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NEWS ADVISORY: Board of Commissioners to take up revised work plan, \$3 million construction budget for planned 120-bed Foster Road shelter

PHOTOS of the shelter space and steering committee (credit Multnomah County):

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/multcopao/sets/72157695701148264>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/multcopao/albums/72157667875062517>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

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<http://ahomeforeveryone.net/foster/>

PORTLAND -- On Thursday, June 14, the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners will take up a work plan and estimated construction budget for a planned 120-bed shelter for homeless neighbors at 6144 SE Foster Road.

The shelter, which will be operated by Transition Projects, will serve women and people in couples, and it will prioritize veterans, people 55 and older and people with disabling conditions. It's expected to open in early 2019.

Work on the shelter is part of a long-term strategy to shift beds from temporary spaces opened quickly under the city of Portland's state of emergency into service-rich facilities designed for long-term success.

Residents at the Foster shelter will have semi-private assigned beds that they'll keep for as long as they need, with 24-hour access to the site. They'll also have access to hygiene services (showers, personal care supplies, linens and clothing), locked storage for their belongings, a computer lab, private meeting rooms, an on-site pet relief area, bike parking, and telephones.

The shelter also will connect residents with one-on-one housing and employment case management services. Health and wellness supports will include an on-site health clinic, access to health treatment specialists and peer support services.

"Every day, our shelters save lives and provide a safe place off the streets for neighbors who need help but don't have anywhere else to turn," said Marc Jolin, director of the Joint Office of Homeless Services. "But shelters work best, for their residents and their communities, when they also provide the stability and services that help lift people back into permanent housing. That's what this shelter will do."

On Thursday, the board will hear an update on the design work and construction timeline -- and consider whether to accept bids for work that's now estimated at \$3 million for construction costs, soft costs, and contingencies. Some of that capital funding would come from the City of Portland, through the Joint Office of Homeless Services.

That marks an increase from a rough estimate of \$2 million provided in January, when the Board voted 4-1 to approve a 10-year lease for the shelter site -- a vacant, nearly 14,000-square-foot commercial space, with two five-year options.

The increase comes despite work to reduce some expected costs. It's due in part to higher demand in the local construction industry, which is making bids more competitive and causing significant labor shortages. But the cost also reflects contingency funding and efforts to add amenities and features in response to community feedback.

Some of the increased costs would help pay for planned upgrades to a recreational courtyard, including landscaping and fencing designed to increase privacy and offer residents a comfortable and attractive place to be outside. They also would pay for additional improvements to the shelter's sleeping areas and a full-service commercial kitchen so residents could take meals on-site.

Community engagement in shelter plan

Neighbors have been working with County Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson and the Joint Office of Homeless Services to help shape shelter design and operations as part of a public steering committee that has met four times since February.

Committee members are currently working on a Good Neighbor Agreement. Committee members also heard from the shelter's design team and reviewed and commented on design options.

The committee includes immediate neighbors, neighborhood and business organizations, social service organizations, and other critical community stakeholders, including some who were critical of the shelter plan.

Record outcomes in housing, prevention, shelter last year

Multnomah County and the City of Portland delivered on a promise to double year-round shelter capacity made in 2015.

Overall, the community operates more than 1,300 publicly funded year-round beds. More than 8,500 people spent at least one night in shelter last fiscal year.

Because of that expansion, in the 2017 Point in Time Count, more neighbors were counted in shelter than without for the first time.

And though the County's overall number of neighbors experiencing homelessness increased, the number of neighbors reported without shelter fell nearly 12 percent. In contrast, other West Coast cities facing a housing affordability crisis like Portland's saw major increases in unsheltered homelessness between 2015 and 2017.

But Multnomah County and the City of Portland remain committed to a vision for ending homelessness that relies on shelter primarily as a means to return to permanent housing. Together, they've expanded their investments to support housing placements and services with an additional \$4 million in the coming fiscal year.

In the 2016-17 fiscal year, partners in A Home for Everyone placed nearly 4,900 people from homelessness into housing, up 65 percent from three years prior. Some of those placements come from shelter, but many also come directly from the streets, where outreach teams work daily to build connections with campers.

Last year, partners also worked to prevent more than 6,000 people from becoming homeless in the first place, an increase of nearly 2,000 people from the year before.

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