



**CITY OF BOULDER
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**

MEETING DATE: May 4, 2023

AGENDA TITLE

Consideration of a motion to accept the April 13, 2023 study session summary regarding Homelessness strategy - Safe and Managed Public Spaces program in Boulder.

PRESENTER(S)

Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, City Manager
Sandra Llanas, Deputy City Attorney
Maris Herold, Police Chief
Ali Rhodes, Director of Parks and Recreation
Joe Taddeucci, Director of Utilities
Kurt Firnhaber, Director of Housing & Human Services
Stephen Redfearn, Deputy Police Chief
Daniel Reinhard, Police Data Analyst Senior

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This agenda item provides a summary of the April 13 study session on the Safe and Managed Public Spaces (SAMPS) program. The purpose of this item was for Council to receive an update on the program's activities, outcomes, and challenges. Council also reviewed recent improvements to the Abatement Protocol.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Suggested Motion Language:

Staff requests council consideration of this matter and action in the form of the following motion:

Motion to accept the study session summary from April 13, 2023 on the Safe and Managed Spaces program.

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENTS AND IMPACTS

- **Economic** – Increased misuse of public spaces leads to an increase in the cost to mitigate the effects of such misuse. Perceptions of safety issues in public spaces can lead to loss of revenue from nearby businesses, events, and general decreases in visitation.
- **Environmental** – Trash, organic materials, and debris in waterways can cause significant environmental harm. Biohazards can also have environmental impacts.
- **Social** – While BIPOC people experiencing homelessness are overrepresented in the overall homeless community, they are also over-represented in homelessness exits. The SAMPS program continues to embrace outreach efforts that lead to successful exits from homelessness. The unmitigated impact of camping, however, created societal impacts for the community at large. Crime associated with camping can lead to unsafe conditions which impact the use of public spaces by all members of the community.

OTHER IMPACTS

- **Fiscal** – Sustaining some of the programs initiated during the pilot period will require financial support. This need will be discussed as part of the 2024 Budget process.
- **Staff time** – The SAMPS team added an additional operations team in the 2023 Budget. Additional Police and Park Ranger assistance may be needed and will be discussed as part of the 2024 Budget process.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS FROM COUNCIL AGENDA COMMITTEE

Information was provided as an update, and no questions were posed to Council. The key topics of the Study Session were:

- The SAMPS program addresses symptoms of homelessness; it does not try to solve homelessness.
- Revised Abatement Protocols and an Action Plan were created in 2023.
- SAMPS has seen preliminary results but continues to face challenges.

BOARD AND COMMISSION FEEDBACK

None

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

This is a complex topic and produces significant feedback from members of the community.

BACKGROUND

The SAMPS program update was provided at the [April 13, 2023, Council Meeting](#). Prior discussions occurred including:

- Jan. 19, 2021 – [City Council Meeting](#)
- April 27, 2021- [City Council Meeting](#)
- May 11, 2021 – [City Council Meeting](#)
- June 7, 2022 - [Information Packet](#)
- Aug. 4, 2022 – [City Council Meeting](#)

ATTACHMENT(S)

- A. Summary of the April 13, 2023 Study Session on the Safe and Managed Public Spaces program.

ATTACHMENT A
April 13, 2023 Study Session Summary
Safe and Managed Public Spaces Update

PRESENT

City Council: Mayor Aaron Brockett, Study Session Facilitator Matt Benjamin, Mayor Pro Tem Mark Wallach, Lauren Folkerts, Rachel Friend, Junie Joseph, Nicole Speer, Tara Winer, Bob Yates.

Staff: Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, City Manager; Maris Herold, Police Chief; Ali Rhodes, Parks and Recreation Director; Joe Taddeucci, Utilities Director; Kurt Firnhaber, Housing and Human Services Director; Cris Jones, Interim Community Vitality Director; Stephen Redfearn, Deputy Police Chief; Daniel Reinhard, Police Data Analyst Senior; Vicki Ebner, HHS Operating and Homelessness Strategy Senior Manager

OVERVIEW

The study session provided the opportunity for council members to receive an update and discuss success metrics, changes to processes and challenges.

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION

Staff provided an overview of current Safe and Managed Public Spaces (SAMPS) program services:

Staff discussed the holistic, multi-disciplinary approach to SAMPS and stated that a second operational team is currently being added.

- Internal Operations and Clean-up
- Urban Park Rangers
- Downtown Ambassadors
- BTHERE Outreach
- Dedicated Boulder Police Support
- Data, Analytics, Legal, and Communications

Staff discussed program outputs and actions.

- Output
 - Urban Park Rangers: 1,200 patrols, 1,100 general info contacts, 1,400 park regulation contacts, 895 enforcement contacts.
 - Downtown Ambassadors: 18,392 business contacts, 8,286 welfare checks, 8,300 instances of graffiti addressed, 2,000 bags of trash collected, Cleaned up biohazard waste from more than 250 humans and animals.
 - Boulder Targeted Homeless Engagement and Referral Effort (BTHERE): 1,130 interactions with approximately 419 unique individuals, 28 Coordinated Entry screenings, helped 156 people with obtaining documents.
 - Boulder Police Department: 50,454 hours, 7,007 proactive patrols, 2,772 medical calls facilitated, 949 tickets for encampments in hotspots.

