



BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

AB 5944
September 21, 2021
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 5944: Authorizing and Appropriation for Outreach Services from Area Shelters for the Homeless and Update on Implementation of Ordinance 21C-02	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed:
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Appropriate \$20,000 and authorize the City Manager to sign agreements with The Sophia Way and Congregations for the Homeless for outreach worker services.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution

DEPARTMENT:	Police
STAFF:	Ed Holmes, Police Chief Tambi Cork, YFS Administrator
COUNCIL LIAISON:	n/a
EXHIBITS:	n/a
CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:	n/a

AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE	\$ 20,000
AMOUNT BUDGETED	\$ 0
APPROPRIATION REQUIRED	\$ 20,000

SUMMARY

At the August 31, 2021, City Council Meeting, the Council directed the City Manager to prepare a request to establish a partnership with The Sophia Way and Congregations for the Homeless to provide outreach services to individuals experiencing homelessness on Mercer Island, and to seek an appropriation of approximately \$20,000 to support the partnership through the remainder of the 2021-2022 biennium.

The agenda bill also includes an update on the implementation of Ordinance No. 21C-02.

SIX-MONTH REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF ORDINANCE NO 21C-02

On February 16, 2021, the City Council adopted [Ordinance No. 21C-02](#) which prohibited camping within any public property. The City Council also directed the City Manager to provide the Council with a report on the Mercer Island Police Department's (MIPD) experience implementing this new ordinance within six months.

Since the effective date of this ordinance, MIPD officers have made contact with people that may be experiencing homelessness on average about three times per week. No arrests were made, and no citations were issued for violations of the ordinance.

This ordinance provides officers with an opportunity to engage with individuals experiencing homelessness and assist them in getting connected to services. During some contacts, the MIPD officer was able to put the individual in contact with the King County Mobile Crisis Team (Crisis Team). The Crisis Team then worked with the individual and connected them with resources based on their specific needs. The Crisis Team has access to resources that assist individuals experiencing homelessness, but their primary focus is supporting individuals experiencing behavioral health emergencies, including mental health and/or issues related to substance use.

While the partnership with the King County Crisis Team is helpful in emergency situations, individuals experiencing homelessness also benefit greatly from case management services from qualified outreach workers. Additionally, individuals experiencing homelessness seem more inclined to accept assistance when it is offered by someone other than a uniformed police officer. For example, MIPD officers recently had a contact where a person was asking for resources from a local business. When officers arrived, however, and attempted to assist the person, he decided that he did not wish for police assistance and chose to leave the area without being connected to resources.

NEED FOR OUTREACH WORKERS

At the end of May 2021, staff toured two regional human services facilities that provide shelter space: The Sophia Way and Congregations for the Homeless. The Sophia Way focuses on serving women and families, while Congregations for the Homeless focuses on serving men. Both shelters provide full services to include beds for sleeping, case management, counseling services, employment assistance, and pathways towards stable housing. Both shelters also have outreach workers that serve the community and connect with those experiencing homelessness with resources, however Mercer Island is not part of their current service areas.

During initial conversations with City staff, The Sophia Way and Congregations for the Homeless indicated a willingness to expand their outreach service area to include Mercer Island.

Upon receiving direction from the majority of the City Council at the August 31, 2021 City Council meeting, City staff confirmed that both organizations were willing to provide outreach worker services through the end of 2022, the appropriation request is \$10,000 for a partnership with each organization. Staff recommends funding the \$20,000 appropriation request from the Fund Balance Surplus in the General Fund.

If the City Council wishes to entertain a broader discussion of the City's support for area shelters and continuation of the outreach worker partnerships, staff recommend including this as part of the 2023-2024 biennial budget development process.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Authorize the City Manager to negotiate and execute an agreement with both The Sophia Way and Congregations for the Homeless in an amount not to exceed \$20,000 (\$10,000 for each organization) for outreach worker services for individuals experiencing homelessness through the end of 2022.