THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

# Staff Report

**Council Meeting Date**: May 12, 2020

**Subject:** COVID-19 Shelter Operations Transition from Harrah's Cherokee Center to Motel

**Staff Resource(s):** Sam Powers, Director of Community and Economic Development
Brian Huskey, Community Development Analyst

**Action Requested:** Approval of motions to ratify City Manager's execution of contracts with Red Roof Inn, Inc., Homeward Bound of Western North Carolina, and Axis Security.

**Background**:

- On April 8, the City entered into a 30-day licensing agreement with Homeward Bound of Western North Carolina to operate a 50-bed emergency homeless shelter at Harrah's Cherokee Center for persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness at significant risk of contracting COVID-19 because of age and/or underlying chronic health concerns.
- Operations have gone smoothly and have achieved the initial public health objective of prevention of COVID-19 among the community's unsheltered homeless population.
- The shelter's census has dwindled to 32 over the last week and best practices emerging across the country and in other North Carolina cities now indicate that non-congregate shelter settings in motels provide an appropriate address of public health concerns for those experiencing unsheltered homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic and an opportunity to provide supportive services with the goal of transitioning as many of these individuals to permanent housing.
- The availability of FEMA reimbursement specifically for non-congregate COVID-19 emergency motel homeless shelters now make such options more feasible.
- Council previously authorized the City Manager at its special called meeting on April 28 to apply for, execute related contracts, and receive FEMA funding for various needs in the community. City staff will complete and submit a project application to FEMA specifically for this activity.
- City staff engaged multiple local hoteliers to secure an appropriate site where Homeward Bound of Western North Carolina could continue its existing staff efforts to operate the shelter in a new venue at the Red Roof Inn, 16 Crowell Rd., with which the City has contracted for 60 rooms initially at a nightly rate of $44.99 plus tax.
- The City has renewed its shelter operations agreement with Homeward Bound as well as extended its agreement with Axis Security Inc. to provide round-the-clock security to ensure the operational and property safety.
- The new arrangement will expand shelter capacity and increase the number of beds available to the community's most at-risk unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness.
- Outreach is both part of the City's overall COVID-19 homeless response and a key element of our ongoing strategy. There are people who will remain outdoors and we will continue to conduct outreach to those people and provide ongoing supportive services to outreach clients who have been sheltered in this effort, all with the ultimate goal of securing permanent supportive housing.

**Vendor Outreach Efforts:**

- Staff performed outreach to multiple hoteliers to secure competitive rates and the most appropriate property layout, per FEMA guidance.

**Council Goal(s):**

- A Diverse Community
- A Well-Planned and Livable Community
- Fiscally Resilient City

**Committee(s)**:

- None

**Pro(s):**

- Expands existing COVID-19 homeless shelter operations capacity.
- Public Health and safety
- Non-congregate motel shelter operations, and security costs are eligible for FEMA reimbursement.
- Provides opportunities to provide counselling and supportive services to help these individuals transition into permanent housing.

**Con(s):**

- No set end date
- Potential Damages incurred at the Hotel are not eligible for reimbursement from FEMA

**Fiscal Impact**:

- Funding for the contracts will initially come from previously approved budget authorization that was approved as part of the Affordable Housing CIP project, so no budget amendment is required. Community & Economic Development will utilize Capital Improvement Program funding to cover up front costs pending FEMA reimbursement.

**Suggested Motion(s):**

- Motion to ratify the City Manager's execution of a Memorandum of Understanding with Red Roof Inn for provision of 60 rooms for COVID-19 non-congregate motel shelter for unsheltered at-risk people experiencing homelessness;
- Motion to ratify the City Manager's execution of new services contract with Homeward Bound of Western North Carolina to conduct essential shelter operations; and
- Motion to ratify the City Manager's execution of contract amendment with Axis Security for provision of 24/7 security at Red Roof Inn.

**Attachment(s):**

- Resolutions

RESOLUTION NO. 20- _____

RESOLUTION TO RATIFY THE CITY MANAGER'S EXECUTION OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH RED ROOF INN FOR PROVISION OF MOTEL ROOMS FOR NON-CONGREGATE SHELTER FOR PERSONS EXPERIENCING UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented an unprecedented need for emergency shelter for persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness; and

WHEREAS, the community's existing emergency homeless shelters have been in isolation status, unable to admit new clients, the potential duration of the COVID-19 pandemic remains unknown, and there are persons in the community currently experiencing unsheltered homeless who are at grave risk for contracting COVID-19 because of age and/or underlying chronic health conditions; and

WHEREAS, the emerging best practices across the state and nation now indicate that non-congregate motel shelter better addresses the need for a public health response for persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness who are at risk for contracting COVID-19 if exposed; and

