**WEEKLY INFORMATION PACKET**
**MEMORANDUM**

To: Mayor Appelbaum and City Council

From: Karen Rahn, Interim Director, Department of Housing & Human Services (HHS)
Richard Johnson, Manager, Division of Community Services, HHS
Robert Ray, Manager, Division of Housing, HHS

Date: March 25, 2009

Subject: **Information Item: Update on HHS Response to Homelessness**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

There are increasing concerns about the impact of the national recession on Boulder and surrounding areas, and a possible increase in homelessness in the community as a result of the downturn in the local economy. While there are no current data on the homeless population as a whole that document such a connection, anecdotal reports from agencies serving the homeless population indicate that an increase may in fact be occurring.

This memorandum provides council with an update on what is known about homelessness in the city of Boulder at present and provides council with information about support the Department of Housing and Human Services (HHS) is currently providing to this population and those who are at risk of homelessness. The memo also outlines the progress of regional efforts to address this issue and presents the next steps that HHS staff plans to take in addressing homelessness.

In summary, current data do not support the notion that Boulder's homeless population is increasing significantly. Nonetheless, it stands to reason that an increase will occur if the current recession continues, and some significant data point to the possibility that the numbers of people at risk for homelessness may be increasing. The department's role in combating homelessness consists of: (1) providing support to the non-profit sector for both capital and operating expenses and (2) collaborating with other governmental agencies, funders and non-profit organizations to develop a coordinated response. Currently, HHS allocates $299,155 to non-profit agencies in the community to provide operating expenses to non-profit organizations that provide shelter or immediate services to the homeless population or to prevent those at risk of homelessness from losing their homes. Additional funding is provided who serve Boulder's homeless population with medical and mental health care. On the capital funding side, the department has provided $2,792,368 in support of construction and maintenance of facilities to house the homeless and the non-profits that support them since 2001.

Clearly, this issue is not confined to the city of Boulder; more than many issues, addressing homelessness requires a regional approach. Homelessness in Boulder is influenced not only by national and regional economic trends, but, because of the often transient nature of

homelessness, also by those beyond the city limits who are currently homeless and those at risk of homelessness. The Department of Housing and Human Services is working with other city departments, county agencies, non-profit organizations and the public to develop a regional response to this issue. It's possible that federal stimulus money will be available in the near future to address homelessness on a regional basis.

## FISCAL IMPACT:

Support of non-profit organizations addressing homelessness is contained within the existing 2009 HHS budget. For the future, if council determines that additional resources are necessary to support this population, this could be accommodated within the existing budgets of HHS for the Human Services Fund and the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), but without additional resources, only at the expense of other programs deemed a priority of council.

The federal stimulus package includes approximately $1.5 billion for homelessness prevention-related projects (not emergency shelter beds). This money will be distributed among states by formula; Colorado is slated to receive approximately $8.9 million. HHS is working with Boulder County, Longmont and non-profit organizations to secure some of these dollars for efforts within the county.

## COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENTS AND IMPACTS:

- Economic: Homeless people in public spaces may discourage potential shoppers from patronizing stores in business districts by creating a perceived unwelcoming or intimidating environment, thus reducing sales. Homeless individuals may use more expensive health care services – such as those at the hospital emergency room – due to the lack of less costly, primary care and early intervention services available for those without insurance, increasing public costs for health care. During economic downturns more families and individuals are at risk of becoming homeless, placing greater demand on non-profits and public entities. Other economic impacts to the city of an increasing homeless population may include increased costs for processing municipal court violations and police responding to disturbance calls.

- Environmental: No known impact.

- Social: Individuals and families who are trapped in homelessness are greatly impacted, regardless of the reasons for their homelessness. The longer one remains homeless, the more difficult it is to become self-sufficient as opportunities and even belief in oneself diminish. Without the stability of a home it is more difficult to obtain and maintain other basic necessities of life and avoid more costly emergency medical care, drug and alcohol treatment, and mental health intervention. Addressing homelessness in a comprehensive and coordinated manner will help move many homeless individuals and families into more stable daily living. Stability enables greater self-sufficiency and assists people to become more

civically engaged members of the community who contribute tax revenue instead of requiring it to meet their basic needs.

**BACKGROUND:**

Boulder's homeless population is a diverse group. Reasons for homelessness vary from unemployment and the high cost of housing to mental illness, drug or alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and even choice as a temporary – sometimes permanent – way of life.

According to the most recent survey of homeless people in Boulder County, in January 2007 the largest proportion of homeless people in the county were adults (age 26-64) at 74%, but young adults (age 18-25) composed nearly 15% of the total. Sixty-one percent were male; 37% female (2% data not captured), and 14% had served in the military. Nearly 6 in 10 homeless persons identified as white; 29% as Latino or Hispanic, and 8% as mixed race. Thirty-one percent were either a single parent or a couple with children. Twenty-four percent self-reported that they have a serious mental illness, while 18% reported a serious medical or physical condition and 21% reported alcohol or drug abuse. Nearly a third (30%) reported the reason for their homelessness was that they lost their job and couldn't find work, and 18% reported they were homeless because wages were too low.

