

Summary Notes of November 7, 2018 District 5 Dialogue on Homelessness

Supervisor Mary Adams called the community dialogue to order at 5:38 p.m. in the community room at the City of Monterey Public Library. There were 29 people in attendance, not including Supervisor Adams and Policy Advisor Yuri Anderson. Three people joined the meeting a few minutes after the Supervisor called it to order. Two people joined the meeting well after its beginning, but did not sign in. A total of 34 community members participated. The entire session was conducted as one large group, with all seated in a circle.

The four questions being posed at all HEAP community meetings were posted around the room in large face type for all participants to see. Each participant was given a copy of the 2017 Homeless Census 1-pager provided to the Supervisor's office by the Coalition of Homeless Services Providers Executive Director. Each participant also had a copy of the to A – H list of potential projects/services/programs noted under question three.

Following a brief review of homelessness in Monterey County and the HEAP opportunity, participants were invited to “describe the impact of homelessness to you and your community.” Participants had difficulty focusing on the single question, often venturing into potential solutions/uses for the additional resources provided by HEAP. The conversation was allowed to flow naturally. There was a strong consensus that short-term solutions, that could be put into place this winter, and long-term solutions were needed. As much as possible, these notes will use the words and phrases as the people spoke them.

Comments that emerged as themes related to the impact of homeless are noted in bold type face. Comments that were suggestions for program/service/program interventions are noted in bold and blue type face. A prioritized list of programs/services/programs and general approach is provided at the conclusion of these notes.

- 50% of foster youth become homeless
- Former foster youth often find themselves becoming homeless after exiting jail
- We release prisoners from jail at night, after shelters close with only a bus pass
- **Underlying mental issues, coupled with drug addiction, contribute to homelessness. Mental health services are critical.**
- Homeless persons often come to the Monterey County Peace and Justice Center (in Seaside) to seek refuge
- **An emergency shelter, in a permanent building, that provides an opportunity for rest and support is needed on the Peninsula – use HEAP funding to build permanent shelters**
- Remember that “chronic homeless” is only a subset of the total homeless population
- Many homeless, or “unhoused” people are currently or very capable of working and mental health isn't the cause of their homeless state
- **There is a link between the economy and homelessness**
- I don't like the term “homeless” because just providing a place to live isn't enough. I prefer the term “street living.”
- **People are situationally homeless and then you add on top of that that there aren't enough affordable rentals**
- A bridge between housing and employment is needed, especially for kids

- A woman who attends Gathering for Women found herself homeless after being a victim of sexual assault and domestic violence. She spent three weeks in a safe house and then had nowhere to go so she ended up on the street. Everything she owns she has to carry with her. She would like to look for a job, but doesn't have anywhere to leave her belongings when she does, so it becomes a "circulative" problem. She has lost 20-25lbs and was experiencing shame and bullying about being so thin and hungry. She won't ask for seconds in front of the other women because she fears being ridiculed.
- Rice+ Project feeds 1,500 families, many farm worker families, those using VTC and others "on the edge." **Providing adequate food, clothing, and shelter all needs to be a part of the picture.**
- **GAPS:**
 - o **access to lockers to keep belongs safe**
 - o **a place to take a shower and get dressed**
- **What is the cost per capita of serving the homeless in our hospital and jails? Perhaps we need to make an economic argument for those that are driven by compassion.**
- The homeless are "economic refugees."
- Homelessness is "tearing away pieces of my heart."
- **We are still suffering the effects of the 2008 economic downturn. People lost jobs and homes.**
- **We need to study what's working elsewhere. Don't reinvent the wheel, but instead learn from others.**
- **Be sure we are planning to sustain what we build** and not just create expectation for services that won't be there once the funding is gone.
- Create a targeted program to educate the elected on homeless to develop the political will to make change.
- **Use facilities that are underutilized to develop temporary and permanent shelters, like schools in the evenings. Repurpose "underperforming" hotels/motels and hire those that who the facilities to help maintain them.**
- **Explore "pop-up heat sources," like parking garages with heat lamps and trucks for food to get people out of the cold right now.** The City of Monterey has parking garages that could be used at night.
- **The Monterey Fairgrounds has everything needed to provide shelter and services to people.**
- There are many people, woman in particular, who are employed, but just don't earn a living wage and can't afford a home. These people join together to rent a hotel room, even just for a night. Some people live in cars, but they can't afford the gas to get to Salinas.
- **"It is shocking that we don't have an emergency shelter on the Monterey Peninsula. This is basic!"**
- People are dying from exposure.
- **We need an emergency shelter.**
- I-HELP is a great program with churches using their foyers to house men overnight, but the pick-up time (4 p.m.) makes it impossible for the men to find and keep a job.
- Churches are a resource that can be used and they are more than willing to help provide food and security.
- Don't forget that we have families with kids living in cars.

