



# WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

[www.washoecounty.us](http://www.washoecounty.us)

## STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: April 27, 2021

**DATE:** Wednesday, April 21, 2021

**TO:** Board of County Commissioners

**FROM:** Dana Searcy, Special Projects Manager  
(775) 328-2720, [dsearcy@washoecounty.us](mailto:dsearcy@washoecounty.us)

**THROUGH:** Kate Thomas, Assistant County Manager

**SUBJECT:** Recommendation to approve an Agreement for Professional Services between Washoe County and the Karma Box Project to provide contracted staffing to operate the temporary Safe Camp [\$102,780.83 for initial three month term, \$34,260.28 per month for subsequent months]; authorize the Purchasing and Contracts Manager to execute the agreement. Item supports the development of a safe camping location to improve water quality along the Truckee River and expand capacity for those experiencing homelessness. (All Commission Districts) **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

---

### SUMMARY

An emergency agreement is needed to provide contracted staffing to operate the temporary Safe Camp while a formal procurement is pursued. Given the emergency state of the rising numbers of unsheltered people and the public health, public safety and environmental concerns of unsheltered people living in encampments along the Truckee River, an emergency contract is requested to provide staffing to support the immediate implementation of a safe camping location at the Governor's Bowl portion of the Nevada Cares Campus.

**Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item:** Vulnerable Populations, Stewardship of our Community

### PREVIOUS ACTION

On April 13, 2021, the Board of County Commissioners approved accepting a grant award of \$200,000 from Truckee Meadows Water Authority, the use of General Fund Contingency in the amount of \$250,000.00 and the creation of 1.0 FTE Homeless Services Program Specialist position in support of the safe camping location.

**AGENDA ITEM #** \_\_\_\_\_

On Nov 18, 2020, at a joint meeting with the City of Reno Council and the City of Sparks Council, the Board of County Commissioners voted to acquire and cost share three parcels on East 4th Street for the purpose of expanding shelter capacity in the region to assist people experiencing homelessness.

On October 13, 2020 the Board of County Commissioners approved the Agreement for Professional Services between Washoe County and the Karma Box Project for work related to the Built For Zero initiative, specifically River Clean Up and Homeless Encampment Data Project not to exceed \$152,169.60.

On May 19, 2020, the Board of County Commissioners approved the Fiscal Year 2021 Final Washoe County Budget, which included \$750,000.00 of General Fund Contingency.

## **BACKGROUND**

Amid growing community concerns over the public safety, public health and environmental concerns stemming from people living in encampments along the Truckee River, during a Community Homelessness Advisory Board (CHAB) meeting on November 2, 2020, representatives from One Truckee River, a group of public and private partners managing the Truckee River, presented that stormwater sampling and analysis of 11 fixed sites on eight (8) tributaries of the Truckee River showed elevated concentrations of contaminants including elevated levels of E. coli in the Truckee River.

In a subsequent concurrent meeting dated November 18, 2020, the Washoe County Board of Commissioners, City of Reno Council and the City of Sparks Council voted to acquire and cost share three parcels on East 4<sup>th</sup> Street for the purpose of expanding shelter capacity in the region to assist people experiencing homelessness. The number of individuals experiencing homelessness has increased significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent unemployment spurring housing insecurity, further compounding previous community concerns over the public safety, public health and environmental effects of people living in encampments.

One of the purchased parcels included the Governor's Bowl Park which was discussed to be a safe camping location. The location would serve as a safe space where encampments along the Truckee River could relocate providing access to restrooms, handwashing, waste management and meal service. This will be a more secure location for individuals not wishing to move into shelters.

The purpose for the Safe Camp is to:

- Provide a sanctioned location for people currently living outside that reduces the environmental, public health and safety concerns of unregulated encampments.
- Reduce the negative impacts of people experiencing homelessness being forcibly removed from a location.
- Engage participants in housing-focused conversations, referrals, and placements.

With oversight from the Homeless Services Program Specialist approved on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the contracted operator will provide 24/7 staffing coverage to manage the Safe Camp safely and effectively.

The tight timeline to implement the Safe Camp prompted the creation of this emergency contract to ensure staffing is provided by a non-profit partner entrenched in frontline outreach work for people experiencing homelessness. This is intended to ensure that Safe Camp operations may commence quickly within the short timeframe allotted before the projected open date. The Karma Box Project is currently contracted with Washoe County to fulfill the objectives of the One Truckee River grant titled “Encampment Clean-Up and Unsheltered Individual Data Collection”. The population that Karma Box Project engages with daily through this grant is the same population the Safe Camp is seeking to attract. Established, positive relationships with Safe Camp participants has been identified as a best practice for Safe Camp staff; therefore, Karma Box Project was identified as an optimal non-profit partner to initiate an emergency contract for Safe Camp staffing.

The emergency contract will provide service coverage while a competitive procurement takes place. The contract includes an initial three-month contract and allowances for one-month renewals until the competitive procurement process takes place.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Budget authority for this Professional Services Agreement exists within the Special Projects Division Fund Center 101-14.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended to approve an emergency Agreement for Professional Services between Washoe County and the Karma Box Project to provide contracted staffing to operate the temporary Safe Camp [\$102,780.83 for initial three month term, \$34,260.28 per month for subsequent months]; authorize the Purchasing and Contracts Manager to execute the agreement. Item supports the development of a safe camping location to improve water quality along the Truckee River and expand capacity for those experiencing homelessness.

### **POSSIBLE MOTION**

Should the Board agree with staff’s recommendation, a possible motion would be: *move to approve an emergency Agreement for Professional Services between Washoe County and the Karma Box Project to provide contracted staffing to operate the temporary Safe Camp [\$102,780.83 for initial three month term, \$34,260.28 per month for subsequent months]; authorize the Purchasing and Contracts Manager to execute the agreement. Item supports the development of a safe camping location to improve water quality along the Truckee River and expand capacity for those experiencing homelessness.*