



December 14, 2021

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Marin County Board of Supervisors
3501 Civic Center Drive
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SUBJECT: Creation of a \$500,000 matching fund to support enhanced City-run homeless services

Dear Supervisors:

RECOMMENDATION: Approve budget adjustments for one-time allocation of \$500,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) proceeds to provide matching funds for enhanced homelessness services provided by cities and towns within Marin County.

OVERVIEW

The County of Marin works collaboratively with the cities and towns to provide assistance to people experiencing homelessness. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and related federal restrictions, local jurisdictions are limited in their ability to respond to the growing visibility of homeless encampments. We are recommending your Board approve the use of \$500,000 in federal stimulus funds (ARPA) to be used as matching funds to support the efforts of San Rafael, Novato and Sausalito to manage encampment and homelessness in their jurisdictions.

SUMMARY

Since October 2017, Marin County and its partners have permanently housed more than 400 people experiencing chronic homelessness, achieving a 28% decrease in chronic homelessness between 2017 and 2019. This achievement is the result of implementing best-practice housing first strategies supported by decades of research, including a prioritization of permanent housing over emergency shelter solutions.

From 2017-2021, the supply of permanent supportive housing in Marin has doubled and the homelessness system of care has transformed to focus on the most vulnerable people, placing each person one-by-one in the unit that best meets their needs. Simultaneously, the County has increased investment in emergency supports specifically designed to help people access housing faster, including outreach and mobile medical services, which builds trust with the people we are seeking to serve and result in faster transitions to housing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made homelessness much more visible to Marin County residents. Federal courts and Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention restrictions limit the previous authority of local jurisdictions to clear homeless encampments. Additionally, pandemic conditions have further reduced the ability of people experiencing homelessness to access necessary supports, including medical and behavioral healthcare and housing assistance.

In response, Marin County has provided significant additional supports, including:

- Offers of permanent supportive housing to 90 unsheltered persons in San Rafael, Novato and Sausalito since March 2020. An additional 46 encampment residents in the three cities have been assigned to various housing case management programs, which will result in an offer of permanent supportive housing.
- Intensive outreach services to people who are unsheltered with a goal of connecting all persons with stable housing. This includes:
 - Weekly collaborative discussions on several of the most prominent Marin encampments focused on moving people into housing and shelter.
 - Four new outreach workers (including 3 bilingual Spanish-speakers) operating in underserved areas of Marin (e.g., West Marin and Southern Marin) in spring 2021.
 - More intensive outreach and coordination efforts at encampments causing community concern, including weekly meetings of outreach workers and law enforcement to connect people to shelter and housing.
- Non-congregate shelter through Project Roomkey for high-risk unsheltered adults and families, including hot daily meals, a safe place to sleep, connection to mental and physical health support, and case management to connect them with permanent housing.
 - Since March 2020, Project Roomkey has sheltered 235 households, and the County has spent \$432,700 beyond costs authorized by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to ensure this vulnerable population receives appropriate supports.
- Sanitation services to residents of some encampments, including port-a-potties and handwashing stations.
- The purchase of two properties through Project Homekey 1.0 in 2020, which will result in 63 new units of permanent supportive housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness.
- Submitted an application for the purchase of one property through Project Homekey 2.0 in 2021, which, if funded, will result in 43

additional units of permanent supportive housing. County support includes \$17,673,848 to acquire and operate these projects beyond funding provided by Project Homekey.

- Established a high-utilizer case management program. Jointly funded by the County and cities, the program permits those using the greatest quantity of municipal services to access federal housing vouchers by providing them the case management required to attain stable housing and to qualify for housing voucher referrals. These services will be paired with vouchers from the Marin Housing Authority to create 63 new units of permanent supportive housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness, many of whom are currently residing in encampments. City funding for this project will expire in 2025, at which point the County will be responsible for ongoing funding.

Because of the differing responsibilities of cities and counties in responding to homelessness, cities and counties must work closely together to effectively address the problem. The County is responsible for safety net services, including behavioral health treatment and employment supports, as well as inter-jurisdictional coordination and administrative leadership. Cities, like the County in unincorporated areas, are responsible for ensuring that adequate affordable housing (including housing affordable to people with extremely low incomes) is available within their jurisdictions and for resolving issues of public safety, including those arising in homeless encampments. Homelessness straddles these roles, requiring both housing and supportive services as well as involvement of various County divisions (including community development and public health) and city departments (including public works and law enforcement).

PROPOSED MATCHING FUND

To help support the new efforts of the Cities of San Rafael, Novato, and Sausalito to manage encampment issues and homelessness within their jurisdictions, we are recommending that the County allocate \$500,000 federal stimulus funds (ARPA) as a match for prospective city-provided homeless services. These matching funds will fund services which may include, but are not limited to, encampment security, camp management, sanitation services, and outreach or other services.

Funds are not meant to supplant existing city salaries or programs, but rather to support enhanced homeless services to effectively respond to the impacts of COVID-19. Services shall be provided in accordance with housing first, cultural humility, and trauma-informed principles and cities are encouraged to coordinate their efforts with the existing homelessness system of care in Marin.

Over the next several weeks, the County will work with the cities and towns to develop proposals and will return to the Board with specific allocations and scope of services.

EQUITY IMPACT

African American and Latinx people are significantly overrepresented in Marin County's homeless population compared to the general population. These funds will support people experiencing homelessness to stabilize and therefore re-enter permanent housing more quickly. HHS monitors demographic data to ensure that clients are being served in proportion with their representation in the homeless community. These funds will be spent in accordance with housing first, cultural humility and trauma-informed principles, with bilingual/bicultural staff as appropriate.

FISCAL IMPACT

Your Board's approval will not increase General Fund net county costs as the recommended matching fund will qualify for reimbursement from federal stimulus funds received as part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). As part of the FY 2021-22 Proposed Budget, your Board approved the initial spending plan for half of the ARPA proceeds. The initial spending plan included \$1.6 million for COVID response and we are recommending that your Board allocate \$500,000 from the COVID response set-aside for this purpose.

Your Board's approval will increase expenditure appropriations by \$500,000 in the Countywide Miscellaneous Project Fund (1010), fully offset by a transfer from the ARPA Fund (3500). Your Board's approval will also increase transfer appropriations by \$500,000 in the American Rescue Plan Act Fund (3500).

Sincerely,



Matthew H. Hymel
County Administrator



Benita McLarin
Director of Health and Human
Services

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