



Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

Meeting Date: September 4, 2012

Prepared By/Phone Number: David A. Salazar 854-4107

Elected/Appointed Official/Dept. Head: Sherri E. Fleming,
County Executive for Health and Human Services and Veterans Service

Commissioners Court Sponsor: Judge Samuel T. Biscoe

AGENDA LANGUAGE:

Consider and Take Appropriate Action on Request from Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Service to Authorize the Creation of 2 Full-Time Positions in the Family Support Services Division to Maintain and Enhance Current Levels of Service in Travis County Emergency Assistance Program.

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST AND ATTACHMENTS:

During the Commissioners Court's August 28, 2012, Voting Session, the Court asked that both Transportation and Natural Resources (TNR) and Health and Human Services and Veterans Service (HHS&VS) provide answers to certain questions that would aid the Court in making an informed decision. HHS&VS has requested additional staff to maintain current levels of service with regard to the provision of food to clients.

In the past, Transportation and Natural Resources (TNR) and Health and Human Services and Veterans Service (HHS&VS) have cooperated to coordinate the pickup and delivery of food from Capital Area Food Bank to the seven Travis County Community Center sites that operate Emergency Assistance programs for the benefit of County residents, but, recently, it has become apparent that providing such service has been an undue hardship on TNR as their staffing has decreased at the same time as their workload has significantly increased.

Responses to the questions from the Court are incorporated and enumerated in the attached memo.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends that the Court approve of the creation of 2 Full-time positions in Family Support Services.

AGENDA REQUEST DEADLINE: All agenda requests and supporting materials must be submitted as a pdf to Cheryl Aker in the County Judge's office, Cheryl.Aker@co.travis.tx.us by **Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m.** for the next week's meeting.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

Please see attached memos.

FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:

The entry level cost for 2 full-time staff is \$86,222 (\$43,111) each, which would be added to the HHS&VS Budget for FY2013.

REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:

Leslie Browder, County Executive, Planning and Budget Office
Mary Etta Gerhardt, Assistant County Attorney

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**TRAVIS COUNTY HEALTH and HUMAN SERVICES
and VETERANS SERVICE
502 E. Highland Mall Blvd
P. O. Box 1748
Austin, Texas 78767**

**Sherri E. Fleming
County Executive
(512) 854-4100
Fax (512) 854-4115**

DATE: August 30, 2012

TO: Members of the Commissioners Court

FROM: 
Sherri E. Fleming, County Executive for
Health and Human Services and Veterans Service

SUBJECT: Additional Staffing in Family Support Services

Proposed Motion:

Consider and Take Appropriate Action on Request from Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Service to Authorize the Creation of 2 Full-Time Positions in the Family Support Services Division to Maintain and Enhance Current Levels of Service in Travis County Emergency Assistance Program.

Summary and Staff Recommendations:

During the Commissioners Court's August 28, 2012, Voting Session, the Court asked that both Transportation and Natural Resources (TNR) and Health and Human Services and Veterans Service (HHS&VS) provide answers to certain questions that would aid the Court in making an informed decision. HHS&VS has requested additional staff to maintain current levels of service with regard to the provision of food to clients.

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been an undue hardship on TNR as their staffing has decreased at the same time as their workload has significantly increased.

Responses to the questions from TNR (attached and incorporated) and HHS&VS are as follows:

1. When did TNR begin delivering to Community Center pantries?

In the 1980's prior to the unification of Road Maintenance activity into the unified road System, the Road Offices of Precincts One and Four began support to the Travis County Rural Centers in Manor and Del Valle by supplying a Pickup Truck or 6 YD Dump Truck and driver to transport food products to be distributed at each rural center. In FY89, this support was assumed within the newly created Public Improvements and Transportation Department (PITD) and, ultimately, within the Transportation and Natural Resource Department (TNR). The growth of this support program for TNR has been follows:

Initial Centers: (Pre-1990)

Manor Rural Center
Del Valle Rural Center

Expansion of Program:

Pflugerville Rural Center – 1993
Jonestown Rural Center – 1993
Oak Hill Rural Center – 1994
Palm Square Center – 2008
Post Road Center – 2008

The initial delivery was not established on a formal schedule, but was initiated by a phone request for a specific day and time and required the department to only pick up the commodities at a predetermined site and deliver to only the original 2 sites. In the early 90's as the program became more effective, the time was pre-set for the pickup and delivery to Tuesday mornings only. Tuesday only delivery remained as the schedule timeline until the addition of the Palm Square and Post Oak Centers in 2008, when Thursday was also added. Also, as the program grew in volume, the commitment for TNR grew to a full day rather than morning only.

2. How long does pick-up and delivery take?

Capital Area Food Bank food pick-up and deliveries to the seven Community Center pantries takes two full days, plus the return of the boxes to the Food Bank.

What is the schedule of deliveries?

Food is delivered to the Community Center pantries each week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Del Valle, Manor, Pflugerville, Jonestown and Oak Hill receive deliveries on Tuesdays; Post Road and Palm Square deliveries are on Thursdays. This schedule is adjusted for Holidays.

3. Has HHS&VS tried using Volunteers or other groups for pick-up and delivery?

The utilization of volunteers for a recurring and physically demanding function has proven unreliable. Volunteers do not keep predictable schedules or commitment and are more difficult to utilize during certain times of the year, such as holidays, when food demands are typically high. TNR has found it difficult to rely on Court-Ordered Community Services individuals in the current delivery process.

RSVP volunteers are a dedicated group of individuals, but often lack the interest and physical stamina to lift and carry heavy objects.

4. If Community Pantry Centers served 25,400 individuals in 2011, what is the projected growth over the next 5 to 10 years?

In 2009, HHS&VS served 18,601 clients with pantry food. In 2010, HHS&VS served 21,256 with pantry food and, in 2011, pantry food was provided to 25,400 clients. As of August 28, 2012, pantry food was provided to 21,795 clients. The demand for food from Travis County food pantries has increased an average of 3,400 clients per year or 17,000 additional clients over the past 5 years. The number of clients needing food has increased each year so this is a conservative projection. Note: some Centers run out of food and are unable to serve clients on any given day. It is unknown how many of those clients return when there is food for distribution.

5. How many trucks are involved in the pantry deliveries?

The current schedule requires that TNR provide:

Tuesday – 2 Box Van Trucks and 2 Passenger Vans

For deliveries to the Rural Centers

6 each, Road Maintenance Workers + Available CSR Probationers

Thursday – 1 Box Van Truck and 1 Passenger Van

For deliveries to the Palm Square and Post Oak

3 each, Road Maintenance Workers + Available CSR Probationers

Additional support – HHS has requested support from TNR for special Holiday deliveries.

6. If the Court approves two staff for the pick-up and delivery of food to the Community Center pantries, how would they be used during the rest of the week?

HHS&VS expects the demand for food in the County will increase in direct proportion to the population, people in poverty, and as the cost of food increases. HHS&VS will need to develop sources of food other than the Food Bank and local grocery stores that provide day old bread. As more resources are developed, pick-ups and deliveries will also increase. Meanwhile, if the request for 2 staff is approved through action of the Commissioners Court, HHS&VS plans to utilize them for bread distribution to the Community Centers, preparation of food allotments and food distribution from the pantries, transporting food and prescriptions to medically fragile clients, reconciliation of food vouchers and inter-agency mail and supply delivery.

7. If the Court approves two staff for the pick-up and delivery of food to the Community Center pantries, could these be part-time staff.

Yes, although, the schedule that the Capital Area Food Bank has established for HHS&VS food pick-ups is Tuesdays and Thursdays. Finding two individuals that would be willing to work this schedule may be challenging. HHS&VS will need individuals with truck driving experience, a clean driving record and the physical strength to load and unload multiple pallets of food on delivery days. Working less than 20 hours a week will make these positions ineligible for benefits and lessen the appeal of the job.

8. Is it possible to contract with the Capitol Area Food Bank to deliver the pantry food?

The information was not available at the time of filing the backup.

9. What is the Food Pantry process?

After food is delivered to the Centers, it is stocked on storage shelves, in refrigerators and in freezers. Storage is maintained to the specifications of the Capital Area Food Bank. When a client presents himself to the Family Support Staff in need of food, he or she fills out a 2-page application; staff conducts a check of the automated client management system, and, if deemed eligible and not having received a food allotment in the last 90 days, the client is shown a list of available food items on that day or is allowed to shop for himself and choose the items he or she would most likely use and consume. This gives the client freedom to account for medical needs and cooking arrangements. An Office Support Staff (OSS), Caseworker or the client bags the requested items. The OSS or Caseworker updates the client management system and establishes the next available allotment date for that client.

Budgetary and Fiscal Impact:

The entry level cost for 2 full-time staff is \$86,222 (\$43,111) each, which would be added to the HHS&VS Budget for FY2013.

Issues and Opportunities:

Both TNR and HHS&VS strive to achieve their primary departmental missions with the resources provided.

Background:

HHS&VS has historically provided food pantries at the seven Community Centers, distributing food purchased from the Capitol Area Food Bank and food donated by various partner agencies. Food pantries are available to clients once every 90 days. HHS&VS strives to tailor the food provided to clients to meet their specific the nutritional needs within the limits of the food available at the time the client applies. To supplement clients with special dietary needs due to living conditions or medical conditions, HHS&VS uses a food voucher system.

In support and cooperation of Travis County's program, TNR has coordinated the use of its vehicle(s) and staff to facilitate the pickup and delivery of food to Travis County sites.

BRIEF HISTORY

TNR'S SUPPORT FOR COMMODITY DELIVERY

In the 1980's prior to the unification of Road Maintenance activity into the unified road System, the Road Offices of Precincts One and Four began support to the Travis County Rural Centers in Manor and Del Valle by supplying a Pickup Truck or 6 YD Dump Truck and driver to transport food products to be distributed at each rural center. In FY89 this support was assumed within the newly created Public Improvements and Transportation Department (PITD) and ultimately within the Transportation and Natural Resource Department (TNR).

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TNR has not been independently funded from the General Fund for the support to HHS within the budget process. Resources assigned are directly linked to 4941 Road Maintenance and 4985 Customer Service.

4941 Road Maintenance is 100% funded by the Road Maintenance Fund. 4985 is partially funded by the Road Maintenance Fund and the General Fund for Programs 8510-Solid Waste Management and 8525-Cemetery Services. All other programs under 4985 are not funded by the General Fund including 8530 - Community Service Restitution (CSR).

The Community Service Restitution (CSR) Program 8530 is managed within 4985 and is committed to multiple assignments including responses to:

Line of Sight Mediation – Litter Collection – General Vegetation Control

When probationers are available to support Commodity Delivery.

Weekday participation for CSR is limited to available participants who show up, usually 1 to 3 people only. The program is most effective on Weekends when up to 20 probationers respond for service hours. These probationers are generally very effective when deployed on Saturdays and Sundays to Roadside Litter Abatement.

Current Equipment Assigned

The Department has two (2) Box Van Cab-Chassis Trucks and two (2) 15-Passenger Vans (or Crew Cab PU's) committed to Commodity Deliver on Tuesdays and one of each on Thursdays. None of the vehicles were justified for the specific purpose of Commodity Delivery and each vehicle is utilized by the department and numerous other departments as follows:

- | | |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Box Van – | Is seasonally utilized by TCSO for Brown Santa
County Clerk's Office for ballot box transfer
Facility Management for routine operations as necessary
Juvenile Courts for specific programs as necessary |
| Pass Van | Is generally used for transport of CSR personnel daily and is available to others departments for direct use as necessary. |
| Crew Cab PU | Is generally used for all Road Maintenance Activity. |

Conclusion:

During the last several years, the required support to HHS's Commodity Deliver Program has steadily grown in intensity due to the success of the program. Last year's drought reduced growth of high grass on county roadways and TNR's ROW resources were not significantly affected by the requirement of the twice a week support for commodities. This year, as the drought ended, a significant demand for vegetation control became a priority, yet resources were diverted on Tuesdays and Thursdays to support HHS. By late June, it was apparent that the department needed to re-address priorities to utilize the limited Human Resources assigned to ROW Vegetation Control to public safety on county maintained roadways.