- Clean-Up/Operations: 1,316 Encampment assessments, 836 Clean-Ups
195.4 Tons of trash collected.
- An Action Plan was created for 2023 and was attached to the meeting agenda.
- Outcome-based metrics related to each SAMPS program goal were presented to council.

Staff provided an update on Police-related activities, including:

- A discussion of the variety of staff-level support provided by BPD
- Crime rates and patterns of criminal activity in designated areas. From Jan. 2020 through Dec. 2022:
 - One in five people issued camping tickets received four or more camping tickets.
 - These top 88 people were responsible for 783 camping charges.
 - These 88 people engaged in 967 crimes, excluding camping, during this time.

Staff provided council with an operational update.

- Staff provided information related to the evolution of program and approach.
- Staff discussed changes to the Abatement Protocol and how areas are prioritized for clean-up.
- Staff provided an update on the hiring of the new crew.

Staff updated council on the changes to the Abatement Protocol.

- Recent situations reflect changing conditions:
 - Fires/Propane
 - Issues on Pearl Street Mall and the Bandshell
 - Overdoses
 - Situations along school routes and path obstructions
 - Increased community concerns
 - Reduced voluntary compliance by campers
- The Abatement Protocol was updated to provide clarity on:
 - Tent/propane ordinances applicability
 - Notice and situations that are exceptions to 72-hour notice
 - Re-occupancy prohibitions
- Signage has also recently been updated, partly in response to the recent increase in fires. Signage provides clarity on rules concerning camping, tents, and propane. Signs also include QR code information to connect people to Coordinated Entry and sheltering. Signs have initially been posted along Boulder Creek in the downtown area, around Boulder High School, and in the Goose Creek area.

Staff discussed the challenges faced by operations workers and the community at large.

- The community is divided, which makes it hard to define success, and the distribution of food, sleeping bags and other items contribute to debris and creates a disincentive to engage with services.

- Poly-substance or methamphetamine addictions often lead to disengagement with service providers, increased criminal activity and inability/unwillingness to access limited resources.
- Criminal histories or other barriers limit the system's ability to successfully house certain individuals.
- Disease, contamination, weather, public health risks, victimization occur in encampments.
- Campsites increase wildfire risks and impact/endanger wetlands or ecologically sensitive areas. Biohazards can create dangerous situations on pathways or in parks.
- Ticketing is not effective in reducing illegal camping. Bond reform removed jail as an opportunity for intervention, and there is a shortage of jail beds.
- Crime disproportionately concentrates in encampment areas and creates harmful work environments.

Chief of Police Maris Herold and Interim City Attorney Sandra Llanes answered questions about camping citations.

- Most camping citations are dismissed.
- Community Court provides alternative sentencing for people cited for crimes usually associated with homelessness.
- Staff is exploring Exclusion Zones for repeat offenders of the camping ban.
- Zones are defined by a geographic area rather than by tent.

Chief Herold and Dr. Daniel Reinhard, police researcher, answered questions about Boulder Police Department data collection and trends. They also answered questions about the ability to seize propane cannisters. Boulder Police Department cannot collect propane tanks that are within tents; this requires a warrant. They explained that people are obtaining propane tanks, grills, and heaters in a variety of ways including theft, purchase, and donations from community members.

Deputy Chief of Police Stephen Redfearn answered questions about overdoses and treatment options.

- People often refuse medical assistance.
- People often have their own Narcan, so some overdoses go unreported.
- Once Narcan is administered, people often do not reach the threshold of instability required for detox center or jail admission.
- Police officers assist people who refuse medical assistance with connection to support systems.

Director of Utilities Joe Taddeucci answered questions as to the definition of "impact on neighborhood livability". He explained that this is one factor that goes into a formula and is generally considered the quantification of the amount of trash or debris that has spilled onto property.

Director of Housing and Human Services Kurt Firnhaber answered questions about housing and the value of outreach services.

There are at least 9 coordinated outreach services – including city staff such as the Homeless Outreach Team and the Municipal Court Homeless Navigators – that work collaboratively to engage with people. The pathway to housing is complicated and is different for different people. As a result, any exit from homelessness is accomplished through the work of a team of people, rather than by one organization.

NEXT STEPS

Staff identified the next steps for the SAMPS team, including:

- Improving both internal and community communications to clearly explain the challenges faced by the SAMPS team, increase transparency about what can and cannot be accomplished, and to better communicate successes to the public.
- Fully implement the strategies and actions laid out in the 2023 Action Plan including implementation of the updated Abatement Protocol, development of a communication plan and reviewing responses from worker safety surveys with the aim of implementing improvements
- Putting forth recommendations for the 2024 Budget

City Council requested further conversation about program needs and key issues impacting the work and requested an update to follow at least 45 days from the implementation of the Abatement Protocol changes.