



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Linda Stewart, Neighborhood and Community Services Director
COPY: Community Vitality and Safety Committee; Peter Huffman, Planning and Development Services Director
PRESENTER: Erica Azcueta and Allyson Griffith, Neighborhood and Community Services
SUBJECT: Temporary Shelter Permanent Regulations - Update
DATE: October 24, 2019

PRESENTATION TYPE:
Request for Ordinance

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this presentation is to provide the Community Vitality and Safety Committee with an update on the use of the Temporary Shelter Permanent Regulations, Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) Sections 13.06.635 and 13.06.700 (Ordinance No. 28498) and recommend potential near-term amendments to increase use of the regulations to establish temporary shelter sites.

BACKGROUND:

On April 10, 2018, Tacoma City Council passed Ordinance No. 28498 adopting the Emergency Temporary Shelters Permanent Regulations. The regulations allow non-profits and faith-based organizations to implement a permitted, temporary shelter for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. One temporary shelter per police sector can operate for a duration of 185 consecutive days. A second temporary shelter may be established in a given police sector once a shelter has been sited in each other police sector.

ISSUE:

Since adoption of the Emergency Temporary Shelter Permanent Regulations in 2018, NCS staff has conducted more than 50 consultations with interested religious and non-profit organizations. One faith-based organization has obtained a permit to operate a shelter on their property. Bethlehem Baptist Church (4818 E. Portland Avenue) operated a temporary shelter at times during 2016-2018. The Pastor of Bethlehem Baptist has committed to work with the City to identify a suitable operator, and plans to establish a temporary shelter at that site as soon as the operator is identified and permitting obtained.

During consultations with NCS staff, prospective shelter hosts have stated a variety of perceived barriers and reasons for not utilizing the regulations to establish a temporary shelter site. One of the barriers expressed was the restriction of one shelter per police sector. This restriction was originally put in place to allow for equitable distribution of services, access to services for individuals experiencing homelessness across the city, and limit impacts to City services in any given location in the city.

Staff recommends refining the limitation on geographic location to address the number of individuals served in any given area rather than limiting the number of sites. For example, the regulation could state:

In no event shall more than six temporary shelter sites be permitted within the City at any given time. Additionally, a maximum of two (2) shelters should be allowed in any single Police Sector at any given time. ~~No given Police Sector will have a total number of temporary shelter sites serving~~



more than a total of 100 residents at any given time and a minimum of one mile must separate each temporary shelter site. Prior to approving shelter sites, the total capacity of temporary shelter sites in a given sector shall be evaluated. ~~a request for a second temporary shelter location within a sector, all other sectors shall have a temporary shelter location.~~ As part of the process for approving ~~a second~~ additional locations within a sector, the City shall determine whether there are adequate City services to support ~~the second~~ additional locations in a sector.

Staff has collected non-profit and faith-based organization concerns related to the required square footage for sheltering sites. To address this concern, staff recommends refinements to the regulation, which could state:

(2) The minimum site area required for temporary shelters shall be a minimum of ~~7,500~~ 5,000 square feet serving up to 25 people or 7,500 square feet serving between 26-50 people. The minimum site area may be proportionally reduced if adjacent existing buildings are used for sleeping or support facilities such as kitchen, dining hall, showers, and latrines.

Neighborhood and Community Services staff continue to meet with organizations who want to better understand the temporary shelter regulations, and anticipate that these refinements may result in commitments to establishing temporary shelter sites.

ALTERNATIVES:

Council may decide not to modify the Temporary Shelters Permanent Regulations at this time. Not modifying the regulations to reduce the identified restrictions does not alter the likelihood of establishing additional temporary shelter sites, which are required to meet current need.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to adjusting the Municipal Code. Staff anticipates that City resources may be required to assist with temporary shelter implementation and operations.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends these near-term updates to the Temporary Shelter Permanent Regulations section 13.06.635 of the TMC to refine the restriction on number of locations per police sector and to reduce the required square footage for temporary shelter sites serving 25 people or less. Staff may bring additional recommendations forward for Council consideration at a later date, as an outcome of the November 2019 – April 2020 homeless services provider and stakeholder convening process.