To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Homeless Commission
Submitted by: Carole Marasovic, Chair, Homeless Commission
Subject: Addressing Critical Concerns of the Homeless - Port-a-potties, Wash Stations and Trash Removal at Encampments/Hepatitis A Vaccine Distribution

RECOMMENDATION
Adopt a Resolution to (1) develop a quick, barrier-free process to provide port-a-potties, wash stations, and trash pick-up for unsheltered homeless residents, prioritizing the largest encampments and taking into consideration proximity, safety and accessibility; and (2) support the City's securing and administration of Hepatitis A vaccines; have them provided where homeless persons generally congregate; and have community-based organizations that receive funding from the City distribute information about where homeless persons can access these vaccines.

FISCAL IMPACT OF RECOMMENDATION:
The cost of the porta-potties, wash stations and trash removal near encampments is unknown. The City of Oakland's decision to implement such a procedure, for about fifteen encampments, was done with an allocation of $100,000.

What is known is that the cost of not having proper sanitation facilities for homeless persons resulted in a Hepatitis A outbreak in San Diego, Los Angeles and Santa Cruz with the cost of many human lives and severe illness, nineteen lives lost in San Diego alone.

The cost of the Hepatitis A vaccine itself was free because it was designated for priority populations, expanded to target populations in Berkeley.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS
This fall brought a hepatitis outbreak to California which while currently in San Diego County, Los Angeles County and Santa Cruz County could very well travel to Berkeley with its large number of unsheltered homeless individuals, most of whom do not have easy access to sanitation facilities to protect their health and hygiene.

The unsheltered homeless who attempt to access public bathrooms in local businesses are sometimes met with derision when seeking to utilize bathrooms intended for
customers. Even if they are able to access those bathrooms, there are no 24/7 facilities for them to use. That lack of availability fails to acknowledge that requiring access to bathrooms as in acquiring housing is not a life-style choice for the unsheltered homeless but a human necessity unavailable to them, a necessity many of us take for granted.

While porta-potties and wash stations for the over 600 unsheltered homeless persons in Berkeley are an urgent necessity, particularly with the growing numbers of homeless persons, never has the urgency been more glaring than with the Hepatitis A outbreak resulting in 19 deaths in San Diego County alone.

BACKGROUND
The Homeless Commission passed two motions, recommending as follows:

**Action:** M/S/C Orgain/Kealoha-Blake recommending that Council develop a quick, barrier-free process to provide port-a-potties, wash stations, and trash pickup for unsheltered homeless residents, prioritizing the largest encampments and taking into consideration proximity, safety, and accessibility.

**Vote:** Ayes: Feller, Gor, Hirpara, Kealoha-Blake, Marasovic, Orgain, Sutton

And:

**Action:** M/S/C Marasovic/Hirpara that (1) the Homeless Commission move to recommend and support the City’s securing and administration of Hepatitis A vaccines; have them provided in locations where homeless persons generally congregate; and have community-based organizations that receive funding from the City distribute information about where homeless persons can access these vaccines; and that (2) in the interim, the Homeless Commission emphasize the urgency of immediately placing port-a-potties and wash stations directly at or adjacent to encampments.

**Vote:** Ayes: Gor, Hirpara, Marasovic, Orgain.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
The impact on the environment with these measures can only have a positive effect.

RATIONALE for RECOMMENDATION
Historically, Berkeley has not provided 24/7 bathrooms. The necessity of doing so now is prompted by the growing number of unsheltered homeless persons who need access to hygiene and protection of their health. The recent hepatitis deaths were attributed to inadequate sanitation practices. Those practices cannot be laid at the feet of the
unsheltered, vulnerable homeless who engage in a persistent daily struggle to survive and who at the very least, need to be provided these basic facilities to not further jeopardize their already at-risk health.

The Hepatitis A vaccine is important to prevent disease from spreading among the homeless and our community-at-large. Thus, the Homeless Commission supported and recommended the City of Berkeley order these vaccines which they have done. The Commission also recommended that the vaccines be distributed where homeless persons congregate and that community-based organizations distribute information as to where the vaccines can be secured.

While acknowledging the importance of the vaccine, the Commission also continued to recognize that the vaccine did not substitute for the most important preventative measure of all, that of proper sanitation facilities to prevent such an outbreak.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED
The only alternative the Commission could consider was to do nothing which would ignore the homeless crisis and the basic needs of health and hygiene for all humans alike. That was not considered acceptable by the Commission.

Some commissioners had concerns that supporting the administration of a Hepatitis vaccine would make port-a-potties and wash stations a secondary priority for the City of Berkeley. However, the Commission hoped that prevention, through providing these facilities to provide for health and hygiene, would be considered as critical as a vaccine.

CITY MANAGER
See Companion Report

CONTACT PERSON
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Attachments:
1. Resolution
RESOLUTION NO. ##.###-N.S.

ADDRESSING CRITICAL CONCERNS OF THE HOMELESS

WHEREAS, health and hygiene are critical components to everyone’s life; and

WHEREAS, the status of becoming homeless should not strip unsheltered homeless persons, already at-risk of poor health, of access to proper hygiene; and

WHEREAS, the 2017 Homeless Count showed 664 unsheltered homeless persons in Berkeley who have the same need for 24/7 access to proper sanitation facilities as housed persons; and

WHEREAS, the recent Hepatitis A outbreak in counties south of us demonstrated that a lack of access to sanitation facilities, for homeless persons, could result in severe illness and multiple deaths; and

WHEREAS, denial of access to proper hygiene and sanitation is a chilling statement on how a society views its homeless as an underclass not entitled to sanitation, health or dignity; and

WHEREAS, the City of Oakland has allocated $100,000 to place porta-potties and wash stations directly at or adjacent to encampments where the homeless have located themselves; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley has already ordered Hepatitis A vaccines free of charge which have not yet arrived.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor and Council of the City of Berkeley direct staff to prepare a plan expeditiously for the implementation of porta-potties, wash stations, and trash pick-up prioritizing the largest homeless encampments.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that once the Hepatitis A vaccine arrives, that it be provided where homeless persons generally congregate and that community-based organizations, who the City of Berkeley funds, distribute information on the availability of the vaccines and the locations where it will be provided.