

Staff Report

**EMERGENCY RESIDENCE PROJECT FY 2015/16 DRAWDOWN
AND DEFINITION OF “AMES RESIDENT”**

November 22, 2016

BACKGROUND:

In July, the City Council authorized staff to carry forward the \$28,272.42 that remained unpaid under the Emergency Residence Project's FY 2015/16 contract for shelter services. This was done to allow City staff more time to reconcile billings where clients were submitted to both the City and the County for drawdown in the same period.

Since then, City staff has met with ERP staff on several occasions, and has reviewed client records from ERP to more accurately judge which client stays should be paid by which funder. Because ASSET contracts require agencies to keep three years of records, this review was limited to the 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 fiscal years. City staff reviewed each client stay during that period and used the available information to determine whether the client should be considered a City, County, or out-of-county client.

The method previously used by ERP to submit bills to the City and the County involved taking selected client entries each month and submitting some to the City and some to the County. When a client stayed over into the following month, that client appeared on multiple monthly spreadsheets, with the first entry not indicating an exit date. Therefore, in some instances the same client was submitted to both the County and the City, and because only one entry would contain the complete record of the client stay, it created the appearance of a double-billing. It should be noted that staff has discussed this previous billing method with ERP and is confident future billings will not be so confusing.

Because City staff was unable to verify the client entry and exit dates using an independent source besides the billings, staff chose to separate clients into groups based on the residence recorded (Ames, Story County, and outside Story County). After sorting clients by funder type, staff found that in both FY 2013/14 and FY 2014/15, ERP provided more nights of shelter to City-eligible clients than the number of contracted units. Therefore, it was appropriate for ERP to draw its full City contract amount in those years.

In FY 2015/16, the City contract called for ERP to provide 2,919 nights of shelter to City clients in exchange for \$68,500. The review indicates that ERP provided a total of 2,824 City client-nights of shelter. Another 16 client-nights are likely to be City clients in City staff's opinion based on the context of the entry in ERP's records. However, complete information was not available.

An additional point of information mentioned in previous discussions with the City Council regarding ERP is that the Ames Police Department is a source of referrals for the shelter. According to the data provided by ERP, 192 client-nights of shelter were provided to individuals referred by APD who were considered non-Ames clients. A case could be made that these client-nights of service should be considered for City funding since they were referred to ERP by City staff.

FY 2015/16 ERP Records Review

Type of service	Number of shelter-nights	Cost at \$23.47/unit	Contract Balance Remaining
<i>ORIGINAL CONTRACT</i>	<i>~2919</i>	<i>\$ 68,500</i>	<i>\$ 68,500</i>
City client nights of shelter	2,824	66,279.28	2,220.72
Add'l likely City client nights	16	375.52	1,845.20
Add'l APD referrals	192	4,506.24	0
TOTAL	3,032	\$ 71,161.04	\$ 0

DRAWDOWN OPTIONS:

- 1. Allow ERP to draw down the 2,824 nights of shelter provided in FY 2015/16 to clients who were definitively from Ames.** This option would allow ERP to draw all but \$2,220.72 of its FY 2015/16 allocation.
- 2. Allow ERP to draw down the 2,824 nights of shelter to Ames residents plus the 16 additional nights of shelter provided to those who were likely Ames clients.** This option would allow ERP to draw down all but \$1,845.20 of its FY 2015/16 allocation.
- 3. Allow ERP to draw down the 2,824 definitively Ames units of service, plus the 16 units of service likely from Ames, plus the 192 Ames Police Department referrals.** This option would allow the entire undrawn balance in ERP's FY 2015/16 allocation to be drawn down. **If this option is selected, City staff would like Council to indicate whether it is the expectation that Ames Police Department referrals will be paid by the City as "City clients" in the future.**

CLIENTS FUNDED BY OTHER SOURCES AND RESIDENCY

At the April 26, 2016, City Council meeting, the City Council asked that City staff 1) explain how ERP has historically been financing Ames clients once the City's allocation has been fully exhausted, and 2) provide options for the definition of "Ames resident."

In visiting with ERP staff, it appears that once the City's allocation has been fully drawn down, clients who would have otherwise been eligible for City funding are provided

shelter using ERP's donor funds. ERP has indicated in the past that it has turned away clients, primarily due to a lack of space in the shelter or at the local motels ERP contracts with when the shelter is full as opposed to a lack of funding.

In other ASSET services, the residency of clients is a key consideration in determining which funder provides funds to the agency and in what amounts. ASSET volunteers use client residency information provided by the agencies to ensure that City funds aid City clients, ISU Student Government funds aid ISU student clients, and so forth. Residency information is also used to ensure that in larger programs, ASSET funds are not being used outside the area, where they will not directly benefit the residents of the Ames/ISU/Story County area.

With the sheltering services provided by ERP, "residency" is naturally difficult to define. Previously, ERP has used the measure of where a person last received mail or the address indicated on an ID card as factors in determining what address to record for its clients. In the past several weeks, ERP has modified its intake process. **Information is now gathered from incoming clients regarding where they stayed the night before arriving at the shelter, and how long they had been living in that situation.**

Staff researched other potential methods to determine residency, but was unable to identify any effective, commonly used measures. Factors that staff identified as possibilities through research, but which staff could not find practical examples of, include 1) where a person last received mail, 2) where a person last registered to vote, or 3) where a person last had a relationship with a social services agency or received public assistance. However, the clients using ERP's services come from chaotic life situations and can be vulnerable. It is likely that not all will have connections to government agencies or documented social services.

Using measures such as these to determine residency may be beneficial as a clear "test" of whether a client is from Ames or not, but it is also likely to result in clients who have lived in Ames for some time but do not have those connections being funded through ERP's donations and not through City ASSET funds.

RESIDENCY OPTIONS:

Based on recent discussions with the City Council, staff has communicated to ERP that it will only accept clients for City funding whose last mailing address was Ames. The City Council may choose to continue that practice or modify it using one or more of the options that follow:

- 1. Continue allowing ERP to claim as City clients those whose last mailing address was Ames.** This has been the practice that the City Council identified most recently it would like to pursue.

2. **Allow ERP to claim as City clients those who stayed in Ames for some period prior to entering the shelter.** This is now the prevailing method used by ERP to determine residency in lieu of asking for an ID card. The City Council would have to determine what length of time would be required to meet this criterion (e.g., one day, one week, thirty days, etc.).
3. **Allow ERP to claim as City clients those who are clients at a local social services agency but that do not have any documentation identifying them as a resident of another community.**
4. **Allow ERP to claim as City clients those who are registered to vote or have a driver's license or other identification listing an Ames address.**