

County of Santa Clara  
Board of Supervisors  
Supervisorial District 5  
Supervisor S. Joseph Simitian



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90531

**DATE:** March 20, 2018  
**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** S. Joseph Simitian, Supervisor  
Dave Cortese, Supervisor

**SUBJECT:** Year-Round Provision of Emergency Shelter in Sunnyvale

**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Direct Administration to extend Sunnyvale Shelter operations between April 15 and October 15 of 2018 on a pilot basis; and to report back to the Board by the end of 2018 on the results of this pilot and with information on the costs and programmatic changes necessary to turn the current cold weather shelter in Sunnyvale into a year-round emergency shelter. As part of this effort, the Administration shall contact local stakeholders (including but not limited to the City of Sunnyvale, Shelter neighbors, Shelter clients, the Shelter contractor, referring entities and other relevant non-profits) for their input. (Simitian/Cortese)

**FISCAL IMPACT**

We have been advised by County staff that the current six-month budget for the shelter is \$1.15 million.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

Over the past year or two, people in the community have been questioning why there is not a year-round homeless shelter in the County outside of San Jose. While we weren't anticipating the residents of the Sunnyvale Shelter attending the February 2nd Board of Supervisor's meeting, they did a good job of putting forth many compelling reasons for considering year-round operations in Sunnyvale.

The number of homeless in the most recent survey shows the homeless count is up in the North County, and the high utilization of the existing shelter in Sunnyvale shows there is demand.

There are a number of families who use the shelter; and there is particular interest in providing some stability to the families who have been using the shelter, particularly if it results in minimizing school disruptions for the children.

Another disruption that will be avoided if the shelter is open year-round is the simple fact that when the shelter closes people are back in the community looking for places to safely shelter overnight. Sometimes this means sleeping in a storefront, sometimes it means sleeping in a car, sometimes it means sleeping in an encampment. Inevitably, these makeshift arrangements lead to negative impacts for the homeless, the broader community and the environment.

At Sunnyvale, we've tried through the referral model of shelter to provide a stabilizing force for the homeless. We've supplemented with some modest case management services and have had some success in getting people out of emergency shelter and into housing.

Keeping the shelter open year-round will likely require some adjustments to the model in place (for example, should there be a maximum length of time people are allowed to stay?), and there could be long-term capital implications for the facility. Hence, it makes sense to approach this first as a pilot, which we can implement this year, and use what we learn between April 15th and October 15th to make a decision about whether it makes sense to continue a permanent year-round shelter in Sunnyvale in late 2018 or early 2019.

## **BACKGROUND**

For more than 20 years emergency cold weather shelter services were provided at the Sunnyvale Armory (located in District Three). Each year there were approximately 125 shelter beds contracted for on a nightly basis, from the first Monday after Thanksgiving through the last day in March. This was the main emergency cold weather shelter for Northern Santa Clara County.

In 2014 the Sunnyvale Armory was torn down and replaced with two affordable housing projects that together provide 47 units of permanent supportive housing. While those units were a welcome addition to our housing supply, they did not eliminate the continuing need for access to emergency shelter in Northern Santa Clara County.

In the 2014-15 cold weather season, the County cobbled together a series of stopgap measures to ensure there were emergency shelter services for North County homeless, including things like expanding capacity at Project WeHOPE in East Palo Alto (San Mateo County) and providing hotel vouchers.

In the 2015-16 cold weather season a modular unit was placed on a piece of land provided by the City of Sunnyvale, and it accommodated 125 people for that season.

For the past two years, the 2016-17 and 2017-18 cold weather season, the County has provided emergency cold weather shelter for the homeless out of a building it purchased at 999 Hamlin Court in Sunnyvale (located in District Three). In 2016-17 the maximum capacity at the shelter was 125 people and the shelter was scheduled to be open from the Monday after Thanksgiving until the last day in March, but in fact was open until April 15th, the end of the cold weather season as defined in agreements with the State for use of an armory as a shelter (notwithstanding the fact that the Sunnyvale Shelter is not an armory property).

In the current cold weather season, the Board of Supervisors approved expanding the capacity of the Sunnyvale shelter by up to 50 (currently there are additional 15 people using the shelter pending physical modifications to the space) and extending the season to the maximum as defined in agreements with the State for use of an armory as a shelter, that is from October 15 – April 15. The extension was also approved for the Gilroy shelter which is, in fact, located within an armory.

