

Board transfers Encampment Resolution Funding within County budget

January 3, 2024



With a standing room-only audience observing at the Flynn Center, the Board of Supervisors approved the transfer of \$10,823,724 identified as Encampment Resolution Funds (ERF).

The transfer moves the funds to line item accounts within the budget to cover the cost of upcoming development and consultant fees, an emergency shelter, a micro village, training for employees, and outreach

and navigation services, as requested by Ranel Brown, Director of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The vote to approve the transfer was 4-1 with 4th District Supervisor Joey Borges dissenting.

The transfer was necessary to pay for the project which is supported by the County Homeless Ad Hoc (two supervisors) Committee. DHHS is partnering with non-profit Del Norte Mission Possible (DNMP) and Arcata House Partnership on this project.

Homelessness has exponentially grown in the state, including Del Norte county. Since the 9th District Court of Appeals decision, efforts to develop shelter beds in California have continued with little progress made in addressing the homeless problem. Transients continue to reside on public property and across a wide swath of forested public lands adjacent to our populated centers of commerce and residences.

For helpful context in understanding the drive for a homeless shelter in Del Norte County, please see the attached article on the 9th District Court of Appeals decision *Martin vs. City of Boise* on its anti-camping ordinance.

The property in question at Tuesday's Board meeting is located at 1070 Highway 101 North. The property was reported to be in escrow for \$525,000 with a \$340,000 down payment and an owner carry back of \$185,000. Mission Possible founder Daphne Cortese-Lambert and Executive Director Charlaine Mazzei emphasized the funds to purchase the 1070 site were not sourced to the Encampment Resolution Funding but derived from other state resources. Neither Cortese-Lambert nor Mazzei shared the source of those public monies utilized in this escrow other to say the emergency shelter is separate and distinct from the ERF funds directed to develop pallet homes off Williams Drive, east of Highway 101.

Folks weighed in with comments and opinions on a possible future emergency homeless center on 101 North. The lot site is presently occupied by soon-to-be exiting Sally's by the Sea and Sticky Grove Cannabis Dispensary.

Savanna and Logan Halliwell, owners of the popular bakery Sally's shared a Facebook post urging the public to attend last Tuesday's meeting. Turnout was remarkably high.

The Halliwells' felt strongly in sharing their concerns with the public:

The Halliwells' stated the process to acquire the property was not transparent with no apparent accountability to the public.

The decision to purchase the property was unfair to those neighbors directly impacted who reside near the proposed site.

Owner Halliwell shared its appreciation for those who supported its bakery these last several years by standing up for those, perhaps without voice, who supported Sally's through the challenging Covid 19 Pandemic.

Savanna Halliwell underscored, "100 percent, the location (of the shelter) is everything."

Logan Halliwell escorted *The Triplicate* to Pacific Ocean Park / Cottages by the Sea immediately North of his store. Residents who wished anonymity expressed disapproval of the location but did not oppose the

dire need of an approved shelter, elsewhere.

Sally's by the Sea operates on a month-to-month lease and stated it was moving to Colorado early next year but felt compelled to share their concern and opposition on the placing of the shelter within the Northern gateway of Crescent City.

Del Norte Sheriff Garrett Scott was not advised of the plan purchase of the site nor the development of an emergency homeless shelter/ information kiosk.

Upon very short notice, members of the public showed up at The Flynn Center, Tuesday to weigh in on the transfer of these funds and the proposed housing shelter program.

A total of 36 individuals spoke at the dais or via ZOOM on the issue of a homeless Shelter in Del Norte County.

The majority of those addressing the Board supported the ERF funded project. A few expressed opposition and concern on the impact of a homeless Shelter near their homes and businesses.

The question raised by many of the public speakers was WHERE to place the facility within the county.

Mazzei shared her Board's frustration in finding a suitable location in Del Norte. Mazzei lamented, "The Coastal Commission's long application process of over two years waiting discouraged selecting an appropriate site on the south end of Crescent City.

4th District Supervisor Joey Borges, who voted NO on the transfer stated he wishes to see the process be public and transparent. Borges continued, "The Ad Hoc Committee speaks for only two of our Board. No Emergency Homeless center has been approved by our entire Board. By approving this transfer, neither supervisors nor the Public has had the opportunity to study and discuss the site or details on how the public will be impacted. I seek transparency."

5th District Supervisor Dean Wilson shared his support for a shelter but not at the gateway to the City. "The selection of the site was done by Mission Possible, a non-governmental organization, and with its own funding. It was not a choice needing approval of the Board of Supervisors." The retired Sheriff continued, "I'm not in favor of a 101 location, but it is also not my decision. I was voted in to resolve the homeless and crime issues. To that end, what is needed and what this money will go toward is an approved location where the homeless can rest and receive services. Once we have those in place, The Board can pass local ordinances that will allow law enforcement to clear out the homeless camps from non-authorized locations. This is what I voted for... to give local government the tools to clear out these homeless encampments. In turn, this will help reduce crime."

Mission Possible founder Cortese-Lambert shared her plan... "The ERF is a result of unprecedented collaboration of the county and community-based organizations, to bring funding into our community and to bring solutions to the long-standing problem of homelessness in our county. With the ERF funding, we will be able to hire staff, to keep the sheltering environment safe and secure, provide individualized case plans

and management, teach life skills, budgeting, job training and on-going support.” Cortese-Lambert continued, “ We will be partnering with community agencies to become a link to services to help our guest get back on his/her feet. A continuum of care including shelter, emergency sleeping cabins and permanent supportive housing with continued case management to ensure success are part of the Plan.

All can agree, a shelter is needed in Del Norte County. The question remains...WHERE?