

August 15, 2023



AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

City Council

STAFF

Rupa Venkatesh, Assistant City Manager
Sgt. Annie Hill, Fort Collins Police Services
Katie Donahue, Natural Areas Director
Marcy Yoder, Neighborhood Services Manager
Ethan Doak, Legal

SUBJECT

First Reading of Ordinance No. 105, 2023, Appropriating Prior Year Reserves in the General Fund to Continue the Encampment Site Cleanup Pilot Program.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this item is to appropriate \$200,000 in additional funds to continue the site cleanup pilot program. In Fall 2022, staff identified a backlog of site cleanups throughout the City and determined that cleanups needed to shift from twice a month to once per week. This was implemented towards the end of January 2023 with the recognition that additional funds would be needed if this pilot program achieved desired results.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the adoption of the Ordinance on First Reading.

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

Prior to 2019, the City did not have a separate encampment fund. In 2017 and 2018, costs of cleanups came from regular operating budgets for Natural Areas, Parks, Neighborhood Services, and other departments where cleanups were occurring. In Fall 2018, a mid-cycle adjustment was requested for a dedicated fund to utilize in 2019. The joint offer was submitted by Neighborhood Services, Parks, Stormwater, and Natural Areas who provide staffing. Since 2019, a dedicated encampment fund has been utilized though funds expended have varied over the years likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since Fall 2022, a weekly tactical team of staff from Social Sustainability, Natural Areas, Police Services, Neighborhood Services, Parks Rangers, Transfort, City Attorney's Office and partners such as Poudre Fire Authority and Outreach Fort Collins meet to coordinate encampment cleanup prioritization and identify hot spots.

During these weekly tactical meetings, the growing number of site cleanups became an emergent issue with the turnaround time of when a site is identified to actual cleanup of the site ranging up to 3 months. A

pilot program was implemented in late January 2023 to move towards weekly cleanups with a goal to reduce turnaround time to 30 days.

In April 2023, the turnaround time for cleanups was an average of 12 days. A total of 257 camps had been cleaned with 169 cubic yards of waste, 363 sharps, 77 shopping carts and 15 cubic yards of metal collected and diverted from Natural Areas, Parks, and other locations in the City.

By July 17, 2023, the turnaround time had been further reduced to an average of 8 days. A total of 560 camps have been cleaned with 365 cubic yards of waste, 880 sharps, 119 shopping carts and 27 cubic yards of metal collected and diverted from Natural Areas, Parks, and other locations in the City. If the current pilot program continues, it is on track to divert 100% more trash, 79% more shopping carts and 20% more metal than 2022.

The weekly cleanups are averaging \$6500 per week. The cleanup amount varies each week depending on how debris is collected, especially sharps. In addition to the site cleanups, \$10,000 has been utilized from this fund for a debris boom pilot project at Warren Lake/Larimer Ditch #2 to help mitigate issues. Finally, an additional \$13,888 was utilized for stormwater cleanup due to issues in the Conifer Street area as it related to an inoperable RV.

As of July 2023, approximately \$171,000 have been spent of the original \$110,000 offer. To continue the current pilot program of weekly cleanups as weather and holidays permit, an additional \$200,000 is requested for 2023. Any additional expenses related to site cleanups or encampment issues will also be utilized from this fund, including towing of inoperable RVs or mitigation efforts such as any additional debris boom pilots or the need to secure abandoned buildings.

Homeless Outreach and Proactive Engagement (H.O.P.E)

Sgt. Annie Hill, Fort Collins Police Services, was selected in February 2023 to lead a pilot unit dedicated to homelessness. Since then, the team has expanded to three officers with the hopes of adding a fourth officer in Fall 2023. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the team's time is dedicated towards mitigating environmental impacts such as tagging and accompanying Natural Areas staff on site cleanups. This allows the team to provide direct outreach to people experiencing homelessness (PEH), especially to those that are not regular clients of the Murphy Center, Outreach Fort Collins, or other organizations and encourage them to utilize these resources.

H.O.P.E uses compassionate-based policing to meet PEH in the field, homeless encampments, and nuisance related calls to address not only the complaint but also to connect them to appropriate resources. This relationship building with PEH has allowed the city to get a better understanding of their needs. Other program goals include:

- Collaborate with Outreach Programs, Service Providers, and municipal and county courts to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive response to homelessness.
- Support and assist with maintaining the city landscape and natural areas, by addressing homeless encampments and encouraging unhoused individuals to utilize shelters as needed.
- Provide training and education to police officers and other community members on how to effectively engage with individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Monitor and evaluate program effectiveness: The outreach team will regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their program, using data to adjust and improve outcomes over time.

Next Steps

Initial goals for 2023 have been accomplished including:

- Reduction of the turnaround time of identifying a site to cleanup from over three months to less than 30 days (8 days as of July 17)
- Addressing community and public safety issues faster and more holistically as a city (ex: working with the Murphy Center to help mitigate daytime camping).
- Supporting safety for Natural Areas and other staff members as they do assessments and cleanups.
- Starting to identify emerging issues to problem solve holistically as a City (ex: Warren Lake debris boom pilot project, addressing inoperable RVs)

For 2024, goals include:

- Maintain the homelessness tactical team
- Assess the frequency needed for cleanups, if it continues to be weekly or a different cadence
- Identify and mitigate hot spots
- Problem solve emergent issues
- Capture data that is missing for PEH who are not connected with OFC or Murphy Center
- Understand root causes of homelessness in our community
- Research alternate shelter options and programs
- Apply for state grants for a case manager for the H.O.P.E and Mental Health Response Team
- Further the relationships with the business and faith communities

It is also important to note that the recent Point In Time numbers were released and have shown an increase from 2022 to 2023. In 2022, there were 263 sheltered and 84 unsheltered individuals. That number has grown in 2023 to 272 sheltered and 120 unsheltered individuals. The issue of homelessness and the prolonged impacts it has on those experiencing homelessness and the community should continue to be addressed with a holistic city and community approach. Staff will be discussing the homelessness response system during the September 12 work session.

CITY FINANCIAL IMPACTS

The amount of \$200,000 will be appropriated from reserves in the General Fund. Neighborhood Services manages the cleanup program.

BOARD / COMMISSION / COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

This item was presented to Council Finance Committee (CFC) on May 4, 2023 with a request for \$175,000 and there was support for bringing this item forward for full Council consideration. As more information was collected as to the costs of cleanups, it was determined that \$200,000 was needed rather than \$175,000 as the weekly cleanups cost more than anticipated due to the amount of debris and sharps collected.

In addition, there was support from CFC for bringing forward a request for additional funds for 2024 during the mid-cycle revision process.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Ordinance for Consideration

2. Presentation