The city's commitment in providing emergency adult shelter dates back to 1979 with the establishment of Boulder County Safehouse to provide emergency shelter to victims of domestic violence.. Shortly thereafter, in 1982, the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless was established, in part with a grant from the city's Community Development Block Grant funds. Attention Homes was founded earlier, in 1966, to house homeless and runaway youth and the community's support to help prevent homelessness dates even further back, to 1918, with the founding of Emergency Family Assistance Association. Support has spread to other organizations that address family and individual needs such as Community Food Share, Carriage House Community Table and various programs that provide other necessities to families and individuals in need.

This season has seen an apparent increase in the number of homeless persons in highly visible areas of the city, particularly on the Pearl Street mall and along Boulder Creek in the vicinity of the municipal campus. The Boulder Public Library reports an increase in apparently homeless persons seeking day shelter in the main library and people along the creek near the library. This may be due to an increase in homelessness, but may also be attributed to migration from Eben Fine Park, further upstream, which has recently seen a decrease in the number of apparently homeless individuals using the park as a gathering place.

Totally reliable data documenting the number of homeless people and their demographics is non-existent. HHS believes the most accurate data available are those collected by the Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative. At the last data collection in January 2007, there were 743 homeless people living in Boulder County, 377 of whom spent the previous night in the city of Boulder. Data collected in January 2009 will not be available until April.

## ANALYSIS:

### *Current Extent of Homelessness in Boulder*

In advance of the data to be released later this spring by the Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative (the January 2009 Point in Time Survey of Homelessness), the best information the department has on the current homelessness situation is the annual reports of non-profit agencies to the city's Human Services Fund (HSF) and conversations with agency directors over the past week. Coupled with data from Boulder County which can perhaps serve as advance indicators of homelessness, this may give the truest picture at this time.

The Boulder Shelter for the Homeless operates at capacity for most of winter sheltering nights, but has seen no significant increase in those seeking shelter since the start of the recession. The Shelter's Boulder County Cares program, which provides life-saving supplies (e.g., blankets, clothes) to homeless people not staying at the shelter during the winter months, served a 27% increase in people (587 to 746) in 2008 over 2007, which may be due to an increased number of homeless people, or may be due to increased outreach and word-of-mouth about available services or the difficulty in obtaining unduplicated data with this population. The Shelter has reported it is seeing higher functioning individuals coming to its doors for services, perhaps due to the recession and higher unemployment in the area.

Carriage House Community Table estimates approximately 370 homeless persons currently living in Boulder, about the same as in the 2007 Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative survey. Additionally, Carriage House reports its current location is insufficient to feed and house the increase in demand for daytime services that it has experienced over the past couple of years, including time before the current recession. The Emergency Family Assistance Association (EFAA) has experienced an approximate 20% increase in the number of families seeking financial assistance since the start of the recession. Similarly, Community Food Share reports a 20% increase in the need for food assistance from both their member agencies and their direct service programs over the past year. Safehouse reports that the recession has created more obstacles for victims seeking to leave an abusive partner and that requests for transitional housing have increased significantly in the past six months. Attention Homes sheltered approximately the same number of Boulder youth in 2008 as it did in 2007.

In sum, indications from the agencies in Boulder that serve the homeless population have not as yet seen a significant increase in clientele due to the recession, though demand for services aimed to prevent homelessness have increased. Families previously living in owner-occupied housing throughout the county who have lost their residence due to foreclosure have most likely either moved into rental situations (tightening up the rental market) or have "doubled up" with other families on a short-term basis to avoid living in the streets or autos, EFAA speculates.

### *County Indicators of Need*

Though not an actual count of homeless people, an examination of Boulder County statistics on major programs assisting those in need (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Food Stamps, Medicaid) may be indicators of the increasing economic stress on families and individuals which can, in some cases, lead to homelessness. It should be noted that the following figures are county-wide; statistics for the city of Boulder may or may not vary widely from these data.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program (Colorado Works) provides cash assistance to low income families with dependent children. The first two months for 2009 saw a 59% increase in TANF applications over the first two months of 2008. Total appliations for 2008 were up 23% over 2007 applications, while a comparison of 2006 to 2007 applications reveals a 10% reduction over that time period.

Those actually enrolled in TANF during the first two months of 2009 compared to those enrolled during first two months of 2008 shows increases in adults (45%), children (29%) and households (38%). It appears as though a significant increase in applications began to occur in August of 2008, with those actually enolled taking a jump up in October (the number of adults enrolled county-wide for October, November and December 2008 were 135, 138 and 139, respectively, while the 2008 average for the first nine months was 119).

