

1 [Supporting the Establishment of a Compassionate Alternative Response Team]

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3 **Resolution supporting the establishment of a 24 hours a day / seven days a week**
4 **Compassionate Alternative Response Team (CART) in the City and County of San**
5 **Francisco for a safer and more effective response to homelessness.**
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7 WHEREAS, The roots of our local homelessness crisis can be traced, in part, to federal
8 divestment from the funding of affordable housing, and local municipalities have been left to
9 manage the crisis without the tax base of the federal government; and

10 WHEREAS, In many municipalities, including San Francisco, local police departments
11 have acted by default as the front line response to homelessness; and

12 WHEREAS, Instead of creating and facilitating viable exits from homelessness, a
13 police based response creates a costly revolving door, circulating individuals experiencing
14 homelessness from corner to corner and in and out of the criminal justice system; and

15 WHEREAS, The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USIAC) issued
16 a report in August of 2015 outlining best practices for addressing homelessness entitled
17 "Ending Homelessness for People Living in Encampments: Advancing the Dialogue," which
18 includes guidelines on how to address homelessness and puts forward that linking unhoused
19 people to an appropriate level of housing is the only lasting solution; and

20 WHEREAS, The 2019 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey found 8,035
21 unhoused individuals with 5,180 unsheltered and 2,855 accessing some form of shelter; and

22 WHEREAS, The number of individuals experiencing homelessness in San Francisco
23 far exceeds the number of available temporary shelter beds and transitional or permanent
24 housing; and
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1 WHEREAS, The City and County of San Francisco received more than \$44 million in
2 federal McKinney-Vento funding for projects addressing homelessness last year, and the
3 Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has created funding incentives for
4 communities to ensure that persons experiencing homelessness are not deemed criminals
5 because of their use of public space for survival; and

6 WHEREAS, The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals rejected an en banc petition by the City
7 of Boise in Martin v. Boise (formerly Bell v. Boise), upholding its September 2018 ruling that
8 homeless persons may not be punished for sleeping outside on public property in the absence
9 of adequate alternatives; and

10 WHEREAS, The number of police officers devoted to responding to homelessness has
11 increased from 24 in 2017 to over 80 in 2019, and on average, the San Francisco Police
12 Department (SFPD) responds to 179 homelessness-related incidents daily, or 1,253 per
13 week; and

14 WHEREAS, According to San Francisco's Department of Emergency Management
15 (DEM) data, SFPD was dispatched to 65,333 homelessness-related calls in 2019; and

16 WHEREAS, When calls are made to the city expressing concern for unhoused people,
17 SFPD remains the primary agency dispatched in response; and

18 WHEREAS, A report issued by the Budget and Legislative Analyst's Office (BLA) in
19 May 2016 found that police officers dispatched to incidents related to quality of life laws
20 produced limited results given the increase in homelessness on the streets; the BLA
21 subsequently recommended that the Board of Supervisors should implement a new strategy
22 to address these issues that shifts response to quality of life incidents away from the Police
23 Department to other City agencies including the Department of Homelessness and Supportive
24 Housing; and

1 WHEREAS, Currently, San Franciscans are advised to call the Police Non-Emergency
2 line for homelessness-related concerns such as encampments blocking the sidewalk or to
3 contact 311 for concerns about social distancing compliance in encampments; and

4 WHEREAS, In recent years San Francisco has relied more heavily on 311 to address
5 homeless encampments, which has led to a sharp increase in encampments being “removed”
6 or moved rather than the unhoused being supported with placements or services; and

7 WHEREAS, Alternative models such as Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets
8 or “CAHOOTS,” a mobile crisis intervention response and support team located in Eugene,
9 Oregon in which health workers, instead of police, act as first responders, already provide a
10 framework for an alternative to police response to homelessness; and

11 WHEREAS, In January 2020, the San Francisco Police Commission adopted a
12 Resolution urging the creation of a stakeholder group that would make recommendations to
13 the Board of Supervisors, Mayor’s Office, and appropriate commissions on how to transform
14 our response to homelessness from one led by law enforcement into one led by trained health
15 and human services workers based on exploring alternatives to a police response that exist in
16 the United States and other countries; and

