



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:
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Agenda Item Number: 8

Agenda Date: March 20, 2024

In Control: Governance Committee Meeting

DEPARTMENT: Department of Human Services

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Melody Woosley

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Council Consideration Request on the prioritization of Homeless Outreach and Abatement in sensitive community locations.

SUMMARY:

On November 11, 2023, Councilmember Marina Alderete Gavito submitted a Council Consideration Request (CCR) calling for staff to prioritize homeless outreach and abatement in sensitive community locations regarding the unsheltered population.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Since 2018, the Department of Human Services (DHS) has coordinated an interdepartmental response to homeless encampments, which includes assessment of health and safety concerns, outreach and connection to resources, notification of impending abatement at least 48 hours in advance, and site abatement.

The FY 2024 Budget included funds to increase site abatement to 700 in FY 2024 to address the health and safety issues encampments pose to inhabitants and neighbors. The City committed to addressing reported encampment sites within two weeks and increased housing and shelter resources to provide stability for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, to include through the SAMMinistries low-barrier, non-congregate shelter.

ISSUE:

Councilmember Marina Alderete Gavito's CCR requests staff "prioritize the abatement of urban encampments in, or near, sensitive areas while simultaneously connecting our unsheltered population with the resources and expertise our city and community partners provide."

The CCR states as its goals to:

- Prioritize abatements of encampments in areas deemed sensitive.
- Ensure the city is enhancing efforts to provide outreach plus wrap-around services to the unsheltered population consistently to connect these individuals to the help and support they need
- Review of the Absentee Property Registration Program

The CCR identifies sensitive areas as:

- Residential neighborhoods
- Areas In Proximity to Schools
- Public Parks
- Areas In Proximity to Linear Creekway Trails
- Drainage Easements
- Flood Plains
- Dilapidated Homes
- Dilapidated Businesses

DHS coordinates outreach and encampment abatement to all areas with identified homeless encampments that impact the health and safety of the community and individuals experiencing homelessness. To meet our original service commitment of abating encampments within two weeks being reported, staff made the following changes which were effective February 1, 2024: increased abatement activities from 3 days a week to 5 days a week, established a recurring abatement list of 32 sites that are automatically scheduled every two weeks, and placed signs at these recurring sites that state these sites will be abated every two weeks and our outreach team visits these monthly to ensure homeless are offered services. As of March 14, 2024, recurring encampment cleanups are done within 2 weeks and reported encampment cleanups to include the necessary outreach are completed on average within 12.7 days.

Additionally, DHS already prioritizes encampments located near schools and those with significant biohazard material identified near residential neighborhoods and schools (exposed syringes, human waste, etc.); drainage channel and obstruction of flood control infrastructure; and reports of serious criminal activity and fires. In FY 2023, 45% of site abatements were conducted in drainage facilities. When encampments are identified as posing a serious and immediate threat

to health and safety of inhabitants of the encampment and the community, the 48 hour notice requirement is reduced or suspended and the encampment abatement date is moved to the soonest available time.

FISCAL IMPACT:

For briefing purposes only

ALTERNATIVES:

For briefing purposes only

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends continuation of the current policy to abate all reported encampments within 2 weeks and to prioritize areas identified as sensitive including proximity to schools and residential neighborhoods: impacting drainage and flood control infrastructure; and those areas identified with biohazard material and criminal activity.

Staff will include in summary reports information on the locations of encampments abated. In addition, staff will continue proactive outreach and connection to all available resources within the community to advance the housing stability of the unsheltered population.