The Food Stamps program assists low-income families and individuals who need assistance purchasing food. The first two months for 2009 saw a 33% increase in food stamp applications over the first two months of 2008. Food stamp applications appear to have jumped beginning in September of last year, with the final four months averaging 554 applications per month while the first eight months of 2008 averaged 442 per month (a 25% increase).

Finally, the Medicaid program provides health care coverage for low income people. Applications for the first two months of 2009 are up 26% over the first two months in 2008. Total applications in 2008 were 22% higher than in 2007.

### *HHS Support of Non-Profit Agencies Addressing Homelessness*

A major function of the Department of Housing and Human Services is to support community non-profit agencies in the provision of human services to Boulder residents. In the case of agencies working to address homelessness, this function is served primarily by the Division of Community Services (CS) for annual *operational* expenses through the Human Services Fund (HSF) and the Division of Housing (DOH), primarily for *capital* needs through the federal Community Development Block Grant, the Affordable Housing Fund and the federal HOME program, as well as occasional assistance with *operational* expenses through HOME.

Following is a brief discussion of the agencies supported by HHS to address homelessness in the city.

Boulder Shelter for the Homeless

The Boulder Shelter for the Homeless provides safe shelter, food, support services and an avenue to self-sufficiency for adult homeless men and women. The shelter is open each night from October through April for up to 160 men and women per night. There is a 90-day limit on the number of nights a person may stay at the shelter. Annually, the Shelter serves more than 1000 men and women, providing 38,000 bed-nights and serves approximately 80,000 hot meals to the homeless population. The number of clients who have spent the night at the Shelter thus far this year is up four percent over 2008. It is important to note that 39% of the individuals who stayed at the Shelter were employed during the time of their stay in 2006, the most recent year for which we have data. Through its Boulder County Cares program the Shelter provides life-saving supplies to those not staying at the Shelter during especially severe weather.

In addition to its primary service of emergency sheltering during the winter months, the Shelter operates transition programs year-round, providing intensive case management for people who are working or looking for employment. Also, the Shelter receives HSF funding in support of the Boulder County Housing First program, which places chronically homeless individuals in permanent housing with supportive services.

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| 2009 operating expenses provided through CS/HSF: | $ 87,294 |
| DOH capital construction assistance provided 2001-2003: | $ 2,007,661 |

Boulder County Advocates for Transitional Housing (BCATH)

The BCATH transitional housing program provides housing units for formerly homeless families and individuals. Residents receive case management and supportive services for up to two years to help them achieve greater self-sufficiency. During 2008, BCATH served 30 Boulder residents, seven of whom (and their families) achieved stable housing by the end of their stay in transitional housing.

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| 2009 operating expenses provided through CS/HSF: | $ 7,500 |
| DOH funds for unit acquisition (2002-2005): | $ 237,707 |

Carriage House Community Table (CHCT)

Carriage House operates a day shelter for the homeless population, providing meals, showers, access to a phone and case management services. In February of this year, CHCT was seeing an average of 137 homeless people per day at its facility, up significantly since November 2008.

CHCT also operates emergency shelter on nights when the temperature is 20 degrees or below and snowing, or below 10 degrees regardless of snowing conditions. Sheltering space – available from 7:00 pm to 7:00 am – is provided by six religious institutions.

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| 2009 operating expenses provided through CS/HSF: | $ 17,257 |
| DOH funds for facility renovation (2005): | $ 40,000 |

Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Non-Violence (SPAN)

Safehouse provides a continuum of services for victims of domestic violence and their families, including emergency shelter and access to transitional housing. A special segment of the potentially homeless population, battered women and their children often have nowhere to turn without the existence of Safehouse. Without access to shelter and services, many women must remain in abusive relationships which put them and their children at risk of serious harm, or may end up on the street or living in vehicles. Hard economic times have been shown to increase the likelihood of domestic violence. During 2008, Safehouse sheltered 161 women and their children, an increase of 33% over the previous year, probably due to a 60% increase in physical capacity from 2007 to 2008.

2009 operating expenses for shelter and transitional services through CS/HSF: $ 60,000
DOH funding for capital improvements (2008): $ 20,000

Attention Homes

Attention Homes provides the only emergency shelter and short-term group home as a licensed child care facility in Boulder County for youth ages 12-18. While at Attention Homes, youth receive support services, including 24-hour supervision, case management, accredited evaluation, recreation and other activities. Because Attention Homes serves a multi-county area, the number of Boulder-resident youth served annually is relatively small: the facility housed eight Boulder youth for a combined total of 248 days in 2008.

