MDAR Advisory Committee

on Implementation of Rules for Removing Unsanctioned Homeless Encampments

Tuesday, November 13th, 6:00- 8:00 PM

City Hall, Room 370

Meeting Notes

Present: Colleen Echohawk (co-chair), Patricia McInturff (co-chair), Flo Beaumon, Erin Goodman, Mark Lloyd, Harold Odom, Sheila Sebron, Dennis Cook, Lisa Howard

Absent: James Hurd, Michael Neguse, Juan Cotto, Quynh Pham, Mike Stewart

Staff Present: Fred Podesta, Jackie St. Louis, August Drake-Ericson, Will Lemke, Joy Hunt

**Opening Comments from the Co-Chairs**

Colleen: Shared that she observed a cleanup recently. Observed that the procedure was handled with a lot of care and concern. Gave kudos to Navigation Team and the Seattle Police Department (SPD). Only concern was that the tents returned later the same day.

Patricia: Acknowledged that George Scarola and Emily Nolan have moved on/changed roles and expressed appreciation for their work and service to the Committee.

**Status of Navigation Team Transition to HSD – Fred Podesta**

Administrative operations of the Navigation Team transferred from Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) to the Human Services Department (HSD) as of July 1. Fred introduced Lieutenant Sina Ebinger from SPD. Lieutenant Ebinger will be overseeing SPD’s participation in the Navigation Team. Her background includes community outreach among other experiences. Fred emphasized that the Navigation Team continues to be a hybrid organization with many partners, including the SPD and the Parks Department. He shared that the team will continue to focus on encampments that are determined to be hazardous. The four major components of Navigation Team operations include outreach, taking care of campers’ personal property, cleaning up garbage and debris, and police presence to facilitate removing people and their property if needed.

Fred moved to HSD from FAS to work on crisis response issues. His goal is to work with colleagues Jackie St. Louis and August Drake-Ericson to integrate the Navigation Team’s work into HSD’s other work with tiny villages, shelter referrals, safe parking and other complementary programs. Jackie’s role is Crisis Response Manager. August works closely with SPD and manages Navigation Team logistics.

Q – Are these staff additions going to allow for simultaneous clean ups at multiple sites? Will there be one team, or will expanded staff capacity allow for the Navigation Team to grow into two teams?

A – We have done considerably more clean ups in the first ten months of this year compared to last year. One dynamic on the ground is that there’s a larger volume of smaller encampments. The current vision is to remain one team, but a countervailing consideration is to potentially do more geographically based work. Integrating the Navigation Team with HSD will allow for more structed and smarter coordination, which we hope will result in more people accepting shelter services.

Q – What is the racial makeup of the Navigation Team?

A – The Navigation Team is currently undergoing a Racial Equity Toolkit process, which is focusing on the makeup of the team. The process began at the request of auditors and this Committee and is being led by August Drake-Ericson. The result will be a living tool to determine what the team should look like going forward. August plans to take the Toolkit to the community for additional feedback in 2019. As part of the Toolkit work, the entire Navigation Team has attended or will attend training on Undoing Institutional Racism this year. The team will also attend a training on trauma informed care next year.

C – If additional Officers are added to the Navigation Team they should reflect the make up of the community served in terms of race.

A – Officers are selected via notice and an interview process. We make a call for Officers to volunteer for the Navigation Team. (clarification provided by Lieutenant Ebinger)

C – This comment is for SPD and the Navigation Team. I recommend that any Officers working with the Navigation Team receive specialized training. I fully believe and have seen personally that the Officers currently assigned to the team are doing very good work. This work is very challenging. Moving forward, it is essential to develop a formal training plan for Officers who are involved with the Navigation Team.

I am also hopeful there will be a policy regarding body cameras and the Navigation Team. I strongly recommended that be considered in the future. Body cameras can offer protection both to Officers and to people residing in tents. The policy on body cameras needs to be explicit.

