



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

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To: Board of Finance
City Council

From: Sarah Russell, Special Assistant to End Homelessness
Brian Pine, CEDO Director
Kerin Durfee, Human Resources Director

Cc: Mayor Miro Weinberger
Katherine Schad, Chief Administrative Officer
Jared Pellerin, Acting City Attorney

Date: October 5, 2023

Subject: City of Burlington Seasonal Warming Shelter Project: Creation of (1) FTE position within CEDO; AHS Grant Agreement; Contracts; Lease

Executive Summary:

The numbers of people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity continues to be almost triple those pre-pandemic and access to emergency housing is restricted from the levels available during the Spring of 2022. Recent data demonstrates a rise in unsheltered homelessness in Burlington from 80 individuals last September to over 200 currently. This data reflects a growing need for expansion of emergency shelter capacity to ensure prevention of exposure deaths as winter draws near. Without confirmation of Adverse Weather Conditions (AWC) Emergency Housing (seasonal motel) eligibility criteria from the State of Vermont (SoV) Agency of Human Services (AHS), it is imperative that the City identify emergency shelter solutions. The following memo outlines the City's response to this crisis through the development and operation of an overnight seasonal warming shelter, execution of related contracts, acceptance of AHS funding, and creation of a year-round staff position to address emerging challenges related to emergency shelter capacity, outreach coordination, and supports for people living unsheltered through the City.

Justification:

The City of Burlington intends to open a winter warming shelter from December 15, 2023 – March 15, 2024 to prevent exposure deaths for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. With the transition of operations of the Champlain Inn from ANew Place to Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO) in October 2023, shelter beds will be reduced as CVOEO is opting to operate the shelter as non-congregate and will not allow walk-in guests. (The City was part of a team of stakeholders, including CVOEO, Champlain Housing Trust, AHS and Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) engaged in this evolution of management and services at the Champlain Inn and the expanded services that will be offered in this location represent best practices that the City fully supports.) The change at the Champlain Inn in conjunction with the closure of the State's motel program in June, leaves the City without a warming shelter, and with a significant need to ensure we are able to prevent exposure deaths during the winter months. The need for seasonal shelter is critical.

Seasonal Overnight Shelter

The City intends to utilize the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 782 building, located at 176 South Winooski Avenue, to provide emergency shelter accommodations for up to 30 guests (with possibility of overflow capacity). We recognize

this shelter capacity seems inadequate compared to the need however it is our hope that many of the people outside now, will be able to access AWC emergency housing this winter. The City proposes a low-barrier overnight shelter, ensuring individuals with substance use disorder, mental health and behavioral challenges, and people experiencing barriers to obtaining and maintaining traditional shelter stay and/or (AWC) emergency housing (motels) have access to safe accommodations during winter months. The shelter will provide overnight accommodations and will operate from 5pm-8am seven days per week beginning December 15, 2023 and running through March 15, 2024. (Champlain Housing Trust anticipates a spring 2024 start to their new affordable housing project at this site.) Capital improvements required prior to operation include, but are not limited to, installation of security camera system, IT infrastructure, door alarms, minor interior modifications, installation of laundry facilities, signage, and additional storage capacity. The City will utilize consultation from our partners with experience in the operation of similar overnight seasonal shelters, in addition to technical assistance from the VoS AHS Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO).

The City will ensure staffing levels for all shifts include a minimum of two Shelter Support Staff and one security guard during operation. An Assistant Manager and Manager will oversee operations, supervise Shelter Support Staff, manage related contracts, conduct data collection and reporting, and ensure trauma-informed and harm-reduction models are implemented with both shelter operations and policies.

Homeless Initiatives Manager

Due to the temporary nature of seasonal shelter, the City will utilize the services of a temporary staffing agency (details below) for all positions; with the exception of the manager position, which will be employed by the City of Burlington, CEDO. The *Homeless Initiatives Manager* will manage all aspects of the winter warming shelter including staffing, operations, monitor contracts, and ensure safe and secure accommodations to guests through the winter season (approximately November/December 2023 – April 2024). With funding support from AHS, this position will continue beyond shelter operation until June 30, 2024 to provide support to CEDO with its efforts to address, respond to, and prevent unsheltered homelessness within the City. CEDO is requesting Board of Finance and City Council approval to approve the creation of this position to manage overnight seasonal shelter operations. We anticipate submitting a proposal to funds this position for FY25.

