

Date: March 23, 2020
To: Members of City Council and Members of the Public
From: Council President Kaplan
Re: Resolution Requesting The City Administrator To Follow The Center For Disease Control (“CDC”) Interim Guidelines On Homelessness And Covid-19 To Only Clear Encampments If Individual Housing Units Are Provided.

Dear Colleagues on the City Council and Members of the Public,

RECOMMENDATION

I am requesting the City Council the City Administrator to follow the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) Interim Guidelines on Homelessness and COVID-19 to only clear homeless encampments only if shelter is provided.

OVERVIEW

According to *the 2019 Alameda County’s Homeless Persons Point-In-Time Count*, approximately 4,071 people in Oakland are experiencing homelessness. On May 5th, 2019, the Oakland City Council declared via Resolution 87640 C.M.S that homelessness was a local emergency as it increased to 47% since 2017.

The COVID-19, a highly infectious virus, was first identified in late 2019 and is marked by severe and acute respiratory illness that is overwhelming hospitals across the world and whose mortality rates disproportionately impact older individuals and those with underlying diseases. There are approximately 335,403 confirmed cases of COVID-19 worldwide, with about 1,555 in California as of March 22nd; the CDC has stated in relation to COVID-19 that the “lack of housing contributes to poor health outcomes, and linkage to permanent housing should continue to be a priority.”

On March 17, 2020, the health officer of the County of Alameda issued a sweeping Order to shelter-in-place, ordering residents to stay at home and go outside only for essentials, but exempts individuals experiencing homelessness.

The CDC further offers the following guidelines for responding to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) among people experiencing unsheltered homelessness:

- Unless individual housing units are available, do not clear encampments during community spread of COVID-19. Clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break connections with service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread
- Encourage people staying in encampments to set up their tents/sleeping quarters with at least 12 feet x 12 feet of space per individual

- Ensure nearby restroom facilities have functional water taps, are stocked with hand hygiene materials (soap, drying materials) and bath tissue, and remain open to people experiencing homelessness 24 hours per day
- If toilets or handwashing facilities are not available nearby, provide access to portable latrines with handwashing facilities for encampments of more than 10 people

In conclusion, I am seeking the support of the City Council to request the City Administrator to follow the Center for Disease Control's Interim Guidelines on Homelessness and COVID-19 to only clear homeless encampments if shelter is provided.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Kaplan
Oakland City Council President