

RESOLUTION NO. 20150618-084

WHEREAS, 3,754 individuals in 2013 and 3,032 individuals in 2014 were arrested for public intoxication and booked at the Travis County Jail; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Police Department arrested the majority of the individuals charged with public intoxication, which required substantial officer time; and

WHEREAS, the Travis County Sheriff's Office housed these individuals at a cost of \$96.71 per day in jail in 2013, and the estimated total cost for 3,032 public intoxication bookings in 2014 is between \$166,760 and \$294,104; and

WHEREAS, the Seton Healthcare Family estimates that there were approximately \$1.1 million to \$2.6 million in direct costs associated with individuals hospitalized who would have qualified for a sobering center; and

WHEREAS, considering the impact of chronic inebriation on public resources as well as individual health, cities around the country such as San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, San Antonio and Houston have recognized the benefit of providing sobering health care services to intoxicated individuals in sobriety centers; and

WHEREAS, since 2000 health professionals and other leaders have shared a long-standing community goal to create a sobriety center in Austin; and

WHEREAS, in 2000 the City Council approved a resolution directing the City Manager and staff to plan for hiring and training staff to operate a class "C" offender

booking facility or a sobriety center and plan a CIP for facilities that could house Police, Municipal Court, and a Sobriety Center; and

WHEREAS, in 2002 stakeholders worked over a period of six months to create an analysis entitled, “Sobering-Up Station Feasibility Study”; and

WHEREAS, in March 2009 the Travis County Justice and Public Safety Department was selected to participate in the national Justice Reinvestment at the Local Level (JRL) initiative to develop recommendations to reduce jail populations and reinvest the savings into more proactive public safety measures; and

WHEREAS, the top recommendation resulting from the process was to implement a Sobriety Center, however funding was not available for this initiative; and

WHEREAS, the Behavioral Health Advisory Committee under Chair Judge Nancy Hohengarten pursued ongoing efforts to create an Austin-Travis County Sobriety Center; and

WHEREAS, on March 20, 2014, the City Council passed Resolution No. 20140320-051, directing the City Manager to work with the Travis County Justice and Public Safety Division, the Travis County Sheriff’s Office, the Travis County Criminal Courts and Prosecution, the Seton Healthcare Family, the Psychiatric Services Stakeholder work group, and other community members to develop an implementation plan and funding strategies for a sobriety center; and

WHEREAS, Travis County Commissioners Court passed a similar resolution on March 11, 2014; and

WHEREAS, the Austin/Travis County Sobriety Center Planning Committee, comprised of the stakeholders noted above, has met monthly since March of 2014 to review successful models, analyze data, assess costs and savings, and identify decision points; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Committee conducted research on other sobriety centers around the country to identify benchmark criteria, including information important for the evaluation of potential sites for a local sobriety center as well as the minimum bed capacity and square footage; and

WHEREAS, the stated mission of the Austin-Travis County Sobriety Center is to enhance public health and public safety by providing an alternative to the emergency room and jail for publicly intoxicated individuals to sober up and, where appropriate, to provide a safe environment to initiate recovery; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Committee analyzed the costs associated with arrests, bookings, jail time, ambulance transport, and emergency care for public intoxicants and concluded that serving certain individuals in a non-emergency setting would be more cost-effective than arresting and jailing these individuals and would increase sworn officers' time and the availability of care for people who truly need emergency services; and

WHEREAS, on April 27, 2015, the Planning Committee issued the Sobriety Center Implementation Report, summarizing its findings and recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the Committee recommended that a sobering center's primary function be to provide a safe, monitored environment for intoxicated individuals to sober up, as well as to motivate hazardous substance users to seek recovery-oriented community resources and sustain long-term recovery; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Committee urged the City Council to work with the Travis County Commissioners Court "to take immediate steps toward implementing a sobriety center as a strategy to improve public safety, to reduce costs to the community, and to appropriately treat people with alcohol and substance use disorders"; and

WHEREAS, at the May 4th, 2015 meeting of the Health and Human Services Committee of the Council, the Committee voted 4-0 to recommend that the City Manager work with Travis County and other relevant parties to determine a location and develop a governing structure and funding plan for a Sobriety Center based on the report; and

WHEREAS, as identified by the Planning Committee, the City of Austin will need to work with its partners to craft a proposed system of governance, identify and review potential sites, and determine a fiscal plan; **NOW, THEREFORE**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Council regards the creation of a sobriety center as a city and community priority and commits to supporting and advancing this effort with all deliberate speed;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

An Austin-Travis County Intergovernmental Working Group is created, composed of three City Council Members and two Travis County Commissioners to work with other relevant parties and the City Manager to develop recommendations regarding a location for a potential sobriety center, a governing structure or inter-local agreement for the relevant entities and a funding plan for a Sobriety Center based on the model recommended in the Sobriety Center Implementation Report.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The appointments to this body shall be Mayor Pro Tem Kathyrene Tovo, Council Member Greg Casar, and Council Member Anne Kitchen, and that the City Manager is directed to provide the necessary resources to support the work of the Intergovernmental Working Group.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

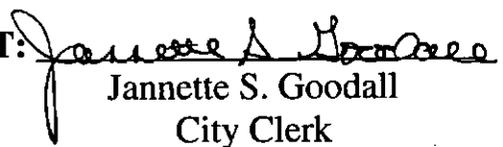
The Intergovernmental Working Group will provide its recommendations to the Council no later than August 31, 2015.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to return to Council by July 30, 2015, for consideration of funding to be incorporated in the FY 2016 budget sufficient to advance

progress toward establishing a sobriety center and to return with a mid-year 2016 budget amendment if necessary.

ADOPTED: June 18, 2015

ATTEST: 
Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk