



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Tadd Wille, Assistant City Manager
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Ordinance- Declaration of State of Emergency – Extension – October 3rd
DATE: September 20, 2017

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this proposed ordinance is to amend Ordinance No. 28430 by extending the sunset date of the declaration of emergency from October 9, 2017 to December 31, 2017. This ordinance would allow the declaration of emergency and the emergency authority granted pursuant to the ordinance to remain in effect through the end of the year in order to continue the City’s efforts to mitigate the conditions in homeless encampments.

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Mayor Marilyn Strickland

STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:

The strategic policy priorities aligned with this action are:

- Strengthen and support a safe city with healthy residents.
- Ensure all Tacoma residents are valued and have access to resources to meet their needs.

BACKGROUND:

On May 9, 2017, the City Council enacted Ordinance No. 28430 (the “Emergency Ordinance”) declaring a state of emergency relating 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. However, the Emergency Ordinance will sunset on October 9, 2017 unless the City Council determines that the ongoing conditions warrant keeping in emergency declaration in place.

A review of the efforts made to abate the conditions giving rise to the declaration of the public emergency are summarized as follows:

- A mitigation site was established at 18th street and Portland Avenue (the “mitigation site”) which was occupied by up to 118 individuals, 70 tents and 9 vehicles;
- Occupants of the mitigation site were provided with health and sanitation facilities together with assessments and screening and other needed services;
- A majority of the occupants of the mitigation site were transitioned to the stabilization site located at 1423 Puyallup Avenue (the “stabilization site”);
- An average of 90 individuals reside at the stabilization site at any given time.



- The stabilization site continues to remain at near capacity with slow outflow into stable housing; and
- Conditions continue to exist resulting in homelessness encampments outside of the stabilization site throughout the City.

The City of Tacoma continues to experience large numbers of individuals and families who are homeless due to such factors as job loss, stagnant and declining wages, family crisis, substance abuse, economic reasons, mental health issues, and loss of temporary housing. Communities like Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon; and Los Angeles, California have declared states of emergency in order to provide emergency services and shelters for the growing number of unsheltered homeless individuals, families and unaccompanied youth.

The City continues to evaluate opportunities to increase short-term transitional housing and partnering with Pierce County and other jurisdictions to address the challenges of addressing homelessness.

ISSUE:

The City of Tacoma continues to experience large numbers of individuals and families who are homeless due to such factors as job loss, stagnant and declining wages, family crisis, substance abuse, economic reasons, mental health issues, and loss of temporary housing. Although the conditions for many individuals formerly occupying homeless encampments have been mitigated through the Temporary Emergency Aid and Shelter Program, unsanitary and unsafe conditions remain in homeless encampments throughout the City. These conditions continue to create potential for disease transmission within and external to a homeless encampment and without the declaration of emergency and the power and authority granted therein, the provision of these needed services will be delayed by normal contracting, budgetary and regulatory processes.

ALTERNATIVES:

The City Council could choose to not to extend the declaration of emergency and instead follow normal contract, budgetary and regulatory processes.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council amend Ordinance No. 28430 by extending the sunset date of the declaration of emergency from October 9, 2017 to December 31, 2017 and keeping in place the declaration of public emergency and the power and authority granted therein to the appropriate public officials to exercise their power and authority under the City Charter, state law, and City code to take and continue to take such actions as are reasonable and necessary to respond to the public health emergency.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The extension of the declaration of emergency does not have a direct quantifiable fiscal impact; however, the City's continued response to the declaration, through its Temporary Emergency Aid and Shelter Plan, may have a fiscal impact. Should the Temporary Emergency Aid and Shelter Plan continue beyond 2017, a budget will be developed and funds identified.