

**BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HALF MOON BAY**

**AGENDA REPORT**

For meeting of: **March 20, 2018**

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**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**VIA:** David Boesch, Interim City Manager

**FROM:** Matthew Chidester, Deputy City Manager  
Jennifer Acuña, Management Analyst

**TITLE: HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT CLEANUP UPDATE**

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive an update on the homeless encampment cleanup efforts and affirm remaining steps in the cleanup and remediation work.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The FY 2017-18 budget includes \$290,000 for encampment cleanup efforts. Staff is not requesting any additional appropriation at this time.

**STRATEGIC ELEMENT:**

This update and recommendation supports the Infrastructure and Environment and the Healthy Communities and Public Safety Elements of the Strategic Plan.

**BACKGROUND:**

Over the last several years, the number of homeless individuals living in encampments in the City has grown, creating concern among the community for both the health and safety of the homeless, as well as residents, visitors and the environment. Many of the encampments have been established in designated Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHAs) adjacent to and within Pilarcitos Creek. A cursory review of many of the sites indicates that significant environmental impacts and degradation have and will continue to occur without intervention.

At the City Council retreat in February 2017, the Council established its priorities for FY 2017-18. One of the identified priorities was the clean-up of the homeless encampments in Pilarcitos Creek, particularly behind the Strawflower Village shopping center.

On December 5, 2017, the City Council approved a plan for homeless encampment cleanup. The plan included a three-stage approach: (1) develop and implement case plans for each member of the encampments to identify and remove barriers to relocating to shelter or other housing, working closely with County and other service providers toward the goal of helping individuals

find permanent and stable housing, (2) engage an environmental firm to assist in remediation efforts for the affected Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHAs), and (3) develop and implement measures to protect the ESHAs and discourage the re-habitation of the encampment areas in the future. At the same meeting, the Council approved a contract with H.T. Harvey & Associates to begin site assessments, develop an environmental remediation plan, and prepare and file permits with various Federal and State regulatory agencies.

On January 4, 2018, staff from the City, Lifemoves and Coastside Hope engaged with individuals in the encampments and distributed the initial notice of encampment closure. This was intended to serve as 90-day notice of the anticipated closure date. On January 17<sup>th</sup>, H.T. Harvey performed its initial assessment of the encampment areas. On January 30<sup>th</sup>, staff distributed the second notice of encampment closure, approximately 60 days before the anticipated closure date. This notice also included information about a scheduled intensive service day, and bilingual copies of the notice were posted intermittently along the edge of the encampments, specifically near access points and higher traffic areas.

On February 8<sup>th</sup>, the City hosted an intensive service day event, in the parking area behind Safeway adjacent to the largest encampment area. The service day was organized and attended by City and County Human Services Agency staff, along with other County and nonprofit service providers, to complement existing services that continue to be offered on an ongoing basis. The service day provided an opportunity for individuals to seek multiple services in a “one-stop” environment and, where possible, begin intake or eligibility assessments to begin receiving services. A total of 14 County and nonprofit agencies were represented by 27 staff and served 51 “duplicate clients” (meaning some clients may have been counted more than once if they connected with multiple service providers) who received general information about services and several of which engaged in an intake or enrollment process.

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, staff distributed and posted the third notice of encampment closure, approximately 30 days before the anticipated closure date. Staff has also issued a request for bids for interested firms that can provide services related to the initial cleanup of the encampment, including debris removal, hazmat removal, and collection and itemization of personal items found in the encampment area, in accordance with state law. The results of the bid process are not available at the time of the writing of this memo, but will be included in the staff presentation to Council.