WHEREAS, the City of Asheville's license agreement with Homeward Bound of Western North Carolina to operate a COVID-19 emergency homeless shelter at Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville is expiring and no other suitable location for this specific shelter need has been identified; and

WHEREAS, such non-congregate shelter operational expenses are eligible for reimbursement by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); and

WHEREAS, Red Roof Inn, Incorporated has agreed to provide up to 60 motel rooms to the City of Asheville for operation of a non-congregate emergency shelter for persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness who are at risk of contracting COVID-19 for an initial period of 30 days, with potential renewal for subsequent 30 day periods as agreed by the City and Red Roof Inn, Incorporated;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

City Council ratifies the City Manager's execution of a Memorandum of Understanding with Red Roof Inn, Incorporated for provision of 60 rooms at a nightly rate of $44.99 plus applicable taxes for an initial period of 30 days; and

City Council authorizes the City Manager to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with Red Roof Inn, Incorporated for subsequent 30 day periods if public health declarations require such extensions to meet the needs of persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness and as agreed by the parties.

Read, approved and adopted this 12th day of May, 2020.

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CITY CLERK MAYOR

Approved As To Form:

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CITY ATTORNEY

RESOLUTION NO. 20- _____

RESOLUTION TO RATIFY THE CITY MANAGER'S EXECUTION OF A CONTRACT WITH HOMEWARD BOUND OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA TO OPERATE A MOTEL-BASED NON-CONGREGATE SHELTER FOR PERSONS EXPERIENCING UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented an unprecedented need for emergency shelter for persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness; and

WHEREAS, the community's existing emergency homeless shelters have been in isolation status, unable to admit new clients, the potential duration of the COVID-19 pandemic remains unknown, and there are persons in the community currently experiencing unsheltered homeless who are at grave risk for contracting COVID-19 because of age and/or underlying chronic health conditions; and

WHEREAS, the emerging best practices across the state and nation now indicate that non-congregate motel shelter better addresses the need for a public health response for persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness who are at risk for contracting COVID-19 if exposed; and

WHEREAS, the City of Asheville license agreement with Homeward Bound of Western North Carolina to operate a COVID-19 emergency homeless shelter at Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville is expiring; and

WHEREAS, the City of Asheville has executed a Memorandum of Understanding with Red Roof Inn, Incorporated to provide 60 rooms of non-congregate emergency shelter for persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness at its property located at 16 Crowell Road in Asheville; and

WHEREAS, such non-congregate shelter operational expenses are eligible for reimbursement by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); and

WHEREAS, Homeward Bound of Western North Carolina has already been successfully providing staff support for operations of the existing emergency COVID-19 shelter at Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

City Council ratifies City Manager's execution of a Services Agreement with Homeward Bound of Western North Carolina for an initial 30 day period to continue provision of essential staff services and supplies at the non-congregate shelter operational at the Red Roof Inn, 60 Crowell Road in Asheville.

City Council authorizes the City Manager to execute additional 30-day contract extensions with Homeward Bound of Western North Carolina if public health declarations require such extensions to meet the needs of persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness and as agreed by the parties.

Read, approved and adopted this 12th day of May, 2020.

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CITY CLERK MAYOR

Approved As To Form:

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CITY ATTORNEY

RESOLUTION NO. 20- _____

RESOLUTION TO RATIFY THE CITY MANAGER'S EXECUTION OF A CONTRACT AMENDMENT WITH AXIS SECURITY INC FOR SECURITY SERVICES AT RED ROOF INN NON-CONGREGATE SHELTER FOR PERSONS EXPERIENCING UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented an unprecedented need for emergency shelter for persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness; and

WHEREAS, the community's existing emergency homeless shelters have been in isolation status, unable to admit new clients, the potential duration of the COVID-19 pandemic remains unknown, and there are persons in the community currently experiencing unsheltered homeless who are at grave risk for contracting COVID-19 because of age and/or underlying chronic health conditions; and

WHEREAS, the emerging best practices across the state and nation now indicate that non-congregate motel shelter better addresses the need for a public health response for persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness who are at risk for contracting COVID-19 if exposed; and

WHEREAS, The City of Asheville's Security Agreement with Axis Security Inc. is specific to the Harrah's Cherokee Center and is approaching not to exceed contractual obligations and must increase the financial value of the contract; and

WHEREAS, such non-congregate shelter operational expenses are eligible for reimbursement by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); and

WHEREAS, Axis Security, Incorporated has agreed to continue providing 24 hour security services for the shelter through June 30, 2020, with potential renewal as agreed by the City and Axis Security Incorporated;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

City Council ratifies the City Manager's execution of a contract amendment with Axis Security Incorporated increasing the total contract amount to $289,000.

Read, approved and adopted this 12th day of May, 2020.

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CITY CLERK MAYOR

Approved As To Form:

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CITY ATTORNEY