



Memorandum

TO: RULES AND OPEN
GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: Councilmember Jimenez

SUBJECT: AUDIT OF BEAUTIFY-SJ

DATE: January 4, 2023

Approved

Date 01.04.2023

Recommendations

1. Direct the City Auditor to conduct an audit of BeautifySJ program safety, training, and employee support protocols, including:
 - a. Reviewing training provided to employees conducting encampment abatements and clean-ups, particularly those who work directly with unhoused individuals or are exposed to hazardous waste and other potentially hazardous conditions;
 - b. Reviewing the safety protocols in place for employees conducting encampment abatements and cleanups, including evaluation of protective gear and security;
 - c. Assessing potential impacts on staff who regularly conduct encampment abatements and work with and encounter people living in abject poverty or suffering from mental health conditions and addiction in encampments. This could include reviewing worker's compensation claims, staff turnover, absence, or vacancy rates, or other relevant data.

Analysis

In 2020, the Housing Department transferred encampment cleanups and abatements to the Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Department. This resulted in the BeautifySJ program expansion into homeless services. Prior to this change, BeautifySJ focused on litter cleanups, dumpster days, and graffiti abatement. Now program staff are tasked with cleaning up hazardous waste from homeless encampments and regularly encounter unhoused individuals who may be struggling with mental health conditions and addiction. These conditions may put employees at risk of injury on the job, expose them to hazardous waste, and impact their personal mental health. The extreme conditions that these employees encounter daily require that we be proactive about ensuring safe work conditions and protocols as well as providing sufficient health and mental health benefits. Abating and managing encampments in San Jose is one of the most difficult and potentially traumatic jobs in our city. This work is not only physically dangerous, but also can lead to secondary or vicarious trauma for those working under the constant stress and demand created by our homeless crisis. An audit of this work will help us determine if we are doing enough to protect our employees in this line of work. Having a strong, reliable workforce of properly trained and well-protected employees in this program is crucial for keeping our community safe and clean.