
   f. Many of those unable to obtain shelter continue to reside on the streets, along creeks and pathways, in alleys and doorways, and in unauthorized encampments throughout the City; and
   g. Persons without shelter are also often without adequate cooking or sanitary facilities, are at risk from theft, crime and extreme weather conditions, and are without security; and
   h. Such conditions result in a critical threat to the physical and mental health and safety of those experiencing homelessness; and
   i. Such conditions also result in a threat to the natural environment and the public health and well-being of the surrounding community; and
   j. To address these conditions, significant additional public and private resources must be brought to bear, with efforts focused on both short-term immediate health and safety measures and long-term solutions to homelessness; and
   k. The scope of the local homeless crisis is beyond the resources of the City standing alone and will require the combined forces of adjacent jurisdictions and state agencies; and
   l. The causes and effects of homelessness are complex and can be addressed only with dedication, coordination and flexibility.

2. These conditions continue to pose extreme peril to the safety of persons and property within the territorial limits of the City, thus necessitating the continuation of the proclamation of local homeless emergency at this time.

FISCAL IMPACT

Extending the proclamation of local homeless emergency does not have a fiscal impact on the General Fund, however, staff does not know for certain at this time the potential impacts of continuing the proclamation.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This resolution and the actions taken and/or proposed herein are not a project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) since they are activities that are excluded from the definition of a project by section 21065 of the California Public Resources Code and section 15378(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines. The proposed actions are organizational or administrative activities of government which will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment. These actions are also exempt from CEQA as specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency pursuant to section 21080(b)(4) and section 15269(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines. They also are exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (existing facilities) and, to the extent there are minor/temporary uses of land having a negligible or no permanent effect on the environment, these activities are exempt under Section 15304(e) of the CEQA Guidelines.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable

ATTACHMENTS

- Resolution – Extending a Proclamation of Local Homeless Emergency

PRESENTER

Sasha Brown, Homeless Services Program Specialist