

**MEMORANDUM**

November 3, 2021

TO: Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: **Emergency Homeless Shelter System**

PURPOSE: Update and Discussion

**Expected for this session:**

Dr. Raymond Crowel, Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)  
David Dise, Director, Department of General Services (DGS)  
Amanda Harris, Chief, Services to End and Prevent Homelessness (DHHS)  
Greg Ossont, Deputy Director, DGS  
Susie Sinclair-Smith, Chief Executive Officer, Montgomery County Coalition  
for the Homeless (MCCH)  
Jennifer Schiller, Chief Programs Officer, MCCH  
Courtney Hall, Chief Executive Officer, Interfaith Works (IW)  
Christine Hong, Director of Homeless Services, IW

**Background**

At this session, the Committee will receive a progress report on the renovation of the building on Nebel Street that will serve as the new men's homeless shelter and the plans for the emergency homeless shelter **system** after the Nebel Street shelter opens in January 2022.

In addition to receiving updates from DHHS and DGS, the County's provider partners, MCCH and IW, will also provide comments to the Committee and participate in the discussion.

The County's emergency shelter system has faced two major issues during the last two- and one-half years. First, in the spring of 2019, the men's shelter that had been located on Gude Drive was relocated after vibrations from the landfill next to the shelter resulted in clients and staff becoming ill. The County was able to work with the City of Rockville to lease 6 Taft Court as a temporary relocation site. The County has made improvements to both the landfill equipment

and certain components of the Gude building, but it was also determined that the shelter should be permanently relocated. The expectation was that an expanded Crabbs Branch shelter would serve as the permanent men’s shelter once renovations, including the addition of a “Sprung Building” were complete.

In spring of 2020, the COVID pandemic drastically altered the capacity of all emergency homeless shelter facilities. The CDC issued guidelines that call for distancing in sleeping areas, generally calling for six feet of distance between beds and people’s heads or the use of barriers to prevent the spread of the COVID virus. These CDC recommendations continue.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the pandemic, shelters often had bunk beds or cots that were spaced closely together. The table below shows the changes in capacity under COVID protocols. Because there is a need for additional capacity to address the public health, the Long Branch Recreation Center and Coffield Recreation Center continue to serve as emergency shelters.

**Montgomery County Emergency Shelter Capacity for Adults without Children**

Facility	Population Male/Female	Pre COVID Capacity	COVID Capacity	Temporary?	Change Pre-COVID to COVID Capacity
Crabbs Branch	Male	100	38	No	(62)
6 Taft Court	Male	100	60	Yes	(40)
2 Taft Court	Female	70	28	No	(42)
Rainbow	Female	28	12	Winter	(16)
Progress Place	Male and Female	80	30	No	(50)
Long Branch Rec Center	Male	0	80	Yes	80
Coffield Rec Center	Female	0	50	Yes	50
Hotels*	Male and Female	0	100	Yes	100
ALL Facilities		378	398		20

*\*Hotels are used for special situations such as the need for quarantine or prevention for high-risk persons during COVID and for surge beyond capacity.*

Lastly, the Executive recommended and the Council approved a policy change that the County will not return to a shelter system with reduced capacity in the warm months and the opening of winter overflow shelters.

**The policy of Montgomery County is that homelessness should be rare, brief, and non-recurring.** Throughout the pandemic, DHHS and the partners in the Continuum of Care have continued to move people to permanent housing, but there will continue to be a need for emergency shelter. The excerpt from the Pulse Report for October 27, 2021 at ©1 shows the average daily count by week for the shelters.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/plan-prepare-respond.html>

## **Progress Report on Nebel Street Shelter**

The Council first approved funding for this project (\$1 million) on December 8, 2020.<sup>2</sup> This authorized the County to move forward with the purchase of a building or buildings in order to meet current need and future projections for emergency shelter space. A single building was identified with sufficient space. On April 20, 2021, the Council approved an additional \$13.647 million for the design and construction of the renovations to move forward on a timeline that will have the facility occupied in January 2022.<sup>3</sup> The Department of General Services has created a project page on its website to monitor the progress of this project. It shows the construction end date as December 31, 2021.

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DGS-BDC/BCC/602103.html>

The description includes the following:

Montgomery County Department of General Services (DGS) purchased a two-story building located at 11600 Nebel Street in North Bethesda to provide congregation, meals, and medical and case management services.

The two-story 30,000 square foot building will be renovated and changed from Commercial Office Use to a Homeless Shelter with 200 beds Sleeping areas, Bathing, Eating, Computer, and Administrative Space.

This facility will ensure that a full complement of homeless services is available to the men seeking emergency shelter in Montgomery County.

The new renovation will provide a complete HVAC/Electrical Systems and Domestic Water will be upsized to meet the new demand for the Portable water and Fire Sprinklers. New elevator will be installed to accommodate the vertical transportation for the new building.

### **Additional request for funding (received October 29, 2021)**

The second item on the Committee's agenda is a worksession on the CIP amendment and special appropriation of \$2,455,000 for this project. As the project has moved quickly, the other funding actions were not able to take into account certain costs that were not fully known or not expected, the most significant being the need for roof replacement. There will be additional work after the opening for things such as energy sustainability, landscaping, signage that cannot occur prior to the January occupancy.

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<sup>2</sup>

[https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2020/20201208/20201208\\_2M.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2020/20201208/20201208_2M.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2021/20210420/20210420\\_60.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2021/20210420/20210420_60.pdf)

# SHELTER RESIDENTS: AVERAGE DAILY COUNT BY WEEK

