
Aug 20, 2018

Memo To: Mayor Berkowitz

From: Nancy Burke, Housing and Homeless Services Coordinator

RE: Recommendations on improvements to the camp notification process and ordinance

Background – building a responsive camp abatement and outreach process for unsheltered adults in Anchorage:

Over the course of 2015-2018, there have been several administrative, social service and procedural improvements to the Municipality's resources to address individuals living in camps across the community.

Between 2012 - 2015, the illegal camping ordinance was enacted with little or no data collected on the people seen in camps, the amount of resources needed to address the number of camps in the community and the resources needed to fully abate and address illegal camping.

Over this same period, there has been a lack of resources to fully fund adequate shelter spaces, and to bring on needed housing programs for people who are unsheltered in the community.

There have been several key goals achieved to reduce this number of people unsheltered:

1. **Public/Private partnerships that remove siloes:** Facilitated community partnerships to align several partners working on aspects of homelessness services and housing
2. **Anchorage Plan to End Homelessness, 2018 update** – The work of the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness and many community partners provided the groundwork for Mayor Berkowitz's Housing and Homeless Services Initiative:
 - a. **Housing First to scale:** Focused the community on a Housing First approach to homelessness providing an evidence-based model for the community
 - b. **Supporting "Coordinated Entry"** – Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness moving the community to have one consolidated list for homeless services rather than each individual agency having separate lists
 - c. **Housed 100/year of the most visible and vulnerable adults – targeting 100 more per year in next three:** Coordinating resources to house 323 high needs homeless adults from street/camps over three years at last count in

April of 2018. (Year one: 68; Year two: 123; Year three: 132). We will target another 100 per year in 2018-2021 through the housing programs initiating.

d. **Increasing resources for mental health outreach and response:**

APD Social Services coordination and the Mobile Intervention Team launched to coordinate Anchorage Police, Anchorage Fire Department and mental health services

Results:

- **Mobile Intervention Team located at Brother Francis Shelter and Bean's Cafe –**
A clinical team has been developed in partnership with AFD and APD to provide additional crisis response for homeless adults at BFS and Bean's Café.
 - **Reductions of emergency calls to shelter/Bean's Café** - down 30%
 - **Added support for the campus** - due to challenging behaviors related to people cycling through DOC/justice system, camps and homeless shelter
- **Community awards: federal HUD demonstration grants**
 - HUD Adult Homeless demonstration grant – Pay for Success targeting 270 high need homeless adults starting 2018 and running through 2021.
 - Youth Demonstration Homeless Program – targeting youth homelessness
- **Increased responsive camp abatement and clean-up process:** increased clean-up capacity in 2018 and implementation of a coordinator to align workflow of Muni agencies – APD, Parks and Rec, and social services providers in the community.
- **Increased enforcement tools:** A zone abatement process will be tested in 2018 for information on needed resources for implementation in 2019. Key components of this ordinance include developing signage, documentation for the process and the ability to store items as required by code.
- **Increased outreach resources:** The Mobile Intervention Team members have connected with 11 agencies conducting outreach and will serve as a 'hub' for outreach coordination to reach more people in camps
- **Calculation of clean-up resources:** The Coordinator will also be able to calculate the resources needed to fully address the camp clean up process after a period of tracking this past 2 months. Several key processes were not aligned in a way that provided adequate data on the resources/person-hours to fully implement the abatement process
- **Gradual improvement in data quality** – as we get better at collecting the data we are able to analyze information coming into the Muni through community inputs, social service contacts and police information. Due to this being a new technology and workflow processes for many people, there is not a strong history of stable data. Changes to the platform for data collection and storage, changes in outreach procedures and challenges with public information are all limitations in the system currently with goals to improve these areas over time.

Other circumstances:

- Visible homelessness: One result of the camp abatement process improvements is the increased visual of homeless people on corners and in right-of-ways. People who previously were deeper in greenbelts are now occupying more public spaces
- Changes in substance use: people are using a variety of substances resulting in new patterns of camping, interactions with the public and more drug paraphernalia
- Changes in activity in camps from prior years: increasing reports of homeless people becoming frustrated and sometimes hostile, citing frustration with not having anywhere to go but being continually asked to leave camp areas; increasing reports of stolen items from neighborhoods – propane tanks, bikes and items from yards
- Reports of increased numbers of camps with large amounts of bikes, propane tanks and other materials. These items will be addressed in the process to conduct a zone abatement

Next steps – short term:

- Implement overflow shelter as soon as funding allows and maintain this resource as long as numbers indicate a need over the number of shelter beds available.
- Increase coordination for alternate resources for people found in camps – opportunities for housing/support services available now; diversion funding to relocate to other communities if appropriate; referral to shelter; advocacy for state resources (guardian programs, etc.)
- Compile information on test zone abatement to plan for summer 2019.
- Support *Anchored Home* plan recommendations for scoping, developing cost estimates and implementing resources for increased monitoring and responsiveness along trails and green spaces and a stronger presence of all aspects of camp abatement process – additional resources to notify, outreach, store belongings when required and clear areas identified.
- Develop a plan for Summer 2019 by February to coordinate and implement a strong system by April 2019 to begin immediate enforcement of camps showing up in the community. This plan will anticipate using available resources and outlining new ones needed to fully implement a robust monitoring system.

Next steps – long view:

1. Redesign and rebuild of the substance abuse treatment center to help stabilize the population of people in camps and unsheltered with addictions.
2. Implement units for high-need adults through HUD permanent supported housing program, Pay for Success (Initial cohort December 2018)
3. Increase community resources for people with mental illness due to Alaska Psychiatric Hospital reduction of beds through training for emergency responders, crisis stabilization, increased treatment options leading to community housing. DOJ application submitted; state RFP released Aug 2018.

4. Stabilize the adult homeless services system so people coming into homeless find needed services to transition back out in a timely manner. Achieving a balanced system will eliminate the bottleneck of resources currently happening at the Brother Francis Shelter, camps and other locations across the community.
5. Continue to build partners – Rasmuson Foundation, United Way, Alaska Community Foundation, Native Corporations, many non-profits, and State of Alaska are all supporting the work. We will continue to build these partnerships.

Challenges:

- Over-burdened emergency services increasing fed by psychiatric hospital shortage of beds and a failing community behavioral health system
- An over-burdened emergency services system results in community impacts – increased street and camp presence of homeless people with negative impacts on homeowners, businesses, and parks/trails.
- Lack of substance abuse treatment resources – declining resources and changing finance structures have resulted in people with more intensive addictions on the streets and in camps.
- Maintaining community commitment to address the problems and not merely the symptoms of the issue.
- Approaching problems with associated with encampments with incentives to move people to permanent locations through a combination of engagement and enforcement techniques while not criminalizing homelessness. Maintain a balanced community approach that meets the needs of all concerned – neighbors, businesses and individual people.

For more information:

- Facebook Live session – link available on Mayor Berkowitz’s Facebook page
- Homelessness information link on Mayor’s Corner webpage
- Housing and Homeless Services Blog – for more information on the work to coordinate resources

Camp Abatement processes and community recommendations for unsheltered persons:

The following is a summary of the community input provided to the Municipality for improvements in the systems in place.

12 recommendations requested by community members and Assembly committee on homelessness. The recommendations submitted were reviewed by the administration

1. Add a public health and safety component to the 2018 Strategic Action Plan of the Anchorage Community Plan to End Homelessness (and all future such plans)

Status: This is a positive addition to the plan and has been identified by the Mayor's office as a gap area previously and was recently added to the 2018 Strategic Action Plan.

2. Clearly post code prohibitions against camping on public lands to enable swift abatement of camps occurring in posted areas.

Status: This idea is being considered for high volume or problematic areas. Signage exists in a number of high camp volume locations, so the addition of signs may not add as much benefit as a quick notice and clearing.

3. Hire or assign a Parks and Rec code enforcement officer to continuously monitor public spaces to identify illegal camps.

Status: This item will be discussed as the Administration and Assembly move through the 2019 budget process. We will work to determine if this idea is where funding should be prioritized, or whether a more swift cleaning process would achieve essentially the same effect.

4. Expand the Mobile Intervention Team (MIT) to 7 days/week so illegal camps can be noticed quickly and entrenched encampments cannot be developed.

Status: We agree expansion of the MIT is needed. We are recommending the Mobile Intervention team move to 6 days per week when other connecting resources are available for the work.

One important distinction: the MIT does not notice camps, this is APD's responsibility. APD's CAP team currently works Tue – Fri and is able to notice camps quickly when needed. The use of a zone abatement will likely meet the needs recommended in this item as it will allow cleaning of large areas, will prevent

longstanding build-up of camps, and will have storage options so quicker abatements can occur.

5. Amend municipal code to allow more efficient “zone” notices in areas of illegal camp concentrations rather than requiring individual notices on each camp/tent.

