

Council Study Session

February 4, 2019

Agenda Item	Amending Resolution No. 2013-04; A Resolution setting forth policies and conditions under which Ashland will provide extreme weather related emergency shelter housing.	
From	Kelly Madding	City Administrator
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Item Type	Requested by Council <input type="checkbox"/> Update <input type="checkbox"/> Request for Direction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

SUMMARY

Councilor Akins asked that a possible amendment to Resolution No. 2013-04, specifically increasing the temperature at which the City would provide a space for the extreme weather shelter to be operated, be reviewed by the City Council.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

Seek opportunities to enable all citizens to meet basic needs.
Support innovative programs that protect the community.

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Resolution 2013-04 states that the City will provide emergency shelter when “outside temperatures are 20 degrees or below or a combination of weather conditions, in the discretion of the City Administrator, make conditions hazardous to human life without adequate shelter.” The Resolution states that the extreme weather shelter may be in a City building such as The Grove or Pioneer Hall and that the shelter will be staffed by volunteers from nonprofit organizations. It does not require that the City staff the shelter nor does it preclude a religious institution or a nonprofit, on their own, from opening an extreme weather shelter at temperatures greater than 20 degrees. During the winter of 2017/2018, the extreme weather shelter was activated no more than seven nights. Due to the sporadic staffing nature of the extreme weather shelter volunteers in the past have been paid the City of Ashland’s living wage.

Currently Options for Helping Residents of Ashland (OHRA) is coordinating a seven day a week homeless shelter for approximately 34 guests. The shelter is operated in four churches: the First Presbyterian Church, the First United Methodist Church, the Rogue Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, and Trinity Episcopal Church. In addition, there are many other volunteers that provide meals and volunteer in a variety of ways to assist shelter guests. A seven day a week homeless shelter staffed by volunteers is an amazing feat!

To date this winter the City Administrator has activated the extreme weather shelter one night when the weather was around 25 degrees, but it was supposed to rain. Five guests attended the shelter.

Councilor Akins has asked staff to bring to the City Council the proposal to increase the temperature at which the extreme weather shelter would be opened to a temperature closer to 32 degrees.

Councilor Akins has found that there are many other areas in Oregon who activate an extreme weather shelter at temperatures from 25 to 40 degrees. It is not known at this time if those locations provide a seven night a week shelter in addition to the extreme weather shelter.

Staff has researched the average number of days at or under 32 degrees in our area and found the number to be, on average 50 days. With that number in hand, Staff has discussed increasing the number of shelter dates with OHRA and at this time they are unwilling to coordinate volunteers. This has also been discussed with a few churches providing shelter currently and they do not have capacity at this time to add days to the seven day a week shelter they are providing and are not sure they would have capacity for almost two months of additional shelter if the permanent shelter at 2082 E. Main is approved. Finally, many of those staff talked to were concerned that adding close to two months of additional shelter with paid volunteers would attract volunteers away from the current shelter model that provides case management and whose goal it is to move guests out of homelessness.

FISCAL IMPACTS

The costs associated with increasing the extreme weather shelter activation temperature are primarily forgone revenue for not being able to use Pioneer Hall for revenue generating activities.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Does the City Council want to change the Resolution? If so, what is the timing?
- Does the City Council wish to direct staff to work with the religious institutions and nonprofits organizations that serve homeless citizens on a proposal to increase the activation temperature of the extreme weather shelter? If so, what is the timing?

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

If the City Council wants to proceed with the idea of increasing the temperature on the extreme weather shelter, Staff recommends that this topic be taken up with the religious institutions and the nonprofit community serving the homeless in the late spring early summer of 2019. Staff would then bring those results back to the City Council in the summer of 2019.