MDAR Advisory Committee

on Implementation of Rules for Removing Unsanctioned Homeless Encampments

Tuesday, July 10th, 6:00- 8:00 PM

City Hall, Board and Commissions Room

Meeting Notes

Present: Colleen Echohawk, Flo Beaumon, Juan Cotto, Erin Goodman, Mark Lloyd, Harold Odom, Quynh Pham, Sheila Sebron, Mike Steward

Absent: Patricia McInturff, Dennis Cook, Leslie Howard, James Hurd, Jane Nelson, Michael Neguse, Dan Wise

Staff Present: Tiffany Washington, August Drake-Ericson, Beth Gappert, Joy Hunt, Will Lemke, George Scarola, Robert Stowers

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| **Welcome/Introductions** |
| **Public Comment Period** |

C – Expressed appreciation for the work of the Navigation Team and that the MDARs are being followed. Asked whether there might be room for additional community engagement prior to and during encampment removals. Proposed the City provide training for community members who wish to work with the Navigation Team to support their efforts to help people get to safety. Was recently barred from helping during an encampment removal. Also expressed concern about the ratio of police to unhoused individuals during encampment cleanups. Recently attended a cleanup with a 1:1 ratio of police to unhoused persons.

C – There are not enough people on the Navigation Team to do all the cleanups that are needed. Wants to know how concerned citizens can help when campers decline help and do not follow instructions. Gave the example of campers moving just a block away after a cleanup.

C – Asked how our Council members can be more engaged to support this work.

**Human Services Department Presentation – Tiffany**

Navigation Team has moved from FAS to HSD. HSD is currently hiring someone manage the team. Duties will be clearly separated between divisions. August will stay in FAS to oversee cleanup logistics (trash pickup, for example). HSD will oversee the people-focused part of the work (deciding when and where to do cleanups, for example). HSD’s new hire will work closely with August.

C – Has anyone been taken off the project, or is the new structure that decision making lives with HSD and execution lives with FAS?

A – Clarified the move hasn’t involved a significant personnel shift. It is a shift of decision making authority. Will share an updated organizational chart for the Navigation Team with the Committee.

C – Confirmed decision making authority now lies with Tiffany and team. Stated the Committee is looking for leadership. Wants to see more folks getting housed and an emphasis on humane treatment for people living in encampments.

A – HSD shares this vision. We’re trying to figure out how the Navigation Team’s work connects to the Continuum. We have to figure out how the Navigation Team connects with the whole system to ensure people get housed.

C – As we bring on more shelter beds, how do we expand this effort and improve the experience of people on the streets?

A – We are working on a plan to expand the Navigation Team. One challenge is the cost of providing enhanced shelter. We find people often turn down mat-on-the-floor shelter options. The public appears more willing to invest in enhanced shelter for families, but there is less support for single adults.

C – Part of what will help us succeed is our message, and how we talk about where we are successful.

C – The City doesn’t appear to be drawing a hardline on requesting more funds.

A – Our energy needs to be on the humans who are impacted. We need to keep people at the center of the work.

C – This is an opportunity for HSD and our city. We want to encourage HSD and the City to think about how to do this work in new and innovative ways.

C – We need services, job opportunities and job training. People experiencing homelessness are daunted by how difficult is can be to access services.

A – We cannot separate the whole person from services and the need for healing.

C – We cannot underestimate the importance of addressing drug use. We will never get anywhere if we ignore the drug problem.

C – At our last meeting we decided to slow down cleanups because only a limited number of shelter beds were available. How many new beds have come online?

A – Only 80 new beds at the City Hall have come online.

C – Requested an update on process of making new shelter beds available to inform the rate of Navigation Team cleanups.

A – HSD will provide an update the next Committee meeting.

**Committee Approved the Following Rule Change Recommendations**

MDAR Specific Recommendations

1) Emphasis Areas

- The City should Increase staffing capacity for Navigation Teams to support removal of encampments in Emphasis Areas. The Navigation Team can’t support all the current emphasis areas. At the current time the designation is meaningless and results in neighbors and business having unrealistic expectations.

- All appropriate City Departments e.g., Parks, Utilities, Transportation, should be directed by the Mayor to allocate additional resources to help maintain areas within their respective area of responsibility.

2) Storage:

- Decrease the number of days items are stored and allow for more flexibility in keeping items for those who have a plan in place to retrieve items. The current storage data should be used to inform the number of days items are held.

3) Clean Up Standard:

- Create clear definition and policy on what “clean” means. What are the expectations and what should the physical space look like after a cleanup happens.

4) Access to Public Rights of Way:

- The City needs to respond faster to obstructions and should move quickly to clear Public Rights of Way. This includes parks, bus stops, libraries, schools, medical facilities and community centers and all Public Rights-of-Way adjacent to these properties (e.g. parking strips).

- The City should fund additional staff, (not Navigation Team model or required to adhere to MDAR protocols), whose only job should be to quickly remove tents and obstructions/access to public spaces as defined above.

5) High Density Areas/Prioritization:

- Specifically, within Encampment Rule 17-01, Section 5.1.3: -- ADD: “areas with high- density residential and commercial development.”

Recommendations Outside of the MDAR Committee’s Original Charge

1. The City should prioritize more resources to expand community based out reach.

- The city should identify funding for Localized Outreach workers based on the Ballard model:

Create 10 Neighborhood-based outreach workers, each with a defined geographic service area. Spread appropriately among neighborhoods around the City, the outreach workers would be:

1. Nimble and community based with the ability to engage with individuals multiple times on a weekly or daily basis.
2. Work in conjunction with business and residential community members to keep the broader community informed and engaged in the process and share information about people in need.

c) Coordinate with existing Navigation Teams, particularly regarding pending MDAR assessments within the specific neighborhood.

- The City should identify additional culturally appropriate resources for more shelter, services and appropriate housing.

- The City should identify additional training for Police Officers involved in the Navigation Team.

1. The City should work in close coordination with the State and County to leverage resources.

- There needs to be better coordination of Mental Health and Chemical Dependency services.

- There needs to be more regional options for safe spaces that can be used as referrals for individuals living on the streets.

**Topics for Next Meeting**

C – Schedule for new shelter beds coming online to inform the cleanup schedule.

C – Would like to discuss the Committee’s role and opportunities for community engagement at the fall meeting. Want to acknowledge the role has changed over time and reflect on what might be next.

C – Requested data in the weekly reports Will and August send to Council. Numbers are very in-the-weeds. The Committee decided to hold off on reviewing that this time.

C – Want to acknowledge that the public doesn’t know all the intentionality behind how cleanups are happening now, including site selection and the storage of belongings. Would like the Committee to reflect on opportunities for community engagement and messaging strategies.