



NEWS RELEASE

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HUMAN SERVICES CAMPUS ASSESSING ALL OPTIONS IN RESPONSE TO PLANNING COMMISSION'S UNPRECEDENTED BYPASSING OF PROTOCOLS

PHOENIX, Ariz. (Jan. 11, 2021): Following the City of Phoenix Planning Commission's unprecedented bypassing of established protocol to discuss and approve their own stipulations dramatically impacting a zoning request to add additional shelter beds at the Human Services Campus (HSC), representatives from HSC, Andre House, Central Arizona Shelter Services (CASS) and St. Vincent de Paul are assessing all options to determine whether or not to move forward with the request.

After several hours of debate about the request during the Jan. 6 evening meeting – the second hours-long meeting before the Planning Commission -- members were presented with a list of 28 stipulations from Commissioner Justin Johnson.

"While we were pleased to receive unanimous support to add shelter beds, we were deeply disappointed and incredibly frustrated with the process," said HSC Executive Director Amy Schwabenlender. "Not only did we get the proposed stipulations a mere 10 minutes before the meeting started, at no time during the commissioners' discussion were we asked for input or an opinion. This after months of negotiations with city staff, many meetings with community groups and hours of testimony that led to the development of City staff-approved stipulations addressing concerns of HSC campus neighbors. Commission members simply drafted their own stipulations."

"The action by the Planning Commission was completely inconsistent with the required process and defies common sense," she said "We are reassessing our next steps to determine if we should move forward or not. It is not clear to us that there is a serious commitment to solve the problem of homelessness. Here you have nonprofit organizations trying to help people experiencing homelessness and rather than helping us be more effective for clients and our neighbors, we are having roadblocks thrown at us."

Schwabenlender said that although many of the stipulations were problematic, "the two most troubling removed a proposed low-barrier shelter to be developed by Andre House and that an additional 275 beds approved for CASS would only be allowed for three years. After that period, CASS would have to readjust to the current number of 425 beds. We're not sure where that three-year threshold came from because it appears to be arbitrary and not based on need or demand. The restriction

is completely unacceptable and does not address the effort to provide shelter beds for men and women experiencing homelessness already on the campus and in the surrounding area.”

The current zoning request seeks to add 275 beds to CASS and permit Andre House to develop a 100-bed low-barrier shelter to serve “the most vulnerable people in our community who are traditionally the hardest to serve,” Schwabenlender said. The request also sought approval for 200 ad hoc beds to be placed in the St. Vincent de Paul dining room on the campus during excessively hot, cold or rainy weather.

Schwabenlender said that the Human Services Campus fully supports a regional approach to addressing homelessness in the Valley and “would consider, at some point, reducing the number of beds if the needs are being met. But, while we would prefer a broad-based regional effort, there is no concerted or comprehensive movement in that direction and we are the only group stepping up to fill this immediate need.”

Schwabenlender said that discussions underway also include the possibility of appealing the Planning Commission’s actions.

Currently, the zoning request has generated more than 360 letters of support and more than 20,000 petition signatures. More than 1,300 signatures are from residents in neighborhoods immediately surrounding the Human Services Campus.

Previously, the request received solid support from the Central City Village Planning Committee and the City of Phoenix Human Relations Committee. The zoning approval process requires appearances with the Central City Village Planning Committee and the City of Phoenix Planning Commission before the request is heard by the Phoenix City Council. The Phoenix City Council meeting is scheduled on Wednesday, Feb. 3 at 2:30 p.m.

For more information about the zoning request, visit www.fromstreettohome.org. For more information about the Human Services Campus, visit www.hsc-az.org.

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ABOUT THE HUMAN SERVICES CAMPUS: Founded in 2005, the Human Services Campus is a collaborative force of partner organizations united on one campus to end homelessness. Located just west of downtown Phoenix, 16 independent agencies on the Campus see nearly 1,000 individuals every day, offering a holistic range of client services including: reunification with family and friends; mental, physical and dental health; shelter; employment; meals; legal services and housing. Having all of these resources in one location with intra-agency communications makes it more feasible to provide a customized engagement for each client to help end their homelessness. For more information, visit www.hsc-az.org.

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