

**BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HALF MOON BAY**

**AGENDA REPORT**

For meeting of: **January 19, 2022**

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**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Bob Nisbet, City Manager

**TITLE: AGREEMENT WITH EL CENTRO DE LIBERTAD FOR COMMUNITY RESPONDER PILOT PROGRAM**

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt a resolution authorizing the City Manager to finalize and execute an agreement with El Centro de Libertad for a Community Responder pilot program, at a cost not-to-exceed \$150,000, for a term beginning March 1, 2022, and ending September 30, 2022.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The \$150,000 pilot program cost will be funded with \$75,000 included in the City's FY 2021-22 Adopted Budget for this purpose, and a \$75,000 contribution from the County of San Mateo. Once received, the Adopted Budget will be revised to accept the County funding.

**STRATEGIC ELEMENT:**

This action supports the *Healthy Communities and Public Safety* and *Fiscal Sustainability* elements of the Strategic Plan.

**BACKGROUND:**

In Summer 2020, responding to the national movement around police reforms and the local killings of two individuals at the hands of law enforcement, the City Council prioritized community outreach and research related to public safety and law enforcement in Half Moon Bay. They also created a subcommittee to discuss the City's current contract with the Sheriff, law enforcement in general, and identify recommendations for reforms to be proposed in Half Moon Bay. The information gathered through these efforts would inform future subcommittee and Council discussions, public safety response alternatives, and negotiations with the Sheriff, including the potential renewal or renegotiation of the contract before its expiration on June 30, 2022.

The City launched a significant community outreach campaign which included: nine focus group meetings (Latinx community members and leaders, homeless community members and service providers, non-profits, youth, faith leaders, and mental health professionals), a listening session, and several Public Safety Subcommittee and City Council meetings. Through these efforts, two main issues rose to the top: general distrust of law enforcement in certain communities, and concerns about mental health response.

Several steps have been taken to effectuate improvements to public safety in Half Moon Bay and the relationship between law enforcement and our residents. On May 4, 2021, the City Council adopted the Yanira Serrano Presente! Program, which was developed by the Latino Advisory Council and is now being implemented in collaboration with that group. On July 14, 2021, the City Council held a special meeting focused completely on policing. At the meeting, the Council received presentations from the Stanford University Criminal Justice Center (authors of a report entitled “Safety Beyond Policing: Promoting Care over Criminalization”) and a representative from the White Bird Clinic (the organization that runs the CAHOOTS program in Eugene, Oregon). At that meeting, the City Council approved the Public Safety Work Plan for FY 2021-22, which includes the following recommendation:

- 5) *Monitor the mental health response pilot program being implemented in Daly City, Redwood City, San Mateo, and South San Francisco and determine whether Half Moon Bay should consider a similar program. Work with the County, local providers and appropriate additional resources with mental health expertise at the earliest possible opportunity to plan a mental health crisis response pilot program. Include broad outreach and engagement with all partners, stakeholders, and members of the public to ensure the pilot program is successful.*

On August 13, 2021, the City reconvened the mental health focus group to specifically discuss the Council recommendation and gather feedback on how to best implement a mental health crisis response pilot program. Based on that feedback and additional research, including the Stanford paper presented in July, staff determined the most appropriate approach was to develop a pilot program using the Community Responder model, like Cahoots and other successful programs already operating in cities across the country.

City staff lack the training, expertise, and experience necessary to manage a program of this nature in-house, and it was determined that the best approach would be to partner with a third-party service provider to provide the services to the community. After gauging interest and accepting proposals from existing non-profit providers already serving the Coast, El Centro de Libertad was selected to work with the City on program design and provide services during the pilot stage due to their well-designed proposal, existing staff, expertise, and infrastructure, and ability to launch services quickly and effectively. El Centro de Libertad is a culturally competent non-profit that has provided substance abuse treatment and recovery, education, and other behavioral health services in Half Moon Bay for more than 20 years.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **Proposed Pilot Program**

