



Legislation Text

File #: 18-0467, **Version:** 2

Ordinance No. 18-105 amending Ordinance No. 17-116 (2018 Appropriation Ordinance) for a supplemental appropriation to the General Fund in the amount of \$500,000 for capital and operating expenses associated with increasing the number of available low-barrier shelter beds in our community

Presenter:

Charae McDaniel, Chief Financial Officer
Andrew Phelps, Homelessness Prevention & Response Coordinator, Neighborhood Services
Peter Wysocki, Director of Planning and Development
Steve Posey, HUD Grants Administrator

Summary:

The attached ordinance is a supplemental appropriation to the General Fund in the amount of \$500,000 for capital and operating expenses associated with increasing the number of available low-barrier shelter beds in our community. Colorado Springs has a deficit of low barrier shelter beds for homeless persons. Our 2018 Point In Time count showed that there were 513 people unsheltered in our community while the only low barrier shelter in town was at capacity. Without adequate low barrier shelter bed capacity in our community, the Colorado Springs Police Department has limited authority to enforce the City's no-camping on public property ordinances. This funding from the City will help ensure that our community will have adequate low barrier shelter bed capacity; therefore, protect the health and safety of citizens and enable the Colorado Springs Police Department to enforce no camping ordinances.

Previous Council Action:

On December 12, 2017, City Council approved the original 2018 budget per Ordinance No. 17-116 (2018 Appropriation Ordinance)

Background:

Every year during the last ten days in January, communities across the nation complete an annual Point-In-Time count (PIT) of people experiencing homelessness. In El Paso County, this count is done under the guidance of the Pikes Peak Continuum of Care (PPCoC). El Paso County's 2018 PIT count showed that there were 1,551 people experiencing homelessness in our community, an increase of 9.6% (136 people) from 2017. This number includes those in emergency shelter, transitional housing, as well as unsheltered. The PIT count also showed that there were 513 people experiencing homelessness that were unsheltered on the night of the count, an increase of 11% (56 people) from 2017.

Providers added 217 shelter beds in the community in 2018, 72 year-round beds and 145 seasonal beds, for a total of 822 beds. On the night of the PIT count, 652 shelter beds were occupied, bringing 116 more people out of the cold than the previous year (536). Even with the addition of shelter beds, on the night of the PIT count there were 170 vacant shelter beds with 513 individuals remaining unsheltered. The vacant shelter beds were reserved for special populations (Veterans, families with children, youth, and people fleeing domestic violence), 21 beds had higher barriers to entry (such as sobriety), and 65 were floor mats available for emergency warming purposes only.

The only current low barrier shelter, The Springs Rescue Mission, was at capacity on the night of the PIT count. The PIT count shows that year round low barrier shelter has high utilization rates year after year. The Springs Rescue Mission has stayed at or near capacity since the night of the PIT count, even through the summer. With high utilization rates of year round low barrier shelter beds and 513 people counted as unsheltered on the night of the PIT count, it is clear that there is a deficit of low barrier shelter in Colorado Springs.

The City of Colorado Springs has historically responded to the issue of homelessness by allocating federal pass through grants. The Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) is the main federal grant for this purpose. The Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) provides federal funds to assist individuals and families to quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis or homelessness. ESG funds five program components:

- Street outreach
- Emergency shelter
- Homelessness prevention
- Rapid re-housing assistance
- Data collection via Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

Federal pass through grants such as the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) are an important part of our local response to homelessness, but the amount of federal monetary resources provided to our community do not meet our local needs, as evidenced by our community's low barrier shelter bed deficit. In order to have adequate low barrier shelter bed capacity in our community, a special appropriation of General Fund money is needed.

These funds will be used for capital improvements at The Springs Rescue Mission and The Salvation Army. They will also be used to fund the operations at both shelters. The Springs Rescue Mission and The Salvation Army were clear choices to provide low barrier shelter in our community as they are the only two adult shelters in town and the only shelters that offered to fill this important need. These funds will be used to add 370 low barrier shelter beds. The Springs Rescue Mission will add 150 low barrier beds and The Salvation Army will become a low barrier shelter, converting 220 beds into low barrier and adding 40 family beds.

The need for more low-barrier shelter is underscored by the growing issue of camping on public property. The illegal camps on City property throughout our City are not only unsightly, but also have a negative impact on the environment. Public safety is also a concern as people living in places not meant for human habitation, especially during the winter months, are at risk of injury or death.

Based on case law resulting from various communities throughout the Country, the Colorado Springs Police Department has very limited powers to enforce camping bans when there is no space at

shelters for the campers to go. The addition of these 370 low barrier beds will help ensure that no one in our community is forced to sleep outside and enable the Colorado Springs Police Department to enforce the “camping on public property ban” en masse as we should have adequate low barrier shelter bed capacity in our community.

Financial Implications:

This supplemental appropriation increases the 2018 General Fund expenditure budget by \$500,000. The source of these funds is the General Fund available fund balance. This represents a 1.0% decrease in the unrestricted fund balance.

Board/Commission Recommendation:

N/A

Stakeholder Process:

City staff worked very closely with the Springs Rescue Mission and the Salvation Army to determine and finalize capital and operating costs to expand their services. City staff also routinely participates with the Continuum of Care and other stakeholder organizations.

To address ongoing funding needs, staff will work with establish an inter-departmental working group to discuss recent expenditures linked to homelessness and better/more strategic uses of funds. Key department reps would include Parks, Fire, Police, Finance, Planning, and Public Works.

Also, staff will work with other governmental agencies to discuss an ongoing funding strategy for key shelter facilities. Key agencies include El Paso County, City, Dept of Health and Human Services, and the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments.

The City Council Budget Committee has reviewed and recommended this supplemental appropriation request at the meeting on September 11, 2018.

Alternatives:

The Council can approve, deny or adjust the appropriation

Proposed Motion:

Approve the supplemental appropriation to the general fund in the amount of \$500,000 for capital and operating expenses associated with increasing the number of available low-barrier shelter beds in our community.

Ordinance amending Ordinance No. 17-116 (2018 Appropriation Ordinance) for a supplemental appropriation to the General Fund in the amount of \$500,000 for capital and operating expenses associated with increasing the number of available low-barrier shelter beds in our community