City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:19-5673

Agenda Item Number:

Agenda Date: 8/7/2019

In Control: City Council B Session

DEPARTMENT: Human Services

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Melody Woosley

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

City of San Antonio Migrant Resource Center Update

SUMMARY:

This item provides an update on the City of San Antonio's Human Services Department Migrant Resource Center and associated services. The resource center, open daily from 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m., is located at 400 N. St. Mary's, across from the Greyhound bus station and is managed by the Department of Human Services with support from city staff and community volunteers. From March 30, 2019 - July 30, 2019, the Migrant Resource Center served 27,835 migrants.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The City of San Antonio opened a Migrant Resource Center on March 30, 2019 to provide needed services to an increased number of migrants traveling through San Antonio. It is operated by the City of San Antonio's Human Services Department, in close coordination with Catholic Charities, San Antonio Food Bank, Interfaith Welcome Coalition, Travis Park Church and other nonprofits and community volunteers.

Since opening, the number of migrants arriving each day in San Antonio has varied from approximately 200 to 450. The vast majority are families with children from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala who have requested asylum in the United States. Some migrants have arrived from other countries, including significant numbers from Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Haiti. Asylum seekers are arriving in San Antonio following brief detainment in Federal facilities and are legally allowed to travel within the United States.

Together with nonprofit partners, the City provides this compassionate layover to asylum seekers so that they can safely arrive at their designated locations for court appearances. At the center, migrants receive help with travel arrangements and tickets to their final destinations, hot meals and snacks, medical services, books, activities for children, toiletries, and diapers while they wait hours and sometimes days for their travel. Families who need to spend the night waiting for their travel departures are provided with overnight shelter at the nearby Travis Park Church.

ISSUE:

Since March 30, 2019, the Migrant Resource Center has served nearly 30,000 migrants as they travel through San Antonio with nearly 19,000 receiving overnight sheltering. It is anticipated that this number will continue to grow for the foreseeable future. Since opening, more than 1,100 City employees have spent time assisting the efforts during their normal working hours or on a volunteer basis. As of the end of July, City employees have worked over 19,000 hours to help.

The assistance provided through the City and nonprofit partners is typically provided by the Federal government upon release, and Federal reimbursement will be sought for this effort. In early July, Congress authorized $30 million in reimbursement funds available to local governments and nonprofits that have assisted asylum seekers in transit this year. Staff is working with Congressional representatives and the local United Way to seek the maximum allowable reimbursement to the City and nonprofit partners. Funds are expected to be distributed in August.

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Funding of $141,000 from the General Fund contingency, authorized by City Council on May 16, 2019, was distributed to Catholic Charities and the San Antonio Food Bank to continue to allow them to provide meals, toiletries, travel assistance, and other support to migrants, while minimizing the impact to the support these agencies provide to permanent residents of San Antonio.

Direct expenditures by the City total $239,331 (including $141,000 allocated by City Council at mid-year) as of July 12, 2019. This does not include the cost of City staff either volunteering or being deployed to the response.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for briefing purposes only.