

May 2, 2020

From Mayor Lyda Krewson (shared from Jacob Long, Director of Communications)

**Background...** normally there are around 530 shelter beds in the city and around 300 in the county. On March 13 a Nationwide Emergency was declared, and on March 27, 2020 CARES Act funding was passed.

Because of Covid19, the existing shelters, who we contract with to provide service, reduced their occupancy to around 300 in order to enable social distancing of their clients and because their staff and volunteers were limited. We understand this action, but it had the result of putting many people out on the street.

The City is normally not a direct service provider, we fund other entities who provide shelter and care. When those agencies could not provide the service, the City had to step in very quickly.

**Action...** Over the past month we have procured locations for 230 beds. We have also hired organizations to operate the housing. Those beds are located in 3 churches, at Sisters Mission, the Western Inn motel, the MarkTwain Hotel, another motel, and at Buder Rec. Our goal was to provide a variety of good, safe, and secure shelter for men, women, and families – and to provide skilled case management to assist individuals to move out of shelter and into more stable living situations/apartments.

**Buder details...** About 2 weeks ago, Alderwoman Ingrassia suggested that the City consider Buder. Rec Centers have been closed because of Covid19 – and the city has previously used Rec Centers as temporary shelters