



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

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Item #: C-6.

CC - Authorization to Conduct a Census Count (Internal Count) of Homeless Persons Within the Boundaries of Culver City Due to a Suspension of the 2021 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA).

Meeting Date: January 11, 2021

Contact Person/Dept: Tevis Barnes, Christina Stoffers Housing Division, CDD
Helen Chin, Assistant to the City Manager on Homelessness

Phone Number: 310-253-5780

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒

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

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

Public Notification: Committee on Homelessness (12/08/2020); Landlord Tenant Mediation Board (01/06/2021); Saint Joseph Center (12/01/2020); Upward Bound House (12/08/2020); Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (12/01/2020) (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - City Council (01/06/2021)

Department Approval: John Nachbar, City Manager (01/06/2021)
Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (01/04/2021)

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Culver City Council (Council) authorize staff to conduct an internal count of homeless persons within the boundaries of Culver City due to a suspension of the 2021 Greater Los Angeles homeless count by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA).

BACKGROUND:

Annually the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) conducts a census of the unhoused community throughout Los Angeles County referred to as the Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count (Count). This process incorporates a street count, shelter/institution count, youth count, and homeless demographic survey. The street count is a Point-in-Time (PIT) census that is conducted in

late January between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines homelessness as not having a regular fixed nighttime residence or sleeping in places not meant for human habitation. The Count enables LAHSA and local governments to account for the number of unhoused individuals and families within its jurisdiction and understand the scope of need and characteristics of this community. In addition, information from the Count is essential in assisting jurisdictions with requests for funding as well as informing program development and policy changes.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, LAHSA requested HUD allow full exemption of all 2021 unsheltered Point in Time (PIT) Homeless Count requirements. City staff was notified by LAHSA on December 10, 2020 that HUD approved their request to suspend the 2021 Count. This means the County of Los Angeles will suspend the street PIT count for the 2021 calendar year. LAHSA will still conduct a shelter/institutional count using their Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

The cities of Glendale, Long Beach and Pasadena administer their own Continuum of Care (CoC) systems and do not fall under LAHSA's jurisdiction. Staff contacted the non-LAHSA cities mentioned above to better understand how they planned to approach the 2021 Count. Staff found that the cities of Pasadena, Glendale and Long Beach will proceed in the same manner as LAHSA and suspend their 2021 PIT Count due to COVID-19. The City of Pasadena will still conduct a sheltered/institutional count by gathering data from its Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). The Cities of Glendale and Long Beach did not state how they will handle the youth and sheltered/institutional count for their jurisdictions.

DISCUSSION:

City Administered Internal Count

In the absence of a coordinated LAHSA 2021 Count, City staff proposes that City personnel administer Culver City's homeless count along City streets and shelter/institutional PIT census, and not include community volunteers.¹ The 2020 Count noted 216 unhoused in Culver City. This is a decrease from the 2019 Count where 236 unhoused persons were enumerated the evening of the Count.

It has not been determined if the 2020 Count decrease in the unhoused population is a trend. With the rise in unemployment rates, COVID-19 infections, and deaths, as well as evictions, it is conceivable that there will be a substantial increase in the number of unhoused families and individuals throughout Los Angeles, including Culver City. In consideration of this outcome, by recording the number, location, and general demographic characteristics of unhoused residents, the City will be able to better target social service resources and programming for additional funding and/or policy changes.

The Internal Count will be achieved through a collaboration between the City Manager's Office, the Housing Division, the Culver City Police and Fire Departments (CCPD and CCFD), and the Culver City Saint Joseph Center (SJC) Homeless Outreach Team. Staff from the City departments stated above held a virtual meeting on December 17, 2020 to outline logistics and define roles and responsibilities to conduct a successful 2021 Count. Both CCPD and CCFD have been essential and supportive in addressing homelessness in our community. For the past 10 years, CCPD and CCFD

have assisted in conducting previous Counts. In the last five years, the CCPD formed a special team with SJC to enumerate the more challenging homeless “hotspots” throughout the City. During previous Counts CCPD and CCFD also provided security at the deployment site (Culver City Senior Center) and safety training to volunteers.

To remain consistent with past PIT, the Internal Count would be conducted using the LAHSA schedule of the last Wednesday of January (01/27/2021). The Count would start at 9:00 pm and would conclude at approximately 1:00 am or 2:00 am. Staff would conduct the Internal Count using the same methodology from previous Counts. In order to “safe distance,” Staff would stay in their vehicles while tallying each unhoused person/family visible on the street, makeshift tent and shelter, RV and vehicle.

While maintaining the Los Angeles County COVID-19 Safety Protocol and the CCPD and CCFD Daily Infection Control Procedures, the Internal Count will consist of five teams made up of staff from CCPD, CCFD, Housing, SJC and the City Manager’s Office. Each team will consist of two to three persons with a mix of staff from each department/agency above. One person in the team will serve as the driver, another team member will be the scribe keeping tally of the figures. A team member will also serve as navigator and/or lookout. A member of the CCPD Mental Health Emergency Team (MHET) will also serve as a member of the enumeration teams. The Internal Count will utilize the CCPD method of dividing the City into five districts. There will be one team per district. The teams will deploy from the first level of the City Hall parking garage which will serve as the Count Deployment Site or base camp. Two staff will remain at City Hall and serve as Deployment Site Coordinators whose function will be to prepare and distribute data collection materials, organize each team, train staff, and collect and analyze final data.

During the Internal Count, City staff will not directly engage the unhoused community, unless they are specifically asked to provide help or to render aid. If staff witness an unhoused resident in need of medical attention or other activity that would require the assistance of CCFD and/or CCPD, those departments would be contacted to respond.

