

Advisory Committee on Implementation of Rules of Removing Unsanctioned Homeless Encampments
October 10, 2017, 6 PM to 8 PM
Boards and Commissions Room L280, City Hall

Co-Chairs: Colleen Echohawk and Patricia McInturff

Notes

Welcome/Introductions

Present: Patricia McInturff, Colleen Echohawk, Leslie Smith, James Hurd, Erin Goodman, Flo Beaumon, Mark Lloyd, Harold Odom, Mike Steward (sitting in for Charlie C.), Tom sitting in for Quynh Pham, Sheila Sebron – on the phone, Juan Cotto

Absent: Michael Neguse, Charlie Costanzo, Quynh Pham

Staff Present: Jackie St. Louis, Chris Potter, George Scarola, Robert Stowers, Emily Nolan, Kelli Hurley, Katoya Grant

The Co-Chairs read a letter from Mayor Burgess and Council Member Sally Bagshaw. The Mayor and Council Member expressed continued support for the Advisory Committee and they work they are doing

Office of Civil Rights - Brenda

Semiannual Report of Encampment Cleanup (see attached presentation)

Highlights from the presentation:

- OSCR can show up and evaluate/monitor a clean-up without notice
- They collect REACH data
- Monitor that the 72-hours' notice been given
- Monitor that the storage protocol being followed
- If rules are not being followed, they can halt or call off a removal (have not had to yet this year)
- Can interview staff/residents/other stakeholders
- Making sure the policies being followed and are civil rights being upheld.

Q – People that we are moving out of unsanctioned encampments often have multiple barriers. Staff might be referring them to housing that won't meet their needs---are you also looking at that?

A – Yes, we are committed, to the extent possible, to look at what is working and not working. Where we have access to data we look to see if referrals are accepted and the number of individuals who leave the referral prematurely without a plan for safe shelter. Unfortunately, some data that will help us answer this question may live in others departments (HSD). We are working with those departments to solve this problem.

Q – How do you know the 72-hour rule is being followed?

A – SOCR's get a calendar ahead of time, and then we go out into the field, or ask residents.

Q – There are high rates of trauma for people in camps, are you tracking your effect when you go out.

A – We all go through trauma training, and we are doing our best to not re-traumatize campers.

Q – Do you go out yourself? Can you give us a sense of what the residents are saying?

A – Yes, I go out myself. People are very open with us. EX: We have heard a lot around storage, what is working and what isn't. People also leave comments on postings – in the report we are currently finalizing, we include narrative on what we are hearing.

Q – Do you also engage with the business/community around a site?

A – SOCR is officially charged with monitoring city staff and ensuring that they are following the city protocol. We are making sure the rules are being followed.

Q – Can we get clarity on the role of our Committee vs the role of SOCR. We do not want to replicate or duplicate the work of SOCR.

A – SOCR has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with FAS and HSD for their work. SOCR is part of the Executive Branch of city government. The Advisory Committee, appointed by both the executive branch and the legislative branch, is a community advisory committee that has a little more room to look at the work, through the eyes of both the unsheltered homeless individuals and the broader communities surrounding the encampments. This includes both neighborhood and business community. The Committee can go beyond just insuring compliance and can make recommendations for improvements.

Q - How are sites prioritized?

A/C – Site are prioritized by resources, and data from multiple sources. We look at safety and health issues when deciding what site to priorities for outreach and clean up.

C – We can offer suggestions, ask the hard questions, and make recommendations.

Q – What happens with SOCR recommendations?

A – We don't have the ability to enforce the rules, we operate more like an auditor. We make recommendations to FAS and the Mayor's Office and report our findings to the City Council.

Q – Does your office feel constrained by the scope of work, or can you act on things you see happening in the field?

A – SOCR can elevate issues. We are a City department, part of the executive branch of city government. We elevate up to the Mayor’s Office and they the Mayor’s Office transmits information to Council.

More will be addressed in the report currently being finalized by SOCR. We will forward the final report to the Advisory Committee when it is final. We are currently waiting for FAS to respond to our draft report.

Review of Encampment Data - Jackie

Demographics of Navigation Team Work (see presentation)

Q – How many people are going into a shelter and then are “blowing out”, do you know how many people are leaving the safe alternatives?

A – We are actively working on tracking discharge and specifically the reasons for discharge.

Q – Licton Springs is low barrier, and rarely has beds open – the other camps have different set ups, I see very different racial make ups at those camps. Those two camps seem to have a higher rate of housing placement.

A – That is tracked in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). We are working to access and synch up with that data. There are issues of confidentiality and access to certain information that still needs to be resolved. (HMIS is currently housed in King County.)

Q – How do you decide to do outreach to? What does complete an intake mean? Where do people go with they are discharged?

A – Anyone can make a referral to the Navigation Team. The intake process depends on the specific referral. People are discharged for many reasons and some people do end up back on the street.

Q – What percentage don’t want to talk to you at all?

A – About 33% won’t talk to us at all.

Q – I didn’t see families and children in your data?

A – When we do see families (with children) we work with Mary’s Place or Kids Plus.

