

ITEM #: 27
DATE: 01-14-25
DEPT: ADMIN

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION APPROVING THE REALLOCATION OF \$11,250 TOWARDS HOMELESSNESS OUTREACH

BACKGROUND:

At the November 12, 2024 Council meeting, Council approved up to \$15,000 towards partnering with Iowa State University (ISU) Extension and Outreach to 1) convene service providers to develop an inventory of services for the homeless, including a map of where service agencies are located and 2) conduct outreach activities with the unsheltered populations. Council also approved \$500 towards purchasing supplies to support outreach efforts.

To date, of the \$15,000 allocated, \$3,750 has been used and the remaining amount is \$11,250. The amount expended has been used convene service providers to develop a list of services offered and to create an online map, both which are still being reviewed and will be made available online in late-January.

Since the November 12 Council meeting, outreach activities have not been conducted by ISU Extension and Outreach, but rather by a local outreach team consisting of the Alternative Response for Community Health (ARCH), the City's Mental Health Advocate, and the Mary Greeley Medical Center Social Worker. Other local social service providers have occasionally joined the team as time allows.

Since November, the outreach team has:

- Successfully housed four individuals who were living on the streets- one of whom was living in a hut near the river.
- Conducted weekly outreach to Romero House and established relationships with staff and those who utilize the Romero House. The team has been able to hear about the needs, stories, and concerns of those in our community who are struggling with permanent housing.
- Engaged with individuals sleeping on the street and assisted with getting them hotel rooms through The Salvation Army and also connected these individuals to The Bridge Home, Central Iowa Community Services, and other community resources.
- Provided basic first aid to individuals encountered who need the assistance.

Some insights gained through the outreach so far reveal that:

- There is a great need for permanent supportive housing, where case management and wrap around services are provided.
- There are many individuals and families who are struggling to maintain long-term employment and housing for a variety of reasons. Many of the high-risk individuals the team has encountered struggle with serious mental health and substance use issues that prevent them from holding employment, relationships, and housing.
- Due the complexity and high-risk cases being encountered; the team has not been able to address the families in our community that are on the verge of homelessness.
- Community education will be important around why there is chronic homelessness in Story

County, what providers can and cannot do, and what barriers to success unsheltered individuals are experiencing.

The outreach team will continue to conduct outreach weekly throughout the winter months and gather information about the unsheltered population they are encountering. The team will reevaluate the outreach activities in the spring. Information learned and services provided will help inform the community at large at where there are gaps in assisting the unsheltered population. The information gathered will also be shared with Analytic Insight, the consultant recently hired to develop a county-wide action plan around homelessness. This plan is anticipated to be available the end of April.

Based on the outreach team's observations and experiences encountered so far, it is clear that additional social service providers are needed, and many social workers or agencies are operating at maximum capacity. The need for assistance seems to outweigh the number of professionals that can help with the enormous and complex needs of the community.

The outreach team has found some solace in conducting outreach together as they can better assess and address various encounters collectively on the spot, eliminating the time lag that can exist communicating across agencies.

An interim way to help the outreach team is through providing some flex funds to purchase transportation services, food vouchers, first aid supplies, socks, hats, water/food, etc. for individuals they encounter who need immediate assistance. Staff is therefore, proposing to pilot a flex fund to support homelessness outreach as a way to assist the unsheltered population in a timelier manner. Staff, therefore, is requesting that the remaining unspent remaining fund dedicated to ISU Extension and Outreach (\$11,250) be reallocated to the outreach team as they continue to conduct outreach over the next several months.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Reallocate the unspent \$11,250 from the ISU Extension and Outreach agreements to the local outreach team to use as a pilot flex fund to be used as needs arise during outreach activities with unsheltered individuals.
2. Deny the request.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Equipping the outreach team with this flex fund will allow the team to address needs encountered in a timelier manner. This is intended to be a pilot effort that will be reevaluated over time to gauge its impact. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager to adopt Alternative No. 1 as listed above.