



Department Source: Public Health and Human Services

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: October 7, 2019

Re: Recommendations for Responding to Extreme Winter Weather Events

Executive Summary

Council requested a staff report on recommendations for opening city facilities overnight during extreme winter weather events.

Discussion

Staff from Public Health & Human Services, Police, Fire, Public Works, Transit, Community Relations and the Boone County Office of Emergency Management met to review policies and practices from other cities and to develop recommendations for city response to extreme weather events.

Several, primarily large, cities on the east coast utilize a defined approach to addressing unsheltered homelessness in extreme weather. While there are a variety of implementations, the approach generally sets guidelines for a response to winter weather conditions with the goal of preventing morbidity and mortality among persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Responses are typically triggered by a combination of temperature, wind chill, and precipitation. Examples are as follows:

City	Conditions
Baltimore	Temperature of 13°F or below, including wind chill. When other conditions (i.e. strong winds, forecasted precipitation for more than two hours, extended periods of cold, sudden cold after a warm period) are deemed by the Health Commissioner to be severe enough to present a substantial threat to the life or health of vulnerable Baltimore citizens.
Philadelphia	Temperature of 20°F or below or 32°F with precipitation.
Newark	Temperature of 25°F or below or 32°F with precipitation.

Extreme weather responses in many communities are comprised of a variety of activities including:

- Increased street outreach
- Opening warming centers or increasing capacity
- Opening emergency shelters or increasing capacity
- Eliminating or reducing barriers to shelter (waiving bans, background checks, etc.)
- Providing transportation to warming centers and shelters



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

The following is a summary of the Columbia temperature history for the period of 2015 - 2019 YTD, as measured at MU Sanborn Field:

Year	Number of Days by Temperature			
	≤ 9°F	≤ 9°F w/ wind chill	≤ 20°F	≤ 32°F
2015	12	33	28	67
2016	6	25	24	73
2017	8	17	14	73
2018	10	31	27	96
2019 YTD	6	22	14	48

With the support of the City's social services funding, the community has increased winter emergency shelter capacity in recent years; although a few nights each year, the shelters have reached capacity resulting in a need for an additional overnight warming center. During the 2018-2019 Winter, the City provided an overnight warming center in REDI offices and the Transit Wabash station on three nights to expand existing shelter capacity. The warming centers were staffed by City airport safety personnel.

Due to limited resources, staff recommends utilizing a threshold of a projected low of ≤ 9°F between the hours of 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. for an extreme cold weather alert. The alert will trigger the opening of an overnight warming center from 7 p.m. - 7 a.m. in a City facility, staffed by City personnel. The overnight warming center will serve as a refuge of last resort for persons unwilling or unable to access local emergency shelter services. City staff will continue to coordinate closely with emergency shelter providers to ensure low barrier access to overnight emergency shelter as the preferred option for persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

The alert will be requested by the Director of Public Health & Human Services and approved by the City Manager. Notification of an extreme weather alert will be provided, as follows, to:

- the public through media advisories, web site, and social media
- homeless service providers (street outreach team and shelters)
- public safety agencies (CPD, Park Rangers, CFD)
- hospitals
- Boone County Office of Emergency Management
- Daniel Boone Regional Library



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The fiscal impact for staffing the overnight warming center is estimated at \$500 per night based upon actual costs from this past winter. This does not include any extra expenses for any additional supplies that may be needed.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: \$500 per night.

Long-Term Impact: Enter the cost of proposed legislation to the city for years **beyond two**.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Social Equity, Secondary Impact: Secondary, Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Primary, Secondary Impact: Secondary, Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

Legislative History

Date	Action
None	There is no legislative history.

Suggested Council Action

Staff requests Council acceptance of the report and approval of the recommendations proposed in response to extreme winter weather.