El Centro de Libertad has proposed the Crisis Assistance Response and Evaluation Services (CARES) program pilot to run for approximately 7 months, with an estimated launch date of March 1, 2022, for a total cost of \$150,000. The CARES program will provide a two-person mobile crisis response team, consisting of a certified EMT or other healthcare practitioner, and an experienced mental health professional, to respond to certain types of 911 calls dispatched through the County’s Public Safety Communications call center. The CARES team will be dispatched in instances where there is no immediate threat of violence, with Sheriff Deputies on

standby when a higher level of response is needed. Examples of the types of calls appropriate for the CARES team include suicidal ideations, persons under the influence of drugs or alcohol, persons experiencing a mental health crisis, parents calling with concern for an adolescent youth exhibiting unusual behavior, or community members reporting persons in some form of emotional distress. Although these calls would not include situations where medical emergencies or acts of violence are active, the CARES team could respond to these calls to provide support to first responders.

The CARES team will be unarmed, bilingual in Spanish and English, and focus on the use of culturally competent de-escalation, crisis-intervention, motivational interviewing, and suicide prevention tools to work with individuals in crisis. The CARES team response would be an alternative to law-enforcement, fire, or other first responders, divert individuals from costly visits to emergency rooms, unnecessary entry into the criminal justice system, and help prevent the physical harm or loss of life that sometimes result from armed crisis response. Following initial de-escalation and stabilization, the CARES team would help individuals develop a plan of treatment, provide warm handoffs to service providers, and engage in appropriate follow-up help put people on a path to healing. Ongoing collaboration with local and regional non-profits, County Health, the Sheriff's Office, and the community will be key to the success of the program and the long-term success of clients.

The initial pilot will operate 40 hours per week and respond to calls within the City limits of Half Moon Bay, as well as the Moonridge affordable housing community in the unincorporated County just south of the City. Future expansion could include the entire mid-Coast (Montara to Half Moon Bay). Further funding and collaboration with the County would be necessary for expansion and will only be considered after successful implementation of the pilot program.

#### Funding

Funding for the pilot program includes \$75,000 in the City's General Fund Budget for FY 2021-22 which was set aside for implementation of mental health services such as this pilot program. County Supervisor Don Horsley has committed a \$75,000 match to support the pilot program. That funding should be provided in February. Staff are researching legislation and pursuing grant opportunities to fund continuation or expansion of the program, including AB 988 and AB 118, which have been signed into law and could provide ongoing funding for the program beginning in 2023.

In December, staff applied for a grant through the California Department of Health Care Services' Behavioral Health Justice Intervention Services grant program. If awarded, the requested funding would allow for expansion of the pilot through the end of the calendar year and/or additional hours or days of service. Additionally, local philanthropic organizations and health care districts have expressed a willingness to support the pilot during their 2022 grant funding cycle.

#### Data Collection, Outcomes, and Program Evaluation

Although the design of the CARES pilot is rooted in the success of similar programs in other cities like San Francisco, Santa Rosa, Eugene, and Austin, what works in other communities may or may not align with the Coastside community. Alternative crisis response programs are still considered

a new approach, and the City has the opportunity to collect data, taking into account the nuances of our community and inform a larger body of evidence-based practices. Data points include the number of calls for service, average response time, diversion from jail or medical systems, and referrals to behavioral health resources. All the data collected can be shared as appropriate and in compliance with HIPAA and other privacy laws to inform program and funding decisions and to contribute to the study of alternative response approaches.

### Conclusion

The agreement with El Centro de Libertad will enable the City to initiate a Community Responder pilot in Half Moon Bay with a targeted start date of March 1, 2022. Staff recommends adoption of the resolution, which would authorize the City Manager to finalize and execute an agreement and launch the program. Should the resolution be adopted, program updates will be presented to the Public Safety Subcommittee and the Council throughout the duration of the pilot. A final report to the Council will be produced following the completion of the pilot program at the end of 2022.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Resolution authorizing the City Manager to finalize and execute an agreement with El Centro de Libertad for a Community Responder Pilot program, for a cost not-to-exceed \$150,000, for a term beginning March 1, 2022, and ending September 30, 2022
2. El Centro de Libertad Scope of Work