- "I live at 'ground zero' where the Board of Supervisor and City of Salinas are proposing to build a shelter." The location is too dangerous and congested for a shelter. There is no transparency about what they're doing. They held a meeting in a room that was too small for all the people who want to attend and then didn't give us a chance to talk. This meeting is much better. People are living in the creek beds and roaming the streets at night. We've formed "Creekbridge United." "Isn't there some place on Fort Ord or in Marina that they can put them?"
- **We need to move from NIMYB to YIMYB.**
- **There are a lot of elderly homeless women on the peninsula.**
- Women lose their homes after divorce.
- Homelessness hurts us all as a community.
- **"I don't want people to have to spend another winter in the cold and rain."**
- People are encamped in our parks, like Laguna Grande.
- People living outdoors with fires is a high danger issue as well.
- The Neighborhood Improvement Program suggested a study on a Monterey City owned public shelter.
- **We need leadership from our elected officials.**
- Homeless increases the risk of sex-trafficking, especially for the youth.
- There is a lot of NIMYBism in front of the Monterey City Council.
- **There are a lot of constituencies not represented here tonight. This conversation needs to be amplified and rippled out so when the implementation point comes, we have more support from the larger community.**
- The Laurel Yard site (in Salinas) is a great locale for a permanent shelter.
- We need to focus on housing first.
- **People need individualize space. Perhaps tiny homes, but just a room with a lock is good.**
- Focus shelter in-takes on the elderly, those receiving SSI and/or disability, and those with a record of working. Some people just want to live on the streets.
- Homeless in vehicles just need services. They already have shelter and you don't need to build anything for them.
- **We lack a shared definition of the homeless. We need to decide what segment of the homeless population we're trying to serve so the best solutions can be identified.**
- The homeless population in District 5 is multifaceted
- **Can we leverage private money? We need to.**
- **We're talking about a 2-tier emergency:**
 - o **1. Immediate need – this winter**
 - o **2. Long-term w/planning**

The funding should be divided as such.

At this point, the conversation shifted exclusively to the question of what projects/services/programs would help homeless people are quickly as possible. **All bullets in this section are solution ideas.**

- In Monterey, transportation is an issue. We need our shelters and warming centers to be in a central area where there is also the opportunity for work.
- We need warming shelters for the homeless that aren't willing to engage in services.
- We need different size facilities to help fight NIMYB mentality.

- Buy houses in neighborhoods and convert them to multi-room units.
- Look for gaps in what we have that we could build on
- Expanded emergency shelter **in MONTEREY** (near the library)
- Replicate I-HELP
- Appropriately scaled shelters **WITHIN** neighborhoods
- Monterey Parks could be a part of the solutions – Dawn Davie Park?
- Explore use of Rancho Canada in Carmel Valley as an I-HELP type location or for development of tiny homes – this would require a transportation plan
 - o Perhaps use HEAP funding to purchase buses/vans that could still be used after the funding is gone
- People on government support who need a location to recovery should be integrated into the community
- Invest in infrastructure and capital improvement – City of Monterey has a max 35 bed requirements in commercial zones
- Purchase “distressed” homes and “HGTV” them within the community by partnering with rebuilding organizations
- Repurpose portables that had previously been offices because they provide the private space homeless persons and families need
- Create a mobile home community with a shared community kitchen
- Incentivize property owners to rent their properties to homeless persons “on the verge” who have case management
- Incentivize the development of/renting of Granny-ADUs as Section 8 housing
- Offer low interest loans for the development of ADUs that property owners agree to rent to Section 8 voucher holders for certain amount of time
- Bring illegal ADUs in the light in exchange for renting to the homeless
- Open temporary warming shelters in parking garages – Maybe Del Monte Shopping Center as a 1-Starfish locale?
- House the homeless on Fort Ord and offer them bus passes to get there
- Reintroduce the Armory at MPC as a warming shelter
- Reintroduce use of showers at MPC for homeless persons
- Explore use of MPUSD school sites
- Provide showers in a truck like the Bay Area/SF Region

Prioritized programs/services/programs and general approach

1. Develop a plan that offers shelters of different sizes throughout the Peninsula, but focuses on a “neighborhood dispersion” model.
2. People who live on the street need to be integrated into the community. Our neighborhoods can house a mixture of housed and homeless persons.
3. At least one peninsula city needs to step up and say it will open a permanent shelter. That city should be Monterey.
4. Explore use of Rancho Canada as an I-HELP and Tiny Home location
5. Don’t allow all the money to be eaten up by bureaucracy and study