Acceptance of SoV AHS Funding

CEDO submitted a proposal to VoS AHS OEO and was awarded full funding to cover all costs associated with operations of the overnight seasonal shelter including capital improvements (listed above), staffing and staffing contract, security contract, shelter supplies, meals (evening meal and morning snack), IT and security infrastructure, lease of site, and services. CEDO is requesting Board of Finance and City Council approval to accept grant funds from the State of Vermont, Department of Children and Families Office of Economic Opportunity Housing and Opportunities Program (SoV OEO HOP) and authorization for the CEDO Director to execute all documents necessary to accept the funding in the amount of \$590,023.

Contracts

Due to the seasonal/temporary nature of this shelter, the City will utilize Maxim Healthcare Staffing to recruit, screen, hire, and manage administrative functions. CEDO has developed job descriptions for the Assistant Shelter Manager and Shelter Support Staff positions and holds final decision-making authority on the hiring of all staff. Maxim Healthcare Staffing has experience hiring shelter staff at the Elmwood Community Shelter and low-barrier seasonal shelter in Manchester New Hampshire, as well as provision of medical (nursing) staff for the VT Department of Corrections, and psychiatric facility. All positions will be filled with local candidates to the extent possible. CEDO is requesting Board of Finance and City Council approval to execute Maxim Healthcare Staffing contract and related documents with a maximum limiting amount of \$340,990.

CEDO intends to contract with private security company to provide overnight security services. CEDO is requesting Board of Finance and City Council approval and authorization for the CEDO Director to execute the documents necessary to contract for security services at the Seasonal Warming Shelter with a maximum limiting amount of \$74,256.

Lease

The City intends to utilize the vacant Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) building located at 176 South Winooski Avenue for operation of the seasonal overnight shelter. CEDO staff are in negotiation with VFW administrative staff to finalize the lease terms. CEDO is requesting City Council approval and authorization for the CEDO director to execute the documents necessary to finalize a lease with VFW with a maximum limiting amount of \$10,000 over a five-month period (November 1, 2023 (latest) – March 31, 2024).

Motions:

Board of Finance Motion:

Move to recommend that the City Council approve and authorize the following:

- The creation of (1) FTE position within the Community Economic Development Office, the *Homelessness Initiatives Manager, a non-union, limited service, grade 18 position*.
- Approve and recommend that the City Council approve the acceptance of SFY 2024 grant funds in the amount of \$590,023 from the State of Vermont Housing and Opportunities Program for the operations of the seasonal overnight shelter and authorize the Director of CEDO to execute all contracts and documents necessary to accept the funding through the period of June 30th 2024, including retroactive approval for the period of November 1, 2023 thru June 30, 2024, subject to the final review and approval of the City Attorney's Office.
- Approve and recommend that the City Council authorize the Director of CEDO or their designee to create a project budget not to exceed \$590,023 for the development of a seasonal overnight shelter and to execute all contracts in furtherance of this initiative upon review and approval of the Chief Administrative Officer and City Attorney's Office.
- Approve and recommend that the City Council approve and authorize the Director of CEDO to execute a contract with Maxim Healthcare Staffing with a maximum limiting amount of \$340,990 for the time period of December 1, 2023 thru March 31, 2024, for the purposes of providing administrative functions related to the seasonal overnight shelter, subject to the final review and approval of the City Attorney's Office.

City Council Motion:

Move to move and authorize approve the following:

- The creation of (1) FTE position within the Community Economic Development Office, the *Homelessness Initiatives Manager, a non-union, limited service, grade 18 position*.
- Approve the acceptance of SFY 2024 grant funds in the amount of \$590,023 from the State of Vermont Housing and Opportunities Program for the operations of the seasonal overnight shelter and authorize the Director of CEDO to execute all contracts and documents necessary to accept the funding through the period of June 30th 2024, including retroactive approval for the period of November 1, 2023 thru June 30, 2024, subject to the final review and approval of the City Attorney's Office.
- Approve and authorize the Director of CEDO or their designee to create a project budget not to exceed \$590,023 for the development of a seasonal overnight shelter and to execute all contracts in furtherance of this initiative upon review and approval of the Chief Administrative Officer and City Attorney's Office.
- Approve and authorize the Director of CEDO to execute Maxim Healthcare Staffing contract and related documents with maximum limiting amount of \$340,990 for the time period of December 1, 2023 thru March 31, 2024, subject to the final review and approval of the City Attorney's Office
- Approve and authorize the Director of CEDO to execute VFW lease and related documents with maximum limiting amount of \$10,000 over a five month period (November 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024), subject to the final review and approval of the City Attorney's Office

Attachments:

- *Homeless Initiatives Manager* job description
- CEDO (updated) Organizational Chart