Ballona Creek

In previous years, LAHSA sent a special team to count the Ballona Creek area. Due to the difficult area topography, lack of lighting, and to ensure staff safety, a census of the unhoused individuals residing in the Ballona Creek area will be conducted during the daytime on Wednesday, January 27, 2020. The Ballona Creek team will be the members of the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) who consist of CCPD, CCFD and the Assistant to the City Manager on Homelessness. This EOC Team already conducts outreach to the Ballona Creek area on a regular basis.

Sheltered/Institutional Count

For the sheltered/institutional component of the Count, staff would work with Saint Joseph Center and Upward Bound House (UBH) to determine the number of unhoused children and their families residing at the UBH shelter the evening of the Internal Count.

City Council Housing and Homelessness Subcommittee

On December 10, 2020, staff met with the City Council Housing and Homelessness Subcommittee (then Mayor Eriksson and then Vice Mayor Fisch) to discuss aspects of a local continuation of the

homeless census. The Subcommittee accepted a continuation of the Count without coordination with LAHSA and asked staff to make a recommendation to the full City Council to proceed with an Internal Count.

Committee on Homelessness

The Committee on Homelessness (COH) has played an essential role working in collaboration with staff to orchestrate the Counts of previous years. The COH annually forms the COH Homeless Count Subcommittee to work with staff to recruit, coordinate and train volunteers, secure refreshments for volunteers, review data collection methodology and field survey maps and ensure the success of all activities related to the Count. During the COH meeting on December 8, 2020, the COH discussed staff's proposal to form an internal team made up of City staff to conduct the 2021 Count in the wake of the LAHSA Count suspension. The COH supported moving forward with an Internal Count. A 2021 Homeless Count Subcommittee was formed and will advise staff on the execution of the Internal Count. Staff will also reach out to LAHSA to acquire best practices to ensure the success of the Culver City Internal Count.

Public Outreach

The COH felt it important to continue to engage the constituency of volunteers, local organizations and businesses who have supported the Count for many years. This includes dozens of private individuals and community and faith organizations such as Temple Akiba, St. Augustine Church, the Exchange Club, and local businesses including Sorrento Market, Gus' Chili, Tito's Taco and Copenhagen Bakery. An outreach notice will be transmitted via email to all the entities who have supported the Count in the past to inform them that, if approved by Council, the City will use an internal team and will not engage volunteers to assist with the unhoused census for 2021. The notice will also encourage the supporters to continue to support local homeless efforts and to consider resuming their support for the 2022 Count.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The fiscal impacts to the City include staff time and use of City vehicles. Funding to address these costs will be allocated from the Fiscal Year 2020/2021 Housing Division budget and the City General Fund.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Final Homeless Counts Figures
2. Housing Data Collection Tally Sheets
3. City Field Survey Map
4. CCFD/PD Daily Infection Control Procedures

MOTION:

That the City Council:

Authorize staff to conduct an Internal Count of homeless persons within the boundaries of

Culver City due to a suspension of the 2021 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA).

NOTES:

1. Detail below are the various coordination aspects of the 2021 Internal Count:

- **Date/ Time** - The Internal Count will be conduct on January 27, 2021 starting at 9pm. This is consistent with the previous deployment of enumerating teams during previous Counts. Staff anticipates that last team will finish by 1:00am. The Ballona Creek Count will take place on January 27th during daytime hours.
- **Deployment Site**- On the evening of Wednesday, January 27, 2020, staff will deploy from first level of the Culver City Hall parking garage. This will allow for social distancing of City staff while assembling and receiving materials and instructions. Two staff members will remain at the deployment site to assist with answering questions and providing instructions to the enumerating teams out in the field.
- **COVID-19 Safety Protocol** - To maintain social distancing and COVID-19 protocols to keep staff safe, City staff will adhere to the COVID-19 Safety Protocol set by the County of Los Angeles. In addition, all participating staff will follow the CCFD/PD Daily Infection Control Procedures and complete the Daily Employee Health Screen Form. All staff will test their body temperatures before commencing the Internal Count. Staff with elevated body temperatures will not be allowed to participate in the evening's event. Staff with any flu-like symptoms will also not be allowed to participate in the internal count. Staff will be mandated to wear a N95 mask at all times. No eating or drinking will be allowed to prevent the removal of masks. The car windows will remain open at all times to allow for air circulation. Staff will maintain social distancing by assembling and deploying from an open underground parking garage and stand a minimum of 10 feet apart. While waiting to deploy, vehicles will also be separated by two parking spaces. There will be teams of no more than 2-3 persons per vehicle. Staff will wear gloves while preparing and distributing field survey packets for each team.
- **Data Collection** - The following demographic characteristic data will be collected on the unhoused community. This is data is consistent with data collected during previous Counts to ensure consistency.
 - Number of Unhoused Individuals/Families/Unaccompanied Minors
 - Number of Unhoused living in Cars
 - Number of Unhoused living in Vans
 - Number of Unhoused living in RVs/Campers
 - Number of Unhoused living in Tents/Makeshift Shelter
- **Training**- To remain consistent with previous Counts, staff will utilize LAHSA training

materials on collecting/recording data and visualization clues on recognizing unhoused persons and unhoused persons residing in cars, vans, RVs/campers, tents and makeshift shelters.

- **Field Survey Maps/Districts** - The City will be divided into 5 districts. These districts will be consistent with the districts used by CCPD. The City GIS will provide all field survey maps to ensure the accuracy of locations and to prevent counting the unhoused individuals residing in the City of Los Angeles, where Culver City and Los Angeles share borders. This will also prevent the Internal Count teams from double counting the unhoused individuals in adjacent districts. Culver City is made up of 12 census tracts. Data will be collected based on the unhoused individuals in each census tract based on demographic characteristic defined above.