



RESOLUTION NO. 39716

1 BY REQUEST OF MAYOR STRICKLAND

2 A RESOLUTION relating to the homelessness crisis; directing the Interim City
3 Manager to promptly prepare and present to the City Council an Emergency
4 Temporary Aid and Shelter Program to respond to the homelessness crisis,
5 and to prepare and present an ordinance declaring a state of emergency
6 relating to the current homeless crisis, authorizing the suspension of certain
7 regulations to facilitate the Emergency Temporary Aid and Shelter Program,
8 and providing for approval of such emergency services contracts as are
9 necessary to support this program.

10 WHEREAS the City of Tacoma continues to experience large numbers of
11 individuals and families who are homeless due to such factors as job loss, family
12 crisis, substance abuse, economic reasons, mental health issues, and loss of
13 temporary housing, and

14 WHEREAS the pattern of stagnant and declining wages and shortage of
15 available affordable housing has also contributed to the rising numbers of
16 homeless individuals and families, and

17 WHEREAS the homelessness crisis is occurring in communities
18 throughout the West Coast, causing cities like Seattle, Washington; Portland,
19 Oregon; and Los Angeles, California, to declare states of emergency in order to
20 provide emergency services and shelters for the growing number of unsheltered
21 homeless individuals and families, and

22 WHEREAS point in time counts conducted in the greater Tacoma area
23 have identified 1,997 homeless persons in year 2012; 1,303 in year 2013;
24 1,474 in year 2014; 1,283 in year 2015; 1,762 in year 2016; and 1,321 in year
25 2017, and
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1 WHEREAS, despite the improving economy, the point in time counts
2 reveal that at any given night large numbers of people, including families,
3 experience homelessness and can be found sleeping on the streets and in
4 parks, cars, abandoned buildings, steep slopes, under highway overpasses, and
5 in other places not meant for human habitation, and
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7 WHEREAS, of the 1,321 homeless persons counted in the point in time
8 count for 2017, 21 percent were identified as chronically homeless, 14 percent
9 were households with children, 39 percent were female, 14 percent were victims
10 of domestic violence, 6 percent were unaccompanied youth and young adults,
11 of domestic violence, 6 percent were unaccompanied youth and young adults,
12 10 percent were veterans, and 41 percent were people of color, and

13 WHEREAS, in years 2015-2016, the unsheltered population in the
14 greater Tacoma area increased by 46 percent and since 2010, the unsheltered
15 homeless population had increased by 192 percent, with more individuals and
16 families living in places not fit for human habitation, and
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18 WHEREAS the supply of available temporary and permanent support
19 housing for homeless persons residing in Tacoma is inadequate to meet
20 demand, resulting in long lines for emergency shelters (the wait list for some
21 shelters is as high as 80-90 people per night), long waits for support housing,
22 and a rising number of unsheltered households, and
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24 WHEREAS, on any given night, homeless encampments in Tacoma may
25 be occupied by 100 or more persons, and
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1 WHEREAS homeless encampments occur without appropriate sanitation
2 facilities or proper trash receptacles and often become contaminated with
3 garbage, human waste, used needles, and dirty dressings, resulting in
4 occupants facing serious health and sanitation issues, and

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6 WHEREAS conditions in homeless encampments are personally stressful
7 and expose occupants to communicable diseases like tuberculosis and
8 respiratory illnesses, violence, malnutrition, and harmful weather exposures and
9 exacerbate common conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and
10 asthma because there is no safe place to properly store medications or
11 syringes, and

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13 WHEREAS behavioral health issues such as depression or alcoholism
14 often develop or are made worse for people living in homeless encampments,
15 and these conditions frequently co-occur with a complex mix of severe physical,
16 psychiatric, substance use, and social problems, and

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18 WHEREAS, according to the National Health Care for the Homeless
19 Council, persons “. . . experiencing homelessness are three to four times more
20 likely to die prematurely than their housed counterparts, and experience an
21 average life expectancy as low as 41 years . . . ,” and

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23 WHEREAS health care services are not effective when a patient’s health
24 is continually compromised by street and shelter conditions, and inpatient
25 hospitalization or residential drug treatment and mental health care do not have
26 lasting impacts when the patient is returned to a homeless environment, and



1 WHEREAS conditions in homeless encampments that are dangerous to
2 human health include: garbage that becomes a food source for vermin; vectors
3 (organisms that transmit diseases or parasites) and related pathogens; lack of
4 proper food storage and clean dishes that can facilitate the spread of food-borne
5 disease; lack of sanitary facilities to dispose of human and animal fecal waste,
6 which can lead to contamination of ground and surface water supplies and
7 transmittal of disease; improper disposal of discarded medical and sharps
8 waste; accumulation of combustible materials that can ignite; lack of poor
9 hygiene which contributes to dental and skin problems; and the victimization of
10 homeless persons by both sheltered and non-sheltered persons, and
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13 WHEREAS these conditions arise from human-made events and are
14 contributing to, and will continue to contribute to, significant human suffering,
15 creating an immediate need to provide temporary aid and shelter for the
16 homeless persons occupying these encampments, regardless of where in the
17 City they may be found, and
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19 WHEREAS the housing and homelessness crisis presents an existing
20 and ongoing threat of significant harm to human health and life, requiring
21 immediate action, and
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23 WHEREAS residents of homeless encampments have needs that include
24 the provision of social, public, and mental health services; stability; storage and
25 safety; potable drinking water; solid waste disposal; and human waste disposal,
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WHEREAS many of these conditions can be mitigated through interim measures designed to meet the immediate survival and safety needs of those persons occupying homeless encampments, such as the provision of hygiene facilities, trash collection, sanitary facilities, temporary shelters, and outreach and gateway services within the encampments, and

WHEREAS the City Council finds that it is in the best interest of the public health, safety, and welfare for the City Council to exercise its police power authority to declare a housing emergency and to authorize an emergency program for establishment of temporary housing and aid stations to address basic humanitarian needs in areas with significant concentrations of homeless persons, and to authorize emergency contracts to provide aid and temporary shelter services at such locations; Now, Therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:

Section 1. That the Interim City Manager is directed to promptly prepare and present to the City Council an Emergency Temporary Aid and Shelter Program to respond to the homelessness crisis.

Section 2. That the Interim City Manager is directed to promptly prepare and present to the City Council an ordinance declaring a state of emergency relating to the current homeless crisis, authorizing the suspension of certain regulations to facilitate the Emergency Temporary Aid and Shelter Program, and providing



1 for approval of such emergency services contracts as are necessary to support
2 this program.

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4 Adopted _____

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Mayor

7 Attest:

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City Clerk

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11 Approved as to form:

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Chief Deputy City Attorney

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