



Memorandum

To: CITY COUNCIL

From: Mayor Sam Liccardo
Vice Mayor Chappie Jones
Councilmember Magdalena Carrasco
Councilmember Dev Davis
Councilmember Maya Esparza

Subject: SEE BELOW

Date: February 22, 2019

Approved:

SUBJECT: AGREEMENT WITH THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT FOR ENCAMPMENT ABATEMENT AND REVISED ENCAMPMENT ABATEMENT PROCEDURES

RECOMMENDATION

1. Accept staff's recommendations.
2. Direct the City Manager to establish an Encampment Clean-up Plan that would:
 - a. Identify encampments that are at risk of needing abatement;
 - b. Intensify outreach efforts to the unhoused folks who live in those encampments and include:
 - i. Engagement strategies like providing donated items like socks, or replacements for soiled sleeping bags or ripped tents;
 - ii. Clean-up approaches like providing empty garbage bags and sharps containers for later pick-up, offering "cash for trash," establishing honey bucket locations, and utilizing volunteers for cooperative clean-ups;
 - iii. Approaches that seek the input of homeless individuals to a) determine how their encampment can be maintained without polluting waterways and other sites and, better yet, b) work together to create and relocate to safer, legal alternatives, like prospective navigation centers or Bridge Housing sites, might be developed in another location or, potentially, nearby; and
 - iv. Coordination of this intensified outreach with the new transitional jobs program as well as the City's new bathroom and garbage receptacle access program—currently being developed in response to Council direction.
3. Return through the Budget process with a Manager's Budget Addendum estimating costs for this program, and itemizing, in particular, the "cash for trash" program.

BACKGROUND

No one at City Hall is comfortable with the idea of uprooting unhoused folk from the shelters and communities they've had to create along our rivers, creeks, and streets. Unfortunately, because of the public safety, public health, and environmental hazards that encampments pose, these cleanup efforts are sometimes necessary. The Housing Department, along with the Water District and the other City departments that have collaborated to update the MOA and our abatement procedures should be commended for balancing the stated desires and needs of folks who live outside with these other important community needs, as well as working hard to gather and consider the input of homeless individuals and advocates.

As we've all acknowledged, there's no better way to address the homelessness crisis than to work with County and private partners to build permanent supportive housing. However, there are other strategies that might help sooner. For one, we should redouble our efforts to find sites for navigation centers. CalTrans has offered several parcels for our Bridge Housing sites—and for that we thank them. We encourage staff to regroup with CalTrans and re-evaluate these sites as well as look for potential additional sites on these or other public or private lands.

Also in the interim, we should try to alleviate the pollution and public health issues in encampments. Just as we should keep lines of communication open with community members whose neighborhoods are impacted by encampments, we should also engage homeless individuals, incorporating them into the solution by seeking their feedback. Let's engage them in clean-up strategies that are likely more humane than abatements and might very well satisfy our legal and regulatory obligations to keep the waterways clean. The city of Minneapolis successfully engaged a 300-tent encampment of mostly-Native American residents and developed, in six weeks, a low-barrier 120-bed Navigation Center nearby where most of the encampment residents moved.¹ Seventy residents actually moved into permanent housing.

Brown Act Disclaimer

The signers of this memorandum have not had, and will not have, any private conversation with any other member of the City Council, or that member's staff, concerning any action discussed in the memorandum, and that each signer's staff members have not had, and have been instructed not to have, any such conversation with any other member of the City Council or that member's staff

¹ <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/how-minneapolis-managed-a-massive-homeless-encampment>