2009 operating expenses for shelter and transitional services through CS/HSF: $ 19,604
DOH funding for facility maintenance and repair (2007): $ 12,000

Emergency Family Assistance Association (EFAA)

The Emergency Family Assistance Association provides programs and services to Boulder families to help ensure that needs for basic items such and food and shelter are met. EFAA provides case management services to increase clients' financial stability and self-sufficiency, and financial help with rent or utilities when necessary to keep families from possible eviction. EFAA's shelter program offers seven units of emergency and 10 units of transitional housing for city residents. In 2008, intake interviews increased by five percent, while the actual number of unduplicated households seen decreased by six percent. This suggests that while the number of families needing assistance is not yet increasing, they need to return for assistance more often. On the other hand, families requesting shelter increased by 19% in 2008 over 2007. The agency served 1,974 Boulder households in its basic services program in 2008, and 54 Boulder households in its emergency and transitional shelters.

2009 operating expenses for shelter and basic services through CS/HSF: $ 107,500
DOH funding for facility acquisition and construction, land and rehab (2002-5): $ 475,000

Other Agencies Related to Homelessness

In addition to the agencies listed above, the department also provides funding for organizations that serve Boulder's homeless population, but are unable to provide statistics regarding the specific number of homeless persons they serve, since this population is included in a much wider client base. These include Community Food Share (food to needy families and individuals through human services agencies and direct provision), Clinica/People's Clinic (health services); the Mental Health Center of Boulder County (mental health services); and Dental Aid (dental health care services).

Additional Efforts in Exploratory Stages

In February of this year a new non-profit was incorporated, Boulder Outreach for Homeless Overflow (BOHO), to address what its board sees as gaps in community services for the homeless population.

As reported recently, BOHO is interested in starting a program that would put homeless people to work cleaning up along Boulder Creek in exchange for Eco-passes. City Parks and Recreation Department staff are researching the idea.

Additionally, BOHO has approached the National Guard about using one of the three buildings at its Boulder Amory complex on North Broadway for use as an overflow homeless shelter. Armories in other parts of the country – particularly California – are used for this purpose. The National Guard has concerns about the security of the weapons vehicles and other federal equipment, funding for personnel to guard the facility and liability issues. Additionally, the entire 8.5 acre site was originally reviewed for redevelopment in 2006 as a mixed-use development to include a grocery store, retail space and attached residential units. Use of the area for sheltering would require an amendment to the North Boulder Community Plan.

***Regional Planning Efforts***

The Boulder County Human Services Strategic Plan – developed jointly by Boulder County; the cities of Boulder, Lafayette and Longmont; the United Way; the Community Foundation and the non-profit sector – identifies goals for a more coordinated, county-wide human services funding system and increased collaboration among service providers.

The plan identifies several service goals and strategies related to the needs of homeless people, including:

- provide emergency and transitional housing for individuals who are homeless;
- offer services and resources that help people retain housing;
- provide a safety net of integrated services needed by the most vulnerable residents;
- provide a continuum of options for transportation access;
- increase the availability of low-cost or sliding scale medical care;
- support access to medical care for those who can least afford it; and
- provide services to help people obtain and retain employment.

In addition to these strategies, non-profits are working to improving coordination of services, sharing information and identifying duplication and gaps in services.

Several service providers – including the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless and Carriage House Community Table in Boulder and Project Hope and Our Center in Longmont – have been working together over the last year to identify gaps and potential overlaps in services and how to most effectively meet the broad range of needs of the homeless population. The service providers and their funding agencies, coordinated by Boulder County, are beginning the development of a ten-year plan to address homelessness, consistent with the county-wide Human Services Strategic Plan and the regional HOME Consortium ten-year plan. The planning process for the ten-year plan is anticipated to be underway in mid-2009.

## NEXT STEPS:

Within the next month, the Department of Housing and Human Services plans to convene a meeting of city departments that address various aspects of the homelessness issue – including HHS, the Boulder Police Department, the Boulder Public Library, Downtown and University Hill Management Division and Municipal Court – to access the current impact of homelessness, possible trends underway, and how the city might respond under its current budget.

HHS will continue to work with Boulder County and service providers to develop a regional response plan to address this issue. Additionally, HHS will continue working with Boulder County, Longmont and non-profit organizations to secure some portion of the state allotment of federal stimulus funds for homelessness-related efforts within Boulder County.

On April 8, applications for the city's Human Services Fund for 2010 are due. These funds support community agencies' operations for serving Boulder residents. Once applications are submitted and agencies report on their anticipated needs for the coming year, staff will have a fuller picture of the impact of the recession on Boulder residents and associated human services needs. Staff plans to send city council a WIP in the second quarter once this new data has been analyzed and possible options developed.

Also in the spring, a Technical Review Committee (TRC) will meet to develop HSF allocation recommendations for 2010 and 2011, including programs to address homelessness as well as other human services purposes. The TRC's recommendations for human services allocations are anticipated for delivery to the City Manager in the summer.