

Response to Council Member Roney's Questions on Homelessness

1. With the decision to house neighbors experiencing homelessness at the Red Roof Inn during the pandemic, we have had celebratory success in moving folks into permanent housing. Are we currently offering to move folks into Red Roof Inn? If so, what is our capacity there? If not, is another, similar option being pursued?

ANSWER: We are working with Homeward Bound to understand the fluctuation of rooms available at the Red Roof Inn. We will continue to work to maintain 100% occupancy of the available rooms. We are working with another hotelier to provide additional rooms.

The Red Roof Inn is not open to increasing the number of rooms for this purpose. We recently had conversations with an additional hotelier who has agreed to make additional rooms available.

2. I understand that staff is meeting with faith leaders and nonprofits this week to discuss next steps regarding eviction. A potential solution for temporary camping permits that includes porta john permit is on the table. The decision to limit to properties not in residential areas may limit our success. Is it possible to have smaller capacity permits for properties in residential areas?

ANSWER: The porta john is included in the Temporary Use Permit process. Temporary use permits for churches in residential zones cannot be approved at a staff level. The only TEMPORARY option for allowing encampments in residential areas is as part of a mayoral declaration of emergency. We had previously delegated this type of authority to the Mayor, and she can issue that declaration without additional Council approval. This would be similar to what we did for a time with food trucks.

However staff would be deeply concerned about allowing this type of use in residentially zoned neighborhoods. Based on the numerous complaints we have received from residents, this action may increase the likelihood of conflict between neighbors and campers and create other safety issues.

3. Support for health and well-being will add to our shared success with partners. Have we reached out to Buncombe County to ask about partnering with the new community paramedic program? Or perhaps asked BeLoved about what funding would be needed to ramp up the street medic services?

ANSWER: City staff and the Mayor have done a ride-along with the Buncombe County Community Paramedics Response Team. A paramedic along with a peer support individual responds to overdose calls. A paramedic has the ability to

release a patient whereas an EMT or nurse does not. The peer support provider must be certified by the state. I believe the County is providing this peer support service in-house. We are in partnership with Buncombe County to coordinating a strategic systematic long-term approach to helping end homelessness that includes:

- Consolidating the City and County 911 system;
- Supporting a community paramedic program;
- Increasing capacity at the crisis care facility at 356 Biltmore Avenue; and,
- Providing a low-barrier shelter for our homeless population to get support/wrap-around services they need, and,
- Evaluating permanent supportive housing and domestic violence shelter with partners.

4. In my conversations with community leaders this week, I was reminded of a potential solution that has been on the table before: parking deck space. It is possible that we could partner to allow car camping on a floor of a parking deck like the Civic Center? This would be proximal to resources, could be staffed while we're in transition, and has bathroom access. I don't imagine non-vehicular camping would be permissible.

ANSWER: We don't have the resources to ensure the safety of both the campers and patrons in this type of environment. However we are happy to provide additional information or further investigate this option if directed by Council to do so.

5. It is my understanding that staff is communicating to some partners that Council made a decision to serve eviction notices to campers experiencing homelessness. I would appreciate clarity on how/when that majority decision was communicated.

ANSWER: Several Council members expressed concerns in a recent check in about the City allowing campers to illegally camp in public parks coupled with crime and other safety issues that were being documented and reported calls for service to the APD. CMO staff responded that we would develop a plan of action to respond to these concerns and sent it to Council.

6. Staying on course for positive outcomes and increased safety for everyone is possible. We need a plan, we're making a plan that will take a bit more time, and I think we have been headed in the right direction with our partners. Now we've created a barrier to our success. It is in our power to pause the clock on evictions so we can get from where we are to where we need to be instead of losing our partner capacity which will have to shift to answering the call to support the campers we're choosing to evict.

ANSWER: To clarify, the notices to individuals camping were not eviction notices but were notifications to relocate. We are working closely with First Congregational Church to open the Code Purple shelter every night for a minimum of six months. We are in conversations with Sunrise to operate this location. It would provide 50 beds. We hope to have this open soon. Additionally another hotelier has agreed to offer rooms to house individuals who are being asked to relocate. We have a limited number of rooms so we are working with our partners to identify those individuals that have no other resources.

We do not have the capacity to continue to manage the numerous calls to APD regarding safety issues at the existing camps.

Additional questions from April 16, 2021 email from Council Member Roney:

- Capacity: How many rooms are currently available at Red Roof? Are we also utilizing Best Western? What is a "golden ticket"? How do you get one? How long can you use it?

ANSWER: See number 1 above.

- Funding: How much CARES/FEMA funding is left? Have we used it? Can we use additional funds if it is depleted?

ANSWER: We do not have any available funding in the CARES Act. We anticipate that funding from the America Rescue Plan program will cover the cost of the hotel rooms.

- Procedure: There were multiple questions about Parks & Rec staff evicting campers. Is that permitted? Advised? Were Parks & Rec staff tasked with this eviction? What is the city policy for detaining people for staff not trained in public safety procedures? Do staff who are responsible for such tasks have the training they need, such as de-escalation?

ANSWER: No person was evicted. Individuals were relocated. Parks and Rec staff were at the site to clean up the camp not to assist in the relocation or to deal with inactions with the homeless individual or the protesters.