Q – Why don’t we currently have access to HMIS?

A – We are close to working it out. The City and County are very near an agreement that will give us access to the data we need. The main issue is one of confidentiality.

C – There is a lot of important information in HMIS, and it could be very useful in this work – I am concerned that we aren’t linked to it. Please keep this Committee informed of progress on resolving the issue.

Q – Is just the Navigation Team looking at the data, or is anyone else looking at it?

A – Just the Navigation Team at this point.

C- We are working with SPD and there are some privacy concerns. HSD has some staff positions in the 2018 budget that would help to support the data analysis.

C – Public Health- Seattle and King County has some great resources that may be able to help look at data and tell the story of what you are seeing on the streets. Recommend strongly that you involve some epidemiologists who understand data. Too often data is not interpreted or used correctly.

Proposal on Committee’s Oversight Role - Colleen and Patricia

We are still grappling with our role and our “value added”. One thing the Committee might want to agree on is data points we want to track over time —sometimes called a dashboard. The Committee needs to be evaluating the implementation of protocol from both a personal—the unsheltered individuals who are living in the unauthorized encampments---AND a public perspective---including both neighborhoods and businesses.

C – I am comfortable with an AND approach – both for health of people living in camps, and those around them—both neighbors and businesses

C – We can offer recommendations, and what we see as solutions.

C – We have asked staff to come up with data that we can look at on an ongoing basis.

Q – Can we explore hiring an independent monitor that reports to the Committee, so we relying solely on City staff that report to the Executive.

A – It is an idea for us to discuss ---it is complicated.

C – We are going to have a new administration; they may scrap all this work. Should we empower our co-chairs to take more of an active role in the dialogue with the new Administration?

C – We will know the outcome in two weeks, if we want to take a position then, we can. I don’t want to spend time tonight talking about what might happen. No new Mayor is going to take on this committee as their first action.

C- This is a very hot issue, and the next Mayor will want to hear from the co-chairs.

Overview of the Racial Equity Toolkit (RET)- Chris and Jackie (see presentation)

- **Review of the tool kit**
- **How it is being applied to the Encampment work**

We worked with SOCR to come up with the first set of questions that we will be examining with the RET.

- What are the benefits and burdens of outreach and removal operations on unsheltered persons, and what aspects may be adjusted to reduce harm and seize opportunity?
- What are the benefits and burdens of the current process of selecting sites for encampment removal? What alternatives or changes can be made to spread benefits equitably and address burdens?

- What are the impacts of the current storage-and-delivery promise? Are there opportunities to make this service more helpful to unsheltered persons?

Q - Was the RET used when the original MDAR rules taskforce met?

A – No, the response now is from the declaration of an emergency, we are doing the best now to adjust the practices we have in place.

C – We have seen a lot of movement in how cleanups happened initially, to what is happening today. It is clear the City is trying to learn, and improve where they have made mistakes.

C – We can't keep making policies without look at things without the RET. People of Color (POC) continued to get screwed and we need to talk about policies and how they are impacting POC. I must keep bringing this up.

Q/C – Once you do this process (RET) will you come back to us with changes in how you do the work?

A – Yes, we will take what we learn and apply changes.

C/Q – I still don't understand what the RET is, can we discuss it more?

A - It is a process to make sure we are being equitable in how we deliver services.

Q – What is the timeline for this work and who is leading the work?

A – Jackie and August, both with the Navigation Team. The work will start right away.

Public Comment/Discussion

PC – With the change in the Mayor Office and state of sweeps, why is the Advisory Committee moving to quarterly meetings and not staying with monthly meetings?

R – We are open to meeting more often if needed, but it also comes down to our role, and scope of our charge. We are all busy, and committed to making sure things are better but we don't see a need at the present time to meet in Nov and Dec.

Q/C – Do we want to move to a monthly meeting? As we move into oversight, I don't see us meeting monthly.

C/Q – Is there an official channel for people who are impacted by the work outside of the public comment in this meeting?

A – Member of the public can reach out to elected official, or do public comment at City Council meetings.

Q – If we want to hear public comment, what is the channel for making that happen?

C – Through the RET we will hear public voices. Maybe Chris and Jackie can come back to us and let us know what they hear.

C – That is still through the City filter.

C – We need a mechanism to go into places that people are referred to.

C – What is coming to us to fill in the whole picture? I am glad that we have members of the public that are here.

PC – With the RET the work stakeholder is very ambiguous, what happens when this runs up against the business community, who may have money and influence. Does the RET have teeth?

A – We need to see what comes up when we apply the tool kit.

C – It will be interesting once Jackie and August start meeting with people, but I don't think SOCR is afraid to pull punches. I think we should wait and see how things play out a bit.

C/Q – Will the Navigation Team and REACH weigh in on what is working/what's not and will that happen sometime next year? I am assuming as a group we will hear that from them.

A – The staff from the Navigation Team can come on a regular basis and share what they are learning.

Wrap Up/Next Steps

upcoming meetings (2018): Jan. 9th, April 10th, July 10th, Oct. 9th