



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember
Maya Esparza

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: 05/08/2020

Approved

Maya Esparza

Date

5/8/20

**SUBJECT: ACTIONS RELATED TO TEMPORARY SHELTERING OPERATIONS
AND SERVICES FOR COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

RECOMMENDATION

1. Establish that the trigger for the City's exit plan for the East Lot site will be when the County orders allow for the reopening of Happy Hollow Park and Zoo.
2. Prioritize, to the extent possible, the population housed in the temporary facilities in the East Lot at Happy Hollow Park and Zoo for interim housing solutions such as Bridge Housing Communities.
3. Explore utilizing current onsite security services provider at Happy Hollow Park and Zoo for any additional security needed for the East Lot site.
4. Direct the City Manager to develop a strategy for addressing blight that may occur on Story Road.

BACKGROUND

Happy Hollow Park and Zoo is the second most visited attraction in all of San Jose, with over 488,000 visitors in 2019, and accounts for 42-44 percent of all PRNS revenue. It is a jewel of our parks system that is accessible to our working families, and is a critical community partner, working with our schools and other educational institutions, providing incredibly important community benefits. As we work to provide emergency, temporary shelter for our most vulnerable residents during this public health crisis, we need to do so in a way that respects the crucial role that Happy Hollow plays in our community and in our City.

The ninety trailers currently onsite in the East Lot will provide temporary, emergency shelter for unhoused residents who are most vulnerable and at risk from COVID-19, including those with serious underlying health conditions such as cancer, heart conditions, and diabetes. It is an important distinction to note that these are temporary, emergency shelters, similar to what we

have set up at South and Parkside Halls, rather than interim housing solutions such as our Bridge Housing Communities. This shelter is necessary to save lives, and our current public health crisis requires swift action to protect our most vulnerable residents.

However, I understand the concerns from organizations such as the Happy Hollow Foundation and other partners who rely on Happy Hollow's continued vitality, which is why I set forward recommendations to ensure that use of the facility as a temporary, emergency housing measure will not negatively impact Happy Hollow or the surrounding community.

In order to develop a sensible timeline for the duration of these shelters, the trigger for our exit plan should align with when the County orders allow for the reopening of Happy Hollow Park and Zoo. This will allow for a smooth and timely transition that protects the health of our vulnerable population while minimizing impact to park operations and the City's already impacted budget. Due to the limited parking available on Senter Road since the 2010 expansion, Happy Hollow will need both the East Lot, as well as the pedestrian bridge over Coyote Creek, available in order to resume full operations.

We need a comprehensive transition plan for these residents, which is why I recommend that we prioritize them, as much as possible, for our interim housing solutions such as Bridge Housing Communities. Regardless of whether or not we are in a public health crisis, these are many of our at-risk individuals, and should already be prioritized for our interim solutions.

I am sensitive to the need to strike a balance between providing necessary security for the site to keep residents safe, while ensuring that they will feel comfortable. That is why I believe we should explore utilizing the current onsite Happy Hollow security services to provide security for the temporary shelter site as well.

Finally, in order to address any potential blight issues that may occur in the vicinity of the site, I ask that we direct the City Manager to develop a strategy and explore resources available to ensure that we keep Story Road clean and safe for our community.

Our current public health crisis demands that we act as quickly as possible to protect our most vulnerable and save lives, and I thank our City staff who have worked under extraordinarily difficult circumstances to get our emergency shelters up and running. I urge my colleagues to support this balanced approach that will meet the urgent needs of the vulnerable, while providing a reasonable path forward when we look to reopen Happy Hollow Park and Zoo, the crown jewel of our city parks.

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.