



City of Culver City

Mike Balkman Council
Chambers
9770 Culver Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90232

Staff Report Details (With Text)

File #:	20-911	Version:	1	Name:	Discussion of a Safe Sleep Program for Unsheltered Individuals Living in their Vehicles during the COVID-19 Pandemic
Type:	Minute Order	Status:			Action Item
File created:	4/17/2020	In control:			City Council Meeting Agenda
On agenda:	4/27/2020	Final action:			
Title:	CC - (1) Discussion Regarding a Safe Park Program for Unsheltered Individuals Living in their Vehicles During the COVID-19 Pandemic; and (2) Direction to the City Manager as Deemed Appropriate.				
Sponsors:					
Indexes:					
Code sections:					
Attachments:	1. Safe Parking Matrix of LA County Programs .pdf, 2. Safe Park Site Services and Suitability.pdf, 3. Safe Park Program Considerations.pdf				

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
------	------	-----------	--------	--------

CC - (1) Discussion Regarding a Safe Park Program for Unsheltered Individuals Living in their Vehicles During the COVID-19 Pandemic; and (2) Direction to the City Manager as Deemed Appropriate.

Meeting Date: April 27, 2020

Contact Person/Dept: Helen Chin/City Manager's Office

Phone Number: (310) 253-6022

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☐

Public Hearing: ☐ **Action Item:** ☒ **Attachments:** ☒

Commission Action Required: Yes ☐ No ☒ **Date:**

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - City Council (04/21/2020);

Department Approval: John Nachbar, City Manager (04/20/2020)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council (1) discuss options for implementation of a Safe Park Program for unsheltered individuals sleeping in their vehicles during the coronavirus respiratory disease (COVID-

19) pandemic; and (2) provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.

BACKGROUND

The City is working with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), Los Angeles County Public Health (DPH), and regional and neighboring agencies to align and streamline efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on unsheltered communities. There are approximately 60,000 unsheltered individuals living throughout Los Angeles County. The 2019 Homeless Count recorded 236 people living in cars/RVs or on the streets in Culver City.

People experiencing homelessness (PEH) are especially vulnerable to the disease. Lack of shelter, limited access to hygiene and sanitation facilities, and underlying health conditions pose a grave risk for those living outside. As a response, the City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Operations Section, Care & Shelter Branch has implemented weekly outreach to provide ongoing COVID-19 education, hygiene kits and hand sanitizers to PEH, while also conducting check-ins on the wellness of individuals living in encampments and in their vehicles throughout the City. This team is made up of City staff, an officer from the Culver City Police Department (CCPD) Mental Health Evaluation Team (MHET), and a Fire Department medic. Outreach data is collected on a survey tool developed by the Information Technology Department.

Recognizing the risk that PEH are under during the pandemic, staff in the EOC Logistics Section and in the Community Development Department (CDD) have researched opportunities and locations to implement a Safe Park program for those living in cars and RVs. The 2019 Culver City Homeless Count found that 61 persons lived in cars, 6 persons in vans, and 23 persons in RVs/campers.

Safe Park Programs

Safe Park programs provide those sleeping in their vehicles a safe place to park at night while continuing to make arrangements for longer term housing solutions. These programs serve those who are falling into homelessness for the first time and prevent people from losing their vehicles and falling further into homelessness. Based on research from the Homeless Coordinator, there are currently 17 Safe Park programs through Los Angeles County operated by different providers. The Safe Parking Matrix shows there are four (4) sites within Service Provider Area (SPA) 5 and adjacent to Culver City.

Safe Park programs are usually located on city-owned, commercial, or industrial property and are coupled with hygiene amenities like portable toilets and handwashing stations and supported by onsite security. Some programs offer meals and wireless internet. The providers interview, screen (including through the National Sex Offender database), and onboard individuals into the program and provide some level of case management to assist with longer term housing solutions. Participants sign program contracts agreeing to expectations set by the program, including but not limited to, adhering to quiet hours, prohibition of the use of alcohol and substances on site, operational status of vehicle, and other agreements. Additionally, some programs support cars only and others support both cars and RVs. This distinction is based on the differing needs of the populations. RVs also require additional space and the ability to empty their tanks.

It should be noted that all the programs operating throughout Los Angeles County are provided by nonprofit organizations such as Salvation Army or Safe Sleep LA. Should the City Council decide to

direct staff to implement a Safe Park program, staff will inquire with the current St. Joseph's Center (SJC) outreach team about capacity to support the Safe Park program.

DISCUSSION

Discussion of a Safe Park program needs to take into consideration both the physical location of such a program and the case management and supportive programming involved. The summary below includes an overview of the locations and site suitability and discussion about the type of programming that would support participants.

Safe Park Program Sites

The EOC Logistics Section performed extensive outreach to identify and locate facilities and researched the programmatic needs of operationalizing such facilities. The team also considered the capacity and flexibility of each site to allow staff to address concerns as they arise.

Sites were evaluated using the following criteria:

- Existing restrooms and ease of installing portable sanitation facilities;
- Access to water and utilities;
- Ownership of site;
- Existing use of site;
- Possible duration of usage of site;
- Proximity to sensitive receptors; and
- Relationship to existing organization working with PEH living in their vehicles.