Status: This item has happened with an ordinance change earlier this year. Procedures are being developed and tested.

6. Amend municipal code (AMC 15.20.020.B.15.c.iii) to more narrowly define “personal property” of illegal campers in accord with court guidance to exclude items which deter camp abatement (generators, collections of propane tanks, etc.).

Status: The current list in code is drawn from case law and we don’t believe should be further narrowed. Items to be cleared are not deterrents to camp abatement. Many large items are routinely cleared from the greenspaces.

7. Amend municipal code (AMC 16.120.020) to allow utilization of “cold weather” shelter alternatives year round to assure alternative housing is available for campers displaced by camp abatements and fund more shelter beds if needed.

Status: We agree have amended the for this purposed in 2017 for two years – to expire in 2019, however, there is not enough funding to run overflow shelter year round. Additionally, short term assistance, diversion funds for travel to home communities and other resources are other options for people to move out of camps.

8. Amend municipal code to allow confiscation of materials used for illegal fires in illegal in public spaces and to allow immediate abatement of camps violating fire codes as public safety lists.

Status: The administration is open to discussing this option with the Assembly and interested stakeholders, subject to relevant case law.

9. Enforce existing code prohibitions on open burns and use of cooking appliances and fuels (such as propane stoves, grills, wood stoves) outside of designated areas.

Status: The codes are enforced when fires in illegal areas are reported. AFD responds to extinguish the fire, APD is contacted to issue citation. It would require significant additional resources to staff a position to monitor the areas on a continuous basis.

10. Develop an economical and efficient means of storing “personal property” of campers (such as providing 64 gal roll-off carts to hold property) so camps can be abated and cleaned up without delay using the 72 hour notice process allowed in municipal code.

Status: This item is recommended and is being explored with Solid Waste Services.

11. Begin immediately publishing routine and complete reports on all illegal camps identified and actions taken to remove them (including when they were identified, noticed, abated and cleaned) so Municipal actions are transparent and accountable to citizens. Make the data searchable online by citizens.

Status: This is recommended for camps that have been closed on APD worklists. A story map in in development to help the public understand the process of illegal camp notification, due process and clean up. Additional materials such as a downloadable spreadsheet of this data will also be available.

12. Establish a comprehensive plan for removing low brush, particularly invasive species, along our trail system to create a more open understory with better sight lines making our green spaces less inviting and encampments harder to hide.

Status: This item is recommended for a Parks and Recreation lead with the consideration that any brush clearing that may move camps into sensitive areas such as school yards should be undertaken thoughtfully.

Businesses and community members who have provided input outside of the Assembly committee meetings:

Goal: Increase ways to assist businesses with challenges with homeless people congregating in alleyways and door stoops. Several businesses have contacted the Municipality with concerns over homeless persons causing disruptions inside or outside of their operations. The following suggestions and ideas have been brainstormed by these business members and staff:

- Request a Crime Prevention through Environmental Design analysis. These analyses address lighting, security measures, placement of foliage and other environmental factors that can be modified to make areas less inviting to criminal activity.
- The Municipality is working with Covenant House Alaska, Anchorage Downtown Partnership and other community resource entities to develop an increased homeless outreach/presence for youth in the downtown area
- Signage – increase signage in alleyways and other congregation areas to assist in enforcement of trespassing or loitering.
- Resource pool – develop the concept of a community resource for possible match for additional security costs for businesses with high traffic or congregating areas

- Given the current situation where several community stores will donate tents and materials directly to homeless individuals, request large stores not provide donations directly to persons in the store outlets. Request that the stores provide these materials to a central distribution location where engagement may occur.
- Provide education to the public that donating large items such as couches to homeless people on the street or in camps is considered dumping and is fineable. A “What not to do Wednesday” police post may be developed to spread this word.
- Some communities have used crowd sourcing apps for homeless individuals who are working on plans for housing to raise funding only when participating in a plan to move out of homelessness. These apps may assist in addressing panhandling which is primarily caused by people giving money to those who are standing on the street corners. An app to provide funding to people who are actively working on a plan would directly compete with the street corner panhandlers.
- Develop a diversion fund or air mile program for any homeless individuals who identify a community where they may return home and information is verified that this is acceptable to the family, friends or host for the person.
- Include a probation officer or other connection to DOC on the Mobile Intervention Team
- Place a social services coordinator in the camp clean up teams. The number of interactions that occur in the community requiring additional support indicate an additional mobile social services coordinator would be a benefit to the camp clean-up crews.