

April 13, 2020



County of Mendocino
Board of Supervisors
501 Low Gap Road, Rm. 1010
Ukiah, CA 95482

SUBJECT: Request for Engagement on Homeless Issues

Dear Supervisors,

The City of Ukiah is committed to collaborative engagement with the County of Mendocino to develop and implement solutions related to homelessness. We look forward to discussions that will form a more comprehensive and unified approach with defined outcomes. To achieve that we seek a joint ad-hoc be established to address the related issues. In the meantime, we desire continuing cooperation with our community's various agencies and partners to tend to the on-going challenges.

In our meeting today, the City Council appointed members Brown and Scalmanini to serve on a joint ad hoc, inclusive of staff, to collaborate with members of your Board.

For more than a month, the City of Ukiah has sought information on the County's sheltering plan and risk mitigation strategies to limit COVID-19 spread among the homeless population in Mendocino County. There is a noticeably larger number of unsheltered individuals in the county that has emerged during this public health emergency. This is likely due in part to the modifications to intake/releases in the correction/judicial system, along with modified service delivery of homeless related services by County Health and Human Services and contracted service providers. There is undoubtedly an increased risk to the homeless population from COVID-19, and as such our first responders and health care resources are at significant risk from a major spread event. A preemptive and coordinated county-wide response is imperative.

We appreciate the County's work to develop a hotel voucher program for homeless individuals who are elderly or medically vulnerable or otherwise at high risk, and a quarantine/isolation plan for when individuals become sick. While these efforts are important, they fail to address a mitigation plan that must include sheltering, which has been identified as imperative, during this emergency for the greater homeless population and encampments. In fact, the County's Health Order specifically identifies the importance of providing shelter and/or other proper COVID-19 mitigation measures. It is important to note that all homeless and health/human services, resources, and funding are provided at and through the County. Our rural cities are completely reliant upon the County's administration, management, and delivery of these services.

Details of the County's efforts to address sheltering and mitigation for the homeless population have been slow to materialize. There remains a lack of a unified approach among the County Office of Emergency Services, Health and Human Services, the Continuum of Care (CoC), and the County's contracted services providers; resulting in duplication of services, an inefficient utilization of already-scarce resources, and significant gaps in service. Please understand that we make this point with a constructive emphasis and a desire to see a more effective planning model and response effort

related to unsheltered individuals during, as well as beyond, this emergency event. This feedback is currently also being expressed by other stakeholders, providers and local jurisdictions. **To that end, the Council requests the County identify a point person with sufficient authority and scope to undertake a unified and coordinated response for this effort, and be appointed and empowered to report directly to the Executive Office and the Board of Supervisors.**

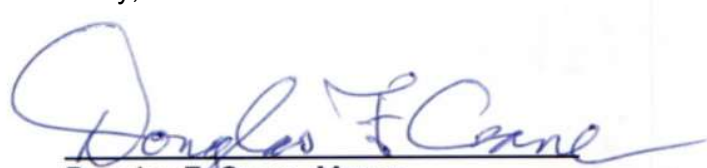
We want to further emphasize that this has been and remains a county-wide issue, not just a Ukiah issue, and currently the most apparent impact is in Ukiah on the north end of Runway Safety Area at the Ukiah Municipal Airport. This current issue grew from 15 people to well over 60 people since the onset of the COVID-19 emergency.

This encampment and others throughout the county will continue to grow with the piecemeal delivery of services and efforts. It is unfair to place the burden on local law enforcement when the lack of coordination and oversight of County services is enabling illegal camping/sheltering, including the collection and distribution of tents and expansion of mobile services. Furthermore, business and property owners in our community are experiencing increased levels of vandalism and theft, which can be directly attributed to this issue.

While we disagree with the County's approach regarding the encampment in the Runway Safety Area and firmly assert a greater effort should be made for a suitable location and sheltering approach, we do appreciate CEO Angelo's recognition that the County will provide a specific focus on this encampment. The County's current level of service at this location is inadequate and lacks the proper sanitation, monitoring, security, coordinated support services and other specific points detailed in the County's Public Health Order. **To that end, the Council requests a detailed plan for the appropriate services at the encampment in the Runway Safety Area and for the remaining unsheltered homeless who remain vulnerable to COVID-19 and thus, represent a significant risk of community spread. Within the plan, please provide specific detail for the transition to appropriate sheltering and a specific end date for services in the Runway Safety Area, which is critical to the safe and continued operation of the Ukiah Municipal Airport.**

We appreciate your service and thank you for addressing these concerns. We look forward to working with the County on these important issues.

Sincerely,



Douglas F. Crane, Mayor

Authorized by: 5-0 vote of Ukiah City Council on 04-13-2020.

Cc: Carmel Angelo, County CEO
Lt. Shannon Barney, EOC Manager
Brentt Blaser, Emergency Service Coordinator
Tammy Moss Chandler, HHSA Director
Dr. Noemi Doohan, Mendocino County Public Health Officer