The following is a summary of proposed Safe Park locations and discussion of services and site suitability. Many of the sites met the above criteria but pose some challenges as discussed below.

Culver Palms United Methodist Church and YMCA Site

The parking lots of the Culver Palms United Methodist Church (CPUMC) and the Culver Palms YMCA can serve as a short-term Safe Park site. The City would provide and install portable toilets, handwashing stations, trash cans, signage, power generators, security, and food. The church works closely with Grace Lutheran Diner to provide hot to-go meals to PEH and can support the enrollment of individuals into the program. CPUMC leadership is enthusiastic about supporting a program and would allow use of its classrooms. This site can accommodate up to 50 vehicles across both lots. One drawback is that this site can only be used for the duration of the local emergency. The City would have to plan for the relocation or the transition of participants to other sheltering programs or to other Safe Park sites. Since the site also sits closely to a residential neighborhood, power generation can be noisy, and lighting can be bothersome to the residents.

Bill Botts Field Parking Lot Site

The Bill Botts Field is currently not in use due to the closure of sports and recreation areas, leaving the sizeable parking lot vacant. This remote City facility has existing restrooms and utility hookups and can accommodate the installation of trash cans, signage, power generators, security, and food without disturbing residential neighborhoods. City staff can work with Grace Lutheran and CPUMC to advertise the program and enroll their interested meal program patrons. Since this is a City facility,

the City has the flexibility to adjust onsite provisions to accommodate the needs of the program, including creating access to potable water and electricity for lighting. This site can accommodate up to 60 vehicles. Since this is a City facility, the City Council can determine whether to extend the program to serve Safe Park participants beyond the duration of the local emergency, taking into consideration potential conflicts with other scheduled uses of the space.

Syd Kronenthal Parking Lot Site

As with the Bill Botts Field, the recreation areas at Syd Kronenthal are also closed, leaving a sizeable parking lot vacant. This City facility also has existing restrooms and utility hookups and can accommodate the installation of trash cans, signage, power generators, security, and food, however the location is adjacent to a residential neighborhood. City staff would also work with Grace Diner and CPUMC to outreach and identify possible participants. Because this is also a City facility, staff can adjust onsite provisions to fit the needs of the program. However, power generators and lights can be bothersome to the neighboring residents. This site can accommodate up to 35 vehicles. Since this is a City facility, the City Council can determine whether to extend the program to serve Safe Park participants beyond the duration of the local emergency, taking into consideration potential conflicts with other scheduled uses of the space.

Virginia Lot Site

The Virginia Lot is a City-owned site located at 10746 Virginia Avenue, adjacent to the Ballona Creek. The lot is used to provide short and long-term parking to businesses in the immediate area. Short-term parking is provided via monthly parking agreements and long-term parking is provided via agreements with the former Culver City Redevelopment Agency. In order for the City to use the lot for the Safe Park program, the monthly leases would need to be terminated and the long-term agreements would need to be addressed. The City would provide and install portable toilets, handwashing stations, trash cans, signage, power generators, security, and food, however the site sits closely to State Rotary Plaza Senior Living Facility. City staff would also work with Grace Diner and CPUMC to outreach and identify possible participants. Power generators and lights can be bothersome due to the site's adjacency to a residential neighborhood. This site can accommodate up to 15 trailers and 25 cars.

Programming

While the City can establish a safe parking location for PEH during the pandemic, thoughtful programming to support the participants also needs to be considered. A Safe Park program can be a good opportunity for the City to build rapport with and connect potential participants to longer-term housing solutions. However, this requires robust and consistent case management. There needs to be careful planning to find balance between meeting the urgency of the moment to provide a safe place to park while also offering enough programming support to help the participants beyond the pandemic.

Longer-term programming

A longer-term program would include working with a provider to develop the program guidelines and enrollment process. The provider handles all the programming needs with support from City staff. They would perform thorough screening for eligibility, including checking for valid driver's license and insurance, warrants, past criminal history, sex offender status, and current location of residency. Participants sign contracts agreeing to the timeline and expectations of the program and work closely with case managers who offer light-touch weekly case management to help participants get back on

the pathway to housing. All programs have onsite security and some programs offer meals and car repair assistance.

Short-term programming

A short-term program could meet the urgency of providing a safe place to sleep during this public health emergency. To support quick enrollment, onboarding and eligibility requirements might need to be pared down. Those who need the program the most right now are not likely able to provide evidence of car registration and insurance. Partnership with Grace Diner and CPUMC can help identify candidates who might be ready for such a program. Participants would still sign program contracts to participate and staff would work with SJC to provide some degree of case management.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

Following discussion of the site and programming recommendations, the Council may direct staff to pursue agreements with CPUMC and Culver Palms YMCA for use of their parking lots for the duration of the local emergency, or work toward the use of the two City facilities and City-owned Virginia lot. The cost estimates of erecting a program at any location is contingent on selection of the site and associated programming costs. It is the intention of staff to ensure that costs are reimbursable by FEMA.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Safe Parking Matrix of LA County Programs
2. Safe Park Site Services and Site Suitability
3. Safe Park Program Considerations

MOTION

That the City Council:

1. Discuss options for implementation of a Safe Park Program for unsheltered individuals sleeping in their vehicles during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
2. Provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.