



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 06/20/2023

ITEM NO: 20

DATE: June 15, 2023
TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager
SUBJECT: Receive Report on the Status of the Shower Ministry and Provide Direction on the Placement of a Temporary Restroom and the Proposed Parameters for a Hotel Voucher Program for Los Gatos Unhoused Residents

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive report on the status of the shower ministry and provide direction on the placement of a temporary restroom and the proposed parameters for a hotel voucher program for Los Gatos unhoused residents.

BACKGROUND:

On January 24, 2023, the Town Council reaffirmed its Strategic Priorities and added a new one to support the unhoused residents of Los Gatos.

As the guidelines for the use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds evolved, the Town has subsequently used the "simplified" approach by allocating ARPA funding to qualifying expenditures specifically to cover Police staffing costs. This has subsequently freed other General Fund dollars for Council priorities. For auditing and other purposes, staff is tracking these General Fund dollars to ensure that grant recipients provide appropriate documentation for the use of the funds. The unallocated proceeds are in the Council Priorities-Economic Recovery Reserve. On February 21, 2023, the Town Council allocated \$25,000 from the unallocated proceeds to support unhoused residents with details to be determined at a later date.

On April 4, 2023, the Town Council listened to public testimony, and discussed the potential use of the funds with members of the Los Gatos faith community who are currently providing support and services to Los Gatos unhoused residents. A majority of the Town Council voted to increase the allocation to a total of \$50,000; direct staff to figure out a hotel voucher program and return to Council with the parameters and structure of the program before money is spent;

Reviewed by: Town Manager, Town Attorney, and Finance Director

BACKGROUND (continued):

move forward with \$30,000 for temporary restrooms and shower program; direct staff to continue research on what is working well in other places; and look at how to do better work with potential partners like the County, other West Valley cities, non-profits, and other service providers.

The purpose of this report is to provide a status on support for the shower program and obtain Council direction for the placement of the temporary restrooms and the parameters for a hotel voucher program. Staff continues to work on the other elements of Council's April motion and will report back on the other items at a future Council meeting.

DISCUSSION:

Shower Ministry

Subsequent to the Council's action, the Town entered into a First Amendment to the Grant Agreement with Los Gatos United Methodist Church to provide an additional \$10,000 for the weekly shower program administered by the Church. These funds extend the service through December 5, 2024.

Placement of Temporary Restrooms

The Town Manager met with members of the Los Gatos faith community to discuss potential locations for temporary restrooms. The group strongly recommended that the Town contract with a vendor for one handicapped accessible portable toilet and handwash station to be located in the Town parking lot on South Santa Cruz Avenue, south of the post office property. This location would be proximate to the proposed permanent public restroom at Town Plaza Park which is currently a Capital Improvement Project in the design phase. The group recommended that the vendor clean the facility twice a week, expressing strenuously that this needs to be successful not only for unhoused residents but also for downtown businesses, nearby neighborhoods, and visitors.

If this location is accepted by the Town Council, staff would determine the precise placement to ensure adequate lighting, available trash receptacles, and other features. Once determined, staff would get quotes from vendors and enter into an agreement. Staff will also work with the local trash hauler to determine frequency of trash collection. With the effects of inflation, it is not yet determined how many weeks this service could be provided with the allocated \$20,000.

DISCUSSION (continued):

Proposed Parameters for a Hotel Voucher Program

The faith community gave a lot of thought to Council's interest in a hotel voucher program and reached out to local hotel managers to determine their interest. Three hotels expressed interest, Los Gatos Lodge, Best Western, and Garden Inn. We then met collectively with these hotel managers to discuss potential parameters for the program.

The entire group agreed that the features of the program should include:

- Clear definition of emergency circumstances that would invoke the program. Emergency circumstances would be defined as extreme heat (over 100 degrees Fahrenheit), extreme cold (below 40 degrees Fahrenheit), poor air quality (above 150 on the Air Quality Index which is unhealthy for the general population), and/or medical needs for a short term stay.
- Screening of Eligible Los Gatos Unhoused Residents. The faith community has deep knowledge of the Los Gatos unhoused population based on the services currently being provided through the food program, shower ministry, laundry ministry, and other services. Through this experience, only ten Los Gatos unhoused residents would qualify for the hotel voucher program due to their behavior, ability to follow rules, and demonstrated respect for others and their property. Screening would be ongoing.
- Clear rules that must be followed to be able to stay at any of the three Los Gatos hotels. If any of them are disobeyed, the individual would no longer be eligible to participate in the voucher program. Rules would include, but not be limited to:
 - No smoking in the rooms at any time.
 - Following the smoking rules of the hotel (some are entirely non-smoking facilities and others have designated smoking areas).
 - No alcohol or drugs.
 - No additional guests.
 - No pets.
 - No rude language or behavior towards staff and other guests.
 - No loud television or music that could disturb other guests.
 - No trashing the room or property.
 - No accruing of additional costs.
 - Store all belongings in the room or designated storage area. No possessions should be on the patio or other outdoor areas. If belongings are wet, they must be placed in large garbage bags provided by the faith community.
 - Must have identification.

DISCUSSION (continued):

- Notification to hotels. The hotels requested an email to document when the faith community would be referring a qualified unhoused resident to the hotel.
- Mechanism for payments directly to the hotel. The hotels preferred a debit or credit card for the registration of the unhoused guests, similar to all other guests. This would cover the cost of the room and taxes as well as the required security deposit.
 - Additional work needs to be done for the creation of the debit or credit card account. One option is for the Town to enter into an agreement with St. Vincent de Paul or other organization in the amount of \$20,000 to operate the hotel voucher program. The organization could then set up a debit account and a member be present at the time of registration of the unhoused resident to complete the registration with the debit card. Reporting and accountability measures would be included in the agreement.
 - Alternatively, the debit card could be a Town account which would incur staff costs for program administration.
 - Other options could also be explored based on the Council's direction.
- Communication with the screened unhoused residents. Once the parameters of the program are established, the faith community would convene a meeting with the eligible residents to review the rules, explain parameters of the program, ensure that identification was current, and provide other information.

CONCLUSION:

Council direction is welcome with respect to the temporary restroom facility and the proposed hotel voucher program.

COORDINATION:

The preparation of this report was coordinated with the Town Attorney's Office, Finance Director, faith community members, and Los Gatos hotel managers as described above.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Town Council allocated funding for the services described in this report as documented in the Adopted Fiscal Year 2023/24 Budget. No additional funding is requested with this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

This is not a project defined under CEQA, and no further action is required.