Staff continues to work closely with the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT team) and attends monthly multi-disciplinary meetings to receive updates on individual case plans and collaborate to identify additional services and supports that will help the individuals currently residing in the encampments. To date, several individuals have entered shelter, mental health or substance abuse outpatient treatment programs, or have obtained housing. Sadly, a long-term resident passed away in the encampment recently, which was a reminder of the risks associated with homelessness and the need to help individuals find shelter and permanent housing. The HOT Team remains in contact with many of these individuals and strives to connect them with needed services.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **Encampment Closure and Cleanup**

The next steps in the encampment cleanup plan include distributing and posting additional notices, holding a second, more focused intensive service day, and closure of the encampment area from existing and future habitation. Once closed, cleanup efforts will begin immediately, with an initial focus on removing the large amounts of debris that have accumulated throughout the encampments, as well as dismantling and removing several illegal structures that have been erected. During the debris removal, any personal property discovered will be documented and stored for a period of up to 90 days, and a process will be developed and posted for homeless individuals who wish to recover their property. Hazardous material removal will also be necessary to remove and remediate any hazardous materials discovered in the encampment areas.

Prior to completion of the initial cleanup work, H.T. Harvey will complete its assessment of the environmental conditions and complete development of a remediation plan and related materials necessary for submittal to the various permitting agencies. The extent of remediation is not fully known at present and will not be known until consultation with the permitting agencies, but it is expected that remediation work will include removal of cape ivy, which is damaging trees and obscuring views into the area behind Safeway in particular. Throughout the cleanup and remediation work, temporary fencing will be necessary to identify project areas, restrict access to the ESHAs, and protect vulnerable species.

Staff anticipates bringing a contract for cleanup services to the City Council at its April 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. The natural end to the rainy season is typically mid-April, although the rainy season has been slightly delayed this year and could continue well into spring. In order for the contractor to develop their cleanup approach and mobilize resources, staff will coordinate the second, client focused intensive service day on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, with closure of the encampment the following day. Initial cleanup efforts will begin on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and are expected continue through the end of the month. Environmental remediation efforts will take place throughout the summer.

### **Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas from Future Encampment**

Although every effort is being made to engage homeless individuals living on the Coast, it is unrealistic to expect every individual to accept services and shelter, especially in existing shelters and other transitional housing options on the bayside of San Mateo County. Many individuals are likely to remain in the City and simply relocate to other areas for habitation. It is also possible that individuals may attempt to return to the current encampment areas to re-establish habitation. The Homeless Outreach Team will continue to provide case management services to individuals experiencing homelessness in Half Moon Bay with the goal of connecting them to permanent housing.

In order to protect current encampment sites and other ESHAs throughout the City from future habitation, staff recommends the following three-stage approach, as shown in more detail

below: (1) site identification, assessment and case management, (2) abatement, and (3) re-encampment prevention.

<p>Site identification, assessment and case management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff will periodically patrol known prior encampment sites, and the public may report a homeless encampment by contacting the Department of Public Works</li> <li>• Reports of homeless encampments will trigger a Homeless Outreach Team visit to the encampment to determine the number of individuals experiencing homelessness, conduct needs assessments and provide intensive case management</li> <li>• City staff will conduct a site assessment if the site is within City limits</li> </ul>
<p>Abatement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued case management</li> <li>• Limited timeline and noticing for individuals to obtain services or vacate the site</li> <li>• City staff, Sheriff’s Department and the Homeless Outreach Team clear the site and connect remaining individuals to services</li> <li>• Temporary fencing during site cleanup</li> <li>• Utilize contractors for cleanup and remediation</li> </ul>
<p>Re-encampment prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posting of legal signage on all City owned properties</li> <li>• Deterrence measures taken (fencing, security patrols/cameras)</li> <li>• Ongoing maintenance and security</li> </ul>

In order to remain responsive to abatement needs for the foreseeable future, the City will need to enter into ongoing contracts with specialized cleanup firms and private security providers, which can be called in on short notice to assist in the removal and protection of future encampment sites. Additional fencing and signage improvements may also be necessary to prevent access to ESHAs if they become attractive for homeless habitation.

Finally, the Half Moon Bay Coastside Homeless Housing Collaborative is working to identify potential short-term and long-term housing options. Staff has assisted the Collaborative with zoning and process information, but at the time of writing this report has not received a formal proposal for any new projects related to housing homeless individuals.

The City remains committed to helping its homeless residents connect with services and support programs that will help them overcome barriers to permanent and sustainable housing. In addition to the plans set forth in this report, staff will continue to develop relationships with service providers and identify best practices to continually serve the most vulnerable members of our community.