



## **City Proposes Funding of Mobile Hygiene Unit to Address Public Health Concerns Related to Homelessness**

### **Governing Body to Consider the Proposal Tonight**

December 8, 2021 -- As part of an ongoing series of strategic initiatives designed to address public health concerns related to homelessness, the Webber administration proposes to establish a Mobile Hygiene Unit to provide essential hygiene services and outreach to people experiencing homelessness. The unit would utilize vehicles and equipment purchased with CARES Act money and consist of a social services navigator to connect the people to housing resources, three park rangers, and a half-time custodian to maintain the unit.

Wednesday night, the Governing Body is expected to vote on a Budget Adjustment Resolution (BAR) of \$205,000 to fund half a year of staff and operating costs for the new unit. The Finance Committee approved the BAR unanimously, as did the Quality of Life Committee.

According to Community Health and Safety Director Kyra Ochoa: "The number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Santa Fe is estimated to be approximately 300. However, we lack a system that will allow us to determine an exact number and respond accordingly. These folks are sleeping in arroyos, parks, in cars and on streets, and have little-to-no access to showers, hand washing, toilets or other hygiene services. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of services also presents a threat to everyone's public health. This program will address that problem and get people connected to help."

Mayor Alan Webber says: "Solving homelessness in Santa Fe will take the cooperation of a whole support system. As we continue to put that system together, the Mobile Hygiene Unit is another tool we can deploy to alleviate suffering and homelessness and guide people toward housing and better lives."

The Mobile Hygiene Unit is the most recent initiative of the City's strategic approach to the problem of homelessness and related issues.

- The City established an Alternative Response Unit to provide an appropriate response to non-violent individuals in need of social and behavioral health services.
- The City partners with Built for Zero, a national coalition of communities using a data-driven public health approach to measurably end homelessness by bringing community partners together in a systematic way. As a result of that partnership, two million dollars was leveraged from the State of NM's CARES Act allocation to make possible the purchase of the Santa Fe Suites, which currently provides a home for renters with very low incomes who would otherwise be unstably housed and those transitioning out of homelessness.
- Almost 300 people have been housed safely and with intensive case management at the Midtown Shelter's converted dormitory building, directly preventing a COVID outbreak at area shelters; of these residents nearly a third were provided space for quarantining either because of exposure to COVID or to provide a safe place for recovery;
- Over 300 renters, many of them adversely affected by COVID, received rental assistance to either keep their housing or get rehoused rapidly, including assistance with move-in deposits, utilities and arrears.
- Six million dollars were added to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to ensure its long-term stability. The fund has a mandate to amplify the connection between housing and social service benefits, and create a structure for the City to plan for future growth and equitable development so that housing is available for all residents, regardless of income or type of housing needed.