17 WHEREAS, The Police Commission further urged that the stakeholder group would
18 identify funding sources, appropriate dispatch protocol, necessary system changes and
19 appropriate service model to move from a police response to a more effective health and
20 human services response to homelessness; and

21 WHEREAS, San Francisco is already exploring alternatives to police response to
22 psychiatric crisis in public spaces by establishing the Street Crisis Response Team (SCRT);
23 the program provides rapid, trauma-informed response to calls for service for people
24 experiencing psychiatric crisis in public spaces in order to reduce law enforcement encounters
25 and unnecessary emergency room use; the program has already successfully diverted more

1 than 79 calls for service from SFPD during its pilot period and demonstrated that utilizing a
2 service-based interdisciplinary team in response to street crisis is a powerful and effective
3 model; and

4 WHEREAS, The city's newly created SCRT by design and plan does not respond to
5 dispatch radio codes 910 (check on well being), 915 (homeless encampment), 916
6 (suspicious person in a vehicle), 917 (suspicious person), 919 (sit/lie ordinance violations),
7 and 920 (aggressive panhandling) leaving no current alternative other than a police response;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, The Compassionate Alternative Response Team (CART) proposal
10 provides a framework for CART to respond to C-Priority Calls involving unhoused people in
11 the City, on the street, or in temporary shelters including dispatch radio codes 800 (mentally
12 disturbed person) that SCRT does not have capacity to respond to, 801 (person attempting
13 suicide), 910 (check on well being), 915 (homeless encampment), 916 (suspicious person in a
14 vehicle), 917 (suspicious person), 919 (sit/Lie ordinance violations), and 920 (aggressive
15 panhandling) 24 hours a day 7 days a week ; and

16 WHEREAS, The CART model is made up of two components, the first being CART
17 Dispatch Response, which provides a specialized police-alternative to calls involving
18 unhoused people in crisis; CART Dispatch Response also establishes a new hotline for CART
19 and create a CART specific dispatch code; and

20 WHEREAS, The second component of CART, the Street Response, would serve,
21 engage, and problem solve with housed San Franciscans and businesses around
22 homelessness; and

23 WHEREAS, CART, being informed by a recent survey of homeless in San Francisco,
24 would hire Crisis Response Staff as well as Community Engagement Staff distinguishable
25 from law enforcement with backgrounds and lived experiences with homelessness, poverty,

1 crisis response, and the provision of services, and would seek to hire response staff that
2 match the racial and LGBTQ demographics of the unhoused clients being served; and

3 WHEREAS, CART would be funded and staffed 24 hours a day / 7 days a week; and

4 WHEREAS, The two-prong scope of the CART program will divert a significant number
5 of homelessness-related calls away from SFPD, while building capacity within San
6 Francisco's neighborhoods to de-escalate and compassionately resolve homelessness-
7 related conflicts, thereby reducing the total number of homelessness-related calls made to
8 dispatch, reducing police interactions with those experiencing homelessness, and improving
9 outcomes for those on the streets; and

10 WHEREAS, The CART response focuses on the well-being of the unhoused, an
11 approach that is foundational to the CAHOOTS model, and will affirm the civil rights of those
12 experiencing homelessness, as well as problem-solve issues faced by the housed and by
13 businesses; and

14 WHEREAS, It is recommended that CART be funded by a diversion of funds from
15 various carceral system budgets, which could be achieved by cost-savings associated with
16 implementing a non-police response; the BLA estimates that the City currently spends \$18.5
17 million on police responses to homelessness, the CART model would replace these services
18 at an estimated cost of \$6.8 million, which would provide the city with a projected \$11 million
19 cost savings; now, therefore, be it

20 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors concurs with the Police Commission's
21 recommendation that the City must transform our response to street homelessness from one
22 led by law enforcement into one led by trained health and human services workers; and, be it

23 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors supports the framework of the
24 Compassionate Alternative Response Team that dramatically expands the City's capacity to
25 respond to street homelessness through revising dispatch response; and, be it

1 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the Mayor to include
2 additional funding for homeless outreach.

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