



TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Milton Dohoney Jr., City Administrator

CC: Karen Field, Supportive Connections Program Director
John Fournier, Deputy City Administrator
Mike Kennedy, Fire Chief
Aimee Metzger, Interim Police Chief
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SUBJECT: Unarmed Crisis Response Program

DATE: June 12, 2023

Background:

City Council has taken several actions over the past year to express support for the development of an Unarmed Response (UR) plan. The intent of this initiative is to provide an alternative option for the community to access when needing to seek a public safety related intervention. Rather than having police be the default, and sole response option for those needing assistance, the existence of UR enables a trained civilian response. City Council approved Resolution [R-21-129](#) Directing the City Administrator to Develop an Unarmed Public Safety Response Program on April 5, 2021. Responsive to City Council's request, [staff prepared an interim report on unarmed policy response](#), which was provided to City Council on December 21, 2021. This memo detailed staff research and understanding of the issues and proposed a path forward for building and implementing an unarmed response program in Ann Arbor.

Prior City Council action via Resolution [R-22-096](#) appropriated \$3.5M of ARPA funds to support the establishment of the program. With the passage of the FY23 budget, City Council also appropriated \$250,000 from the Marijuana Excise Tax Fund to support the program. A subsequent appropriation request was inserted in the FY24 proposed budget and was approved on May 15, 2023.

Staff was charged with the responsibility to implement a community engagement process using an outside consultant. That process was conducted by Public Sector Consultants (PSC), a Lansing-based, nonpartisan research and consulting public policy firm. The engagement methodology included one on one interviews, group discussions, a community survey, and public forums to help gather input from community members about how to develop and implement this program. City administration provided a [report](#) with the results of this engagement to City Council on May 1, 2023. This report confirmed that there is broad conceptual support from the community for a UR program. There is some variation on how the program should actually be implemented. Staff do not view this as either good or concerning, merely a natural reaction to a new initiative.



Discussion of Concept:

To ensure there is a level understanding of the potential UR elements needing consideration, they are outlined below.

One of the areas of discussion during the community engagement process involves the program's relationship with the City in general and specifically the Ann Arbor Police Department (AAPD). Many participants preferred that there be no connection with the police department, while others felt that some interaction is both inevitable, and advisable. Staff believes that for the program to have its best chance for broad community acceptance there should be no straight or dotted line reporting relationship to AAPD.

There is no natural place within the City organization for the program to reside other than the City Administrator's Office. There is no service area that provides a compatible pairing. A staff person will need to be added to the City Administrator's Office to provide the appropriate connectivity and direction to the program. It is not feasible to have the program positioned as a direct report to the City Administrator or Deputy City Administrator.

The City will enter into a contractual relationship with a third party, or multiple third parties, to implement UR. They will negotiate with the City regarding the array of services they propose to offer. It is imperative that a realistic expectation level be established at the outset, and that we all understand that this program will have to be built over time for it to be a success. We will not succeed if the expectation is that a fully formed and operational program will be turned on from day one.

The UR program should be available to Ann Arbor residents or those unhoused who are within the Ann Arbor city limits. The program is not to be implemented beyond the city boundaries. A resident seeking to access the service would contact the contractor through a designated number. 911 would have to be amenable to transferring calls to the unarmed response program when requested by callers and when appropriate, though this option will not be available at the outset.

The core of the program will be determined after the City goes through an RFP process and selects a contractor or contractors. The result of making that selection and negotiating an operating agreement will provide basic information the community will need. It will also provide answers to the following questions. What is their base of operations? When a resident calls for service what should they expect will happen? How long will it take UR staff to arrive? How will the public be able to verify a person is a UR staff member? What will they do upon arrival? What information will they request from the resident? Will the program make multiple visits to the same address? What are our measures of success and how will they be reported? The RFP will by necessity be somewhat open ended on these questions, but will ask respondents to provide suitable answers.

The utilization of the UR alternative will be the sole choice of the resident seeking assistance. UR staff will have no authority to enter homes or detain individuals. If a resident wants an



AAPD response, they are entitled to receive it. Given the deliberate program design, there should be no co-response expectation. However, there should be an intentional relationship built with the Ann Arbor Fire Department (AAFD) and Huron Valley Ambulance (HVA). In trying to diffuse an emotionally charged situation it is conceivable that a resident might experience some level of medical distress. It is further anticipated that the UR program will have a natural relationship with Supportive Connections, the Director of Organizational Equity, and the Independent Community Police Oversight Commission (ICPOC) (albeit oversight of the program will flow through the City Administrator's Office rather than another employee or commission).

The City and the contractor must work in partnership to educate the public regarding the array of services offered. It is also important to be transparent about the types of calls UR will not be dispatched to address. Given that the City cannot escape liability for the service delivery, it is imperative to inform the public on the limitations of the program. Those include not dispatching for:

- Domestic violence.
- Incidents where someone has been shot.
- Incidents where a weapon has been displayed or implied.
- Incidents where a person is being held against their will.
- Incidents where a structure or property within the structure has been set on fire.
- Incidents involving an immediate threat to life or property.
- Incidents involving the unlawful presence of a person on the premises.

There are two areas that need careful consideration. First, establishing an acceptable definition of what success looks like. It is essential that there be an alignment between the City of Ann Arbor and the contractor. The selected contractor must be amenable to direction and feedback from City leadership in the administration of the program. Second, the development of the fiscal relationship between the parties. There could be grant opportunities to support the program. Some may be attainable only by the City, while others may require a collaborative effort. The selected contractor must be amenable to working collaboratively for this purpose.

To maximize transparency the contractor must be committed to both quantitative and qualitative reporting. The frequency and transparent nature of the reporting will be pivotal in building an expansive comfort level with both stakeholders and questioning residents. In order to be effective, the contractor needs to have a self-contained system for receiving complaints and resolving them. Even so, it should be expected that any issues the public has with the program that are not satisfactorily resolved, will be directed back to the City. This is an additional reason that the program may be assigned as a primary part of an employee's portfolio.

Recommendation:

After considering the operational aspects associated with unarmed response, and fiscal elements that have been put into place, staff is recommending moving forward. The next



step entails the development of an RFP soliciting bid proposals from qualified respondents. Given the unique nature of the work, the City must be open to receiving proposals from organizations who may never have performed this service previously. The UR program will be fully realized through a ramping up process. Its maximum utilization will be built over time. The City should be open to creative negotiations to properly structure the agreement for UR services. The agreement should also include a clause calling for an independent evaluation of its effectiveness.