



COUNCIL AGENDA: 10/24/23

FILE: 23-1460

ITEM: 8.3

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Torres

SUBJECT: ACTIONS RELATED TO EMERGENCY INTERIM HOUSING PROGRAM

Approved

Date: October 24, 2023

RECOMMENDATION

1. Accept Mayor, Councilmembers Jimenez, Cohen & Foley memo.
2. Direct staff to closely monitor HomeFirst's performance in all City contracts, including any issues with their staff, and ensure contract performance metrics are met.

DISCUSSION

The recent allegations of egregious misconduct by HomeFirst in the media for reported instances of displaying photos of former Black employees in a handbook "like criminal mugshots," rescheduling Black employees who needed childcare, and terminating a Black employee who now faces homelessness are deeply disturbing. Many news outlets such as NBC Bay Area, SJ Spotlight, and KRON4 have reported on these actions that reflect a blatant disregard for basic human dignity and a clear violation of ethical and fair employment practices. Additionally, they have reported that HomeFirst misrepresents job opportunities to discourage Black employees from applying and requiring different standards between black and white employees, revealing a disturbing pattern of racial discrimination within the organization.

Furthermore, HomeFirst's track record in addressing the critical issue of homelessness in Santa Clara County is far from satisfactory. With only 8% of participants relocated into permanent housing last year in San José, it is evident that the organization's performance falls significantly short of the community's expectations. The recent decision by the Sunnyvale City Council not to renew their contract with the nonprofit underscores the growing dissatisfaction with their services. As we move forward with a new Request for Qualification in January, it is important to prioritize organizations that demonstrate transparency, accountability, and a commitment to addressing the needs of all community members.