



Homeless Commission

ACTION CALENDAR
September 10, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Homeless Commission
Submitted by: Carole Marasovic, Chair, Homeless Commission
Subject: Health Study to be Conducted by Division of Public Health to Gather Data on Health Conditions, Health Disparities and Mortality Rates of Berkeley's Homeless

RECOMMENDATION

The Homeless Commission recommends that Council direct that the City Division of Public Health conduct a study gathering data on health conditions, health disparities and mortality rates of Berkeley's homeless for the last five years.

Such recommendation includes compiling information on Berkeley's homeless including persons living in shelters, in vehicles, on the streets, and any other location not intended for human habitation and who move between these settings. Such study shall include data on specific health conditions and make a comparative analysis between the homeless and Berkeley's general population and shall include demographics such as race, age, gender and known disability. Such study shall include how long the homeless person has lived on the streets and/or in shelters and attempt to track back the nature of their various residences for five years as is feasible.

Data for mortality rates among Berkeley's homeless shall also be gathered for the last five years. The mortality rates shall be examined for persons living in shelters, in vehicles, on the streets and any other location not intended for human habitation. The cause of death shall be identified and demographics such as race, age, gender and known disability compiled. Tracking the housing status of the persons, for the last five years, shall be identified as is feasible. If feasible, the length of residence in Berkeley shall be identified.

A comparative analysis with the general population shall be made. To the extent feasible and within legal constraints, whether or not the deceased individual was under the care of a medical provider shall be identified. All personal information should be redacted so as to comply with federal, state and local laws.

Recommendations shall be made to improve the health conditions of the homeless and decrease the mortality rates of homeless persons. Recommendations, within the City Division of Public Health's purview shall be made initially by them and return to Council

where further recommendations can be made. Council shall provide the opportunity for the Homeless Commission, any other relevant commission, and the public to weigh in on recommendations following the release of the data/study.

SUMMARY

Persons who are homeless whether in shelters, in vehicles, on the streets or in other locations not intended for human habitation are more prone to having serious medical conditions. In recent years, there has been a significant number of deaths among homeless persons in Berkeley. A study, such as that recommended, would provide information to document and improve health conditions of the homeless and would mitigate future mortality rates among the homeless.

FISCAL IMPACT of RECOMMENDATION:

Staff would have to identify the cost of this proposal.

CURRENT SITUATION and its EFFECTS

Recently, a significant number of homeless persons living in shelters, on the streets, in vehicles, or locations not intended for human habitation in Berkeley have died. Many of Berkeley's homeless have visible medical conditions; others may very well have conditions less visible that are going untreated.

BACKGROUND

On June 12, 2019, the Homeless Commission recommended as follows:

Action: M/S/C Hill/ Marasovic That Council direct that the City Division of Public Health conduct a study, gathering data on health conditions, health disparities and mortality rates of Berkeley's homeless for the last five years. Such recommendation includes compiling information on Berkeley's homeless including persons living in shelters, in vehicles, on the streets, and any other location not intended for human habitation and who move between these settings. Such study shall include data on specific health conditions and make a comparative analysis between the homeless and Berkeley's general population and shall include demographics such as race, age, gender and known disability. Such study shall include how long the homeless person has lived on the streets and/or in shelters and attempt to track back the nature of their various residences for five years as is feasible.

Data for mortality rates among Berkeley's homeless shall also be gathered for the last five years. The mortality rates shall be examined for persons living in shelters, in vehicles, on the streets, and any other location not intended for human habitation and who move between these settings. The cause of death shall be identified and demographics such as race, age, gender and known disability compiled. Tracking the housing status of the persons, for the last five years, shall be identified as is feasible. If feasible, the length of residence in Berkeley shall be identified. A comparative analysis with the general population

shall be made. To the extent feasible and within legal constraints, whether or not the deceased individual was under the care of a medical provider shall be identified.

All personal information shall be redacted so as to comply with federal, state and local laws as to the study of both health conditions and mortality rates of the homeless.

Recommendations shall be made to improve the health conditions of the homeless and decrease the mortality rates of homeless persons. Recommendations, within the City Division of Public Health's purview, shall be made initially by them and return to Council where further recommendations can be made. Council shall provide the opportunity for the Homeless Commission, any other relevant commission and the public, to weigh in on recommendations following the release of the data/study.

Vote: Ayes: Behm-Steinberg, Hill, Kealoha-Blake, Marasovic, Mulligan
Noes: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Hirpara (excused).

Action: M/S/C Hill/Marasovic to submit the report as amended and to authorize the Chair to present on behalf of the Commission on the report.

Vote: Ayes: Behm-Steinberg, Hill, Kealoha-Blake, Marasovic
Noes: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Hirpara (excused), Mulligan.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There can only be positive environmental impacts from a better quality of health conditions and mortality rates among the homeless.

RATIONALE for RECOMMENDATION

The homeless are part of the Berkeley community in great numbers. The visible medical conditions of many and the recent mortality rates merit attention to compiling data and making recommendations on improving their health conditions and mitigating mortality rates. Before implementing any new programs or making generalized recommendations, data must be compiled.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

The Homeless Commission considered doing nothing and believed that that was not acceptable.

CITY MANAGER

See companion report.

CONTACT PERSON

Peter Radu, Commission Secretary, HHCS, (510) 981-5435.

