



**CITY OF TACOMA, WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST**

TO: Deputy Mayor Blocker & Members of the City Council

FROM: Mayor Victoria Woodards and Chief Policy Analyst Melanie Harding

COPIES TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager; Tadd Wille, Deputy City Mgr.; Bill Fosbre, City Attorney

SUBJECT: Council Consideration Request for an Ordinance Amending the State of Emergency related to Homelessness and Committing to participation in the Countywide Efforts to End Homelessness

DATE: March 24, 2021

I ask for your support for an Ordinance which would:

- Declare the Mayor and City Council's support of Pierce County and the Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness in their commitment to protect public health and safety by providing everyone experiencing homelessness a safe and secure space to sleep with resources to address their health and sanitation needs by November 2021, allowing sidewalks, parks, and right of ways to be available for those purposes they were designed to serve.
- Direct the City Manager or her designee to ensure appropriate city staff participation in Pierce County's Ad Hoc Committee, established to develop a countywide, Comprehensive Plan to End Homelessness over the next six months.
- Amend the declaration of emergency and the emergency authority originally granted pursuant to Ordinance 28565 – and as subsequently amended by Ordinance No. 28430, Ordinance No. 28457, Ordinance No. 28477, and Ordinance No. 28637 – to add City Council review of the progress toward meeting the condition to end the declaration of emergency on an annual basis.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT:

The Mayor and City Council have increasingly been concerned around the number of people residing in makeshift shelters or vehicles in parks, streets, and other rights of way as well as the need to address the health, safety, and wellbeing of those vulnerable residents. These concerns have been mirrored by an increased number of constituent questions and concerns being expressed on this issue, which is reflected in number of TacomaFIRST 311 requests related to homelessness since the declaration of emergency was enacted in 2017.

To address these needs, the Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS) Department worked with community partners to bring 230 temporary shelter beds online over the winter and established new shelter space for up to 125 residents at 2 Temporary Emergency Micro Shelter sites administered by the Low Income Housing Institute. At the same time, shelter capacities have been reduced due to the need to provide additional space in order to safely shelter each guest. NCS has performed three encampment removals since March 2020 (these activities are significantly restricted by CDC guidance related COVID-19) and 194 litter/trash/debris cleanups in and around encampments.

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened awareness and increased the level of concern with neighbors experiencing homelessness having access to resources to address their health and hygiene needs. Additionally, while there is currently rental assistance funding and potential state legislative action under development to address the issue, the eventual end of State and Federal eviction and foreclosure moratoria enacted in response to COVID-19 have the potential to compound existing issues related to housing and homelessness in unforeseen ways.

On Tuesday, March 23, 2021, the Pierce County adopted Resolution No. R2021-30s, establishing the “Comprehensive Plan to End Homelessness Ad Hoc Committee” of ten members to facilitate further planning to end homelessness. In accordance with Pierce County Resolution No. R2021-30s, the City of Tacoma has been invited to identify a representative to participate in the Ad Hoc Committee established to develop a countywide “Comprehensive Plan to End Homelessness” in no more than six months following passage of the County resolution. This work is moving quickly: The Pierce County Human Services Department is proceeding to establish an Ad Hoc Committee now to assist in developing an Action Plan to present to the Council on or before Friday, April 23. City participation in this County effort is anticipated to be covered with existing staff resources.

Simultaneously, while the City has been operating under the declaration of emergency outlined below, the City’s Neighborhood and Community Services Department is currently developing a formal 5-year, Tacoma-specific strategy to address homelessness, to be substantially complete by September 2021. The effort will include outreach to key community stakeholders and the County, the Continuum of Care and the Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness. Key components of this plan include:

- Addressing racial disparities and systemic causes of homelessness;
- Amplifying regional collaborations, community partnerships, and the continuum of care;
- Aligning efforts with Affordable Housing Action Strategy; and
- Identifying trauma-informed interventions to meet needs of specific populations.

The resources for strategy development are included in the existing Neighborhood and Community Services Budget for the 2021-2022 biennium. Specific strategies identified as part of the 5-year City strategy to address homelessness may result in requests for mid-biennium budget modifications.

On May 9, 2017, the City Council enacted Ordinance No. 28430 (the “Emergency Ordinance”) declaring a state of emergency related to the conditions of homeless encampments and authorizing such actions are reasonable and necessary to mitigate the conditions giving rise to the public emergency. Upon issuance of the declaration of emergency, the City began implementation of a Temporary Emergency Aid and Shelter Plan, which was formally approved by the City Council on June 9, 2017, with an estimated cost of \$3.4 million through December 2017.

On October 3, 2017, the City Council determined that the conditions giving rise to the public emergency were still present, and adopted Ordinance No. 28457, extending the declaration of emergency through December 31, 2017. On December 5, 2017, Council approved Ordinance No. 28477, extending the declaration of emergency to December 31, 2018, and authorizing additional expenditures of nearly \$7.0 million through the end of 2018. City Council approved Ordinance No. 28565, extending the declaration of emergency through the end of 2019, and providing continued funding for the Temporary Emergency Aid and Shelter Plan. On November 19, 2019, the City Council approved Ordinance No. 28637, adopting additional findings and extending the declaration of emergency to remain in effect until such time as there is shelter availability for 95 percent of unsheltered individuals in Tacoma as noted in the annual Point in Time Count. This Ordinance would require Mayor and Council review of the progress toward meeting the condition to end the declaration of emergency on an annual basis.

Due to the County’s fast pace on work of the Ad Hoc Committee established to develop a countywide “Comprehensive Plan to End Homelessness” and the continuing and urgent needs for quick action on the part of the City, this ordinance will be presented to Council as ‘emergency’ legislation requiring only one reading and becoming effective upon passage.

DESIRED ORDINANCE DATE: April 6, 2021

ALIGNMENT WITH TACOMA 2025 KEY FOCUS AREAS:

This legislation, program, project, or event is best aligned with the following (Check all that apply):

Livability: Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity

Improve health outcomes and reduce disparities, in alignment with the community health needs assessment and CHIP, for all Tacoma residents



Improve access and proximity by residents to diverse income levels and race/ethnicity to community facilities, services, infrastructure, and employment.

In you have a question related to the Council Consideration Request, please contact Chief Policy Analyst to the Mayor Melanie Harding at 253-591-5156 or melanie.harding@cityoftacoma.org.

SUBMITTED FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION BY: 
Mayor

SUPPORTING COUNCIL MEMBERS SIGNATURES (2 SIGNATURES ONLY)

(Signatures demonstrate support to initiate discussion and consideration of the subject matter by City Council for potential policy development and staff guidance/direction.)

1.  POS# 1
2.  POS# 3