



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

January 28, 2019

TO: Supervisor Dianne Jacob, Chairwoman
Supervisor Greg Cox, Vice-Chairman
Supervisor Kristin Gaspar
Supervisor Jim Desmond
Supervisor Nathan Fletcher

FROM: William D. Gore, Sheriff
San Diego County Sheriff's Department

Sheriff Letter in Support to Lease County Property for Temporary Use (Districts: All)

I am writing to urge you to join me in support of the Department of General Services' request to enter into a lease agreement with Jewish Family Service of San Diego to temporarily use a County property currently scheduled for demolition and redevelopment as affordable housing to shelter asylum-seeking individuals on a limited basis. My interest in supporting this Board of Supervisor's agenda item stems from my concern over the impacts that migrants seeking asylum in our country have on public safety in the County of San Diego.

San Diego County has recently experienced a surge in asylum applicants granted legal authority to stay in the United States. A majority of these asylum seekers are families with small children who do not have a place to stay in, or means to travel beyond, the County. After being screened, asylum-seeking families are quickly released into San Diego County without any coordinated plans for food, clothing, and shelter. If these asylum seekers are unable to obtain shelter they will be left homeless, without medical screening, seeking shelter on the streets or further overburdening our already overcrowded homeless shelters.

The goal of any law enforcement officer is to seek to prevent crime before it happens. Supporting this agenda item makes good public safety sense. Persons who are homeless are some of our County's most vulnerable population. From a public safety standpoint, my office has a duty to protect all persons residing in San Diego County from crime and victimization, regardless of their immigration status. Many of the asylum seekers are unfamiliar with San Diego County and susceptible to victimization from opportunistic criminals. Women and young children are particularly susceptible to victimization, including sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

The increased numbers of asylum seekers in San Diego County doesn't just impact our overburdened community resources; it impacts our law enforcement resources as well. Oftentimes, persons on the street turn to crime for no other reason than to obtain life sustaining necessities such as food, clothing, or a warm blanket. When crime occurs, law enforcement is forced to respond, and those limited law enforcement resources may be diverted from other necessary tasks. The impact to public safety doesn't end there. If an arrest is made, law enforcement may spend hours transporting, booking, and processing an individual into the County jail. Once a person is processed into the jail, the County now bears the responsibility of providing food, clothing, shelter, and medical care.

The recommendations in this agenda item will provide asylum seekers a temporary place to live without placing them into the County's already overburdened homeless shelters and streets. Further, the temporary use of this County property will provide resources to help prevent victimization and criminalization of some of the most vulnerable people currently in our County.

In closing, I am asking you to approve the recommendations of Vice Chairman Greg Cox and Supervisor Nathan Fletcher in the Board Agenda Item addressing the temporary use of County property.

Sincerely,

William D. Gore, Sheriff