



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

Legislation Text

File #: 23-304, Version: 1

To: Board of Supervisor

From: DHHS: Administration

Agenda Section: Consent

SUBJECT:

Resolution Dissolving the Housing Trust Fund and Homelessness Solutions Committee

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt the attached resolution Dissolving the Housing Trust Fund and Homelessness Solutions Committee; and
2. Direct the Clerk of the Board to provide the Department of Health and Human Services with one (1) fully executed certified copy of the attached resolution.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

General Fund

DISCUSSION:

On Feb. 27, 2018, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 18-14 which established the Housing Trust Fund and Homelessness Solutions Committee (HTFHSC). The Board subsequently rescinded and replaced Resolution No. 18-14 through the adoption of Resolution No. 18-73 on July 24, 2018.

On May 24, 2022, the Board adopted Resolution No. 22-64 which authorized the submittal of a Local Housing Trust Fund Program grant. On Jan. 10, 2023 your Board adopted Resolution No. 23-4 which authorized the submittal of a Regional Early Action Planning Grant Application to establish a Regional Housing Trust Fund, a Regional Housing Catalyst Fund and to Conduct Regional Housing and Transportation Planning. These actions taken around Local Housing Trust Funds (LHTF) and Regional Housing Trust Funds (RHTF), and increased funding made available since 2018, necessitates an evaluation of the role of the HTFHSC.

Currently before your Board is the recommendation to dissolve the HTFHSC. This recommendation is made in recognition of changes in the state approach and funding, the roles of other advisory bodies and consideration of the unpaid time residents are providing without a clear return for the community.

The Board wants to express its gratitude and appreciation for all the hard work and commitment by the

many members of the HTFHSC in its efforts to help members of our community that are experiencing homelessness. Much work has been done and many changes have occurred over the past 4 years in funding and opportunities. The County of Humboldt looks forward to and encourages members of the HTFHSC to continue to participate in the Continuum of Care and help continually improve community outreach and engagement.

The Continuum of Care

The Continuum of Care (CoC) Program, introduced by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is designed to promote community-wide planning and strategic use of resources to address homelessness. The CoC process was developed by HUD in 1994 to coordinate the distribution of several competitive homeless assistance programs. CoCs can be a single jurisdiction or regional, and participants include private non-profits, agencies, jurisdictions, individuals and other organizations and businesses interested in addressing affordable housing and homelessness solutions. CoCs are now a well-established, nationwide structure for jurisdictions to use local expertise to improve coordination and integration with other programs targeted to people experiencing homelessness, improve data collection, and make funding decisions for the benefit of the entire community. The State of California now awards funding from non-HUD sources to CoCs, as well as requiring, under California Senate Bill 1380, that all housing programs adopt the Housing First model. Humboldt's CoC is known locally as the Humboldt Housing and Homelessness Coalition (HHHC), comprised of service providers, developers, government agencies, faith-based organizations and community members dedicated to increasing the availability of housing and ending homelessness.

Funding Since Establishment of HTFHSC

In 2017 Governor Brown signed a 15-bill housing package, and the 2018-2019 state budget and California Senate Bill 2 created several new funding opportunities for housing and homeless services for CoCs; this was the beginning of multiple new funding sources, including, without limitation, the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) and California Emergency Solutions and Housing Program (CESH). Under Governor Newsom's administration, additional housing funding has come through, including, without limitation, Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) grants rounds 1, 2, and 3 with round 4 coming soon. These funds are administered through the California Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency.

Additional funding coming from the state has been intended for mid- and long-term solutions such as rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing and shelter supports, and development and construction of affordable housing. The County of Humboldt continues to support and fund larger projects that create affordable housing units. The No Place Like Home competitive application process, tax credit programs, HHAP, Community Development Block Grants and other funding sources, along with the County of Humboldt's commitment to guarantee occupancy through permanent supportive housing using various funding sources, have assisted developers who are able to navigate the prohibitively complicated regulations regarding funding affordable housing units. The Lodge, Arcata Bay Crossing, Bayview Heights, River Bluff, Samoa Town Homes, Providence Mother Bernard House and Pine Hill represent 189 additional affordable housing units. The County of Humboldt, by and through the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Humboldt

County Planning and Building Department, continues to support projects that increase regular housing stock as well as units that house specific demographics such as chronically homeless individuals, veterans, elderly individuals and very low-income families.

Prior state and federal funding was limited both in uses of funding to these mid- and long-term solutions, as well as having barriers to application by smaller, less-established organizations. The funding that has become available since 2018, such as HEAP, CESH and HHAP, has been more flexible, and has been able to be used for more immediate services, street outreach, rapid rehousing and other supports for those experiencing homelessness, with uses as varied as a social worker in the Public Defender's office and rain ponchos. While there are still requirements such as data collection and insurance that must be navigated, smaller organizations with less administrative structure and support have been able to successfully apply for and receive funds.

At the time the HTFHSC was formed, CESH, HEAP, HHAP and other monies had not yet been allocated or awarded to the County of Humboldt or the CoC. From 2004 through 2018 the CoC was receiving between \$400,000 and \$931,000 per year. Starting in 2019, the CoC starting to receive the new money from 2017's housing package and other sources, including, without limitation, HEAP and CESH. Through the request for proposal process, the CoC, with the County of Humboldt as its fiscal administrator, has awarded over \$12 million in the last 4 years to local agencies and organizations, which include, without limitation: Arcata House Partnership; Redwood Community Action Agency; Affordable Homeless Housing Alternatives; Betty Kwan Chinn Foundation; DHHS's Housing, Outreach and Mobile Engagement division; the City of Eureka; the City of Arcata; and the Housing Authority. Projects support not only affordable housing, but the ability to provide direct and immediate services to unsheltered individuals.

Original roles of HTFHSC

Original roles of the HTFHSC included two distinct, but related functions: the trust fund portion, focusing on a housing trust fund and projects that would assist the County of Humboldt in meeting its affordable housing goals, and the homelessness solutions portion, focusing on making recommendations to the Board on potential shelter projects.

Resolution 18-73 provides that "The purpose of the Housing Trust Fund and Homelessness Solutions Committee (HTFHSC) is to recommend criteria for the receipt and use of Affordable Housing Trust Fund monies, which shall be subject to approval by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors." As stated in the May 24, 2022 Local Housing Trust Fund agenda item, Planning and Building Department staff will return to the Board with an item to establish the LHTF, and authorize the Planning and Building Department to disburse the funding according to the state's contract, program guidelines and procedures. The Planning and Building Department has extensive experience administering similar funding and all expenditures from the fund must be made in the public process of board meetings. Dissolving the HTFHSC would not preclude its members from further participating in the public process associated with the LHTF. Meanwhile, the pending application for Regional Early Action Planning Grant enables the County of Humboldt to pursue a Regional Housing Trust Fund, which, by definition, is a multijurisdictional fund, and the HTFHSC would therefore not be able to be the advisory body for these funds. Future efforts at building a Housing Trust Fund will most likely be

multijurisdictional as an RHTF is pursued.

There was a perceived unmet need at the time of the establishment of the HTFHSC, with advocates wanting to ensure individuals experiencing homelessness were not forgotten as government entities pursued longer term housing. As funding has become more flexible, County of Humboldt departments have become more flexible, and Housing First is becoming better understood in the community and by organizations doing the work as a strategy that supports clients and choice rather than focusing on solely building houses. As housing funds under the purview of the CoC and the County of Humboldt increase in both amount and scope, it becomes more appropriate for community involvement in homelessness solutions to be brought into HHC discussions. Dissolving the HTFHSC and supporting transition to participation in the HHC would ensure HTFHSC members with significant expertise have an ability to influence spending decisions on large amounts of dedicated housing and homelessness funding currently being received.

The County of Humboldt is fortunate that committee members have dedicated so many hours to HTFHSC efforts and that has led to recommendations on funding utilization and other program improvements. The county thanks them for their efforts.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There are no direct costs associated with the dissolution of the HTFHSC, however staff time previously dedicated to the committee would now be spent on other efforts. As a result, adoption of the attached resolution will not impact the Humboldt County General Fund.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

The recommended action supports the Board of Supervisors' Strategic Framework by providing community-appropriate levels of service.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

None

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board may choose to not adopt the attached resolution dissolving the HTFHSC. However, this alternative is not recommended, as most current housing funding is awarded to the CoC, and the current discussions about forming a Regional Trust Fund would require the forming of a new advisory body.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution of the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors Dissolving the Humboldt County Housing Trust Fund and Homelessness Solutions Committee

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: H-1; C-4; F-1; H-4; I-1; D-28; D-23

Meeting of: 2/27/2018; 7/24/2018; 1/14/2020; 4/28/2020; 7/14/2020; 5/24/2022; 1/10/2023

File No.: 18-92; 18-904; 20-4; 20-440; 20-828; 22-605; 22-1713