



AGENCY: City Council
MEETING DATE: February 27, 2023
DEPARTMENT: Finance
PRESENTED BY: Neil Cervenka/Isaac Whippy
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AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

TITLE:

Receive Report and Consider Adoption of City Council Resolution Approving Budget Amendment No. 2022/23-15 for \$36,000 to Fund the Care Response Unit (CRU) Team Through the End of the Fiscal Year 2022/23 and Authorize the Creation of a Separate Line Item Within the Police Department Budget to Account for CRU Costs

ISSUE/BACKGROUND:

The Care Response Unit (CRU) was established in May of 2022 as part of a grant through the Behavioral Health Justice Intervention Services Project, funded through the California Department of Health Care Services. In July 2022, CRU consisted of one full-time, non-benefitted employee and two part-time employees. When one part-time employee resigned, the second was elevated to full-time, non-benefitted. The grant funds were through March 30, 2023. Due to savings, both CRU members were afforded full benefits in January 2023. Additional funding is currently being sought to keep the CRU program in effect but will probably not be awarded until July 1, 2023. Current funding will be exhausted on March 30, 2023.

ANALYSIS

The purpose of CRU was to reduce the number of homeless individuals and the number of homeless camps in Fort Bragg. The intent was to lower the amount of time police officers were spending on calls involving the homeless and instead use CRU to connect the homeless to resources to stop the cycle of homelessness. Furthermore, CRU works in the field proactively instead of requiring clients to come to the Police Department for appointments. This was a new concept and had not been tested locally or nationally.

Hiring and training of CRU members, securing infrastructure and equipment, and establishing procedures took several months. CRU began their field work in July 2022. Statistics were compared for the time period of July 1 through December 31, in 2021 and 2022. These dates will provide a more accurate reflection of the effect CRU had.

Statistics showed arrests of homeless dropped by 53%, from 157 to 74, despite total arrests for the Police Department increasing by 39% from 299 to 417 for the analyzed time periods. Furthermore, percentage of arrests of homeless people also lowered from 53% to 18% of total arrests.

During the six-month period evaluated in 2022, CRU opened 485 cases and served 140 different people. They also successfully reconnected ten homeless individuals with family or friends in other areas through the use of the Homeward Bound bus ticket program. An additional 22 non-local individuals were assisted with funds for fuel for their vehicles so they could get back to their families.

CRU facilitated in getting three people suffering from substance abuse into in-patient rehabilitation. Two of those individuals completed their in-patient programs and are currently in sober living environments. Eight others are currently being assisted and CRU is actively working to find placement.

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CRU managed the Extreme Weather Shelter (EWS) for Fort Bragg this year, using funds from the County. This is the second year the EWS was operated through the Police Department and CRU has made processes incredibly efficient. They have also been able to use this as another opportunity to meet with homeless individuals in an attempt to get them resources to remove the barriers keeping them in the cycle of homelessness.

CRU has further evolved into assisting those on the edge of homelessness to prevent them from starting the cycle. CRU attends Behavioral Health Court to provide reports to the courts on their client's progress and assists the Court with connecting clients to additional resources. In addition to Behavioral Health Court, CRU works closely with the Probation Department to ensure probationers stay on track and are successful while on supervised probation. CRU provides support for people transferring from homelessness to permanent housing, such as the Plateau.

CRU began expanding past homeless-related tasks to serve more of the community. They provide immediate assistance and ongoing support to families with family members experiencing mental health illnesses by offering wrap-around support, connection to available services and general assistance in day-to-day life struggles.

Due to the fact there are many different types of grants available for several amounts, CRU's salary will be placed into a separate line within the Police Department's budget to more accurately and transparently show how funding is being used.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Adopt Resolution approving Budget Amendment No. 2022/23-15 to fund the Care Response Unit (CRU) through the end of the fiscal year, allowing more time to seek additional, permanent funding and authorize the creation of a separate line item within the Police Department budget.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

1. Do not approve the budget amendment consequently ending the CRU program on March 30, 2023.
2. Request additional information.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The estimated cost to fund the CRU team through the fourth quarter of the Fiscal year 2022/23 is \$36,000. The Police Department currently has unfilled positions (two officers and one sergeant), which has resulted in budget savings. These budget savings are being recommended to be allocated to the CRU team budget. The General Fund funds the Police Department.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACT:

There is no direct greenhouse gas emissions impact.

IMPLEMENTATION/TIMEFRAMES:

Immediately upon approval.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution
2. Exhibit A (budget amendment)

NOTIFICATION:

None