C – We also need explicit standards that define what a “clean up” entails. Sometimes needles are left in sites after clean ups. There should be a uniform clean up standard that confirms all needles and garbage are removed when clean ups happen.

Q – How can we do more outreach that doesn’t directly involve the police? The goal should be connecting people to resources first rather than enforcement.

A – In 2019, funds granted to REACH for their work with the Navigation Team will be just 18% of HSD’s grants for outreach. The balance of those funds supports a network of outreach providers who do outreach to literally homeless folks that is not directly connected to the Navigation Team. Also, the Navigation Team’s first touch is typically REACH staff contacting campers without Officers being present.

A – This may be a messaging issue in part. The Navigation Team is only one part of the City’s response to homelessness.

C – I recommend the City consider adopting the Ballard model where outreach workers get assigned specific geographic focus areas.

C – We’re contracting with REACH to do geographically-based outreach based in SoDo. We’re hearing it typically takes about six touches before campers decide to accept services.

A – Jackie is specifically working on developing a coordinated plan for the City’s homeless outreach efforts.

C – Outreach workers need to be folks the community can rely on. There needs to be someone who knows the area and understand the unique needs of each different pocket of the City.

C – All Home is convening a lived experience coalition that may focus on geographic hubs.

A – This feedback is in alignment with the path we’re already on.

**Status of the Committee’s Recommendations**

The recommendations were transmitted to Deputy Mayor Mosely. The Mayor and Council are currently focused on the budget process. We expect to work with them to implement the Committee’s recommendations in the first quarter of 2019.

Q – I thought our Committee was tasked by Council to make recommendations, but now it sounds like the recommendations went to Deputy Mayor Mosley rather than going to Council.

C – We are chartered by both the Mayor’s Office and Council. City protocol is typically for recommendations to go to the Mayor’s Office first, but we don’t expect any edits or changes.

A – The MDAR Rules are administrative rules owned by multiple departments and the Mayor’s Office. We submitted the changes to the Mayor’s Office first, so they can handle making recommendations to Council.

C – My original impression was that the recommendations would go straight to Council, but it sounds like they are still making their way to Council.

C – There was a missed opportunity to get the recommendations to Council before the budget process.

C – We could send the recommendations to Council now. I want to apologize to the group for not pushing the recommendations forward [directly to Council].

C – I assumed the recommendations would go to Council before the budget. I am happy to forward the recommendations directly to Council now. They include pertinent recommendations that Council should see before budget approval.

C – I am supportive of the recommendations going to Council right away. The work of this group deserves to be passed forward.

**The Committee unanimously voted to pass the recommendations forward immediately. Motioned offered by Patricia and seconded by Mark.**

Q – Can HSD staff make sure we have the final draft recommendations to forward to Council tomorrow?

C – Colleen offered that the co-chairs would email Council directly with all Committee members copied.

A – Fred concurred that the Committee to transmit the recommendations to Council and suggested copying the Deputy Mayor and the Budget Director.

**Closing Comments from the Co-Chairs**

C – The Committee’s charter is to provide written recommendations to the Mayor and Council. I want to thank the Committee for a very civil discourse. At no time has anyone not been respectful and collegial. I want to thank the group sincerely for respecting each other’s passion.

C – It’s been a great Committee. We did some excellent work here. It was not totally clear what our purpose was at the beginning. We pushed through, defined our role and did great work. At this stage, it would be helpful to hear your thoughts on how the City might address the work of this Committee in the future.

C – I would like for more people to know what’s happened with the clean up process. How can we communicate the work out to the broader community?

C – We also need to think about how the City and County may be able to merge their work, and then we’ll be in a better position to manage the broader communications effort.

C – This Committee feels like a valuable brain trust.

C – I urge staff to solicit as much input from people on the ground as possible.

C – I want to thank the original Navigation Team. Thank you for sticking with this and turning it into something that is humane and makes a real difference. I want to offer special thanks to August for all of her work.

C – I also want to thank the staff from HSD, FAS and Parks who have supported this work.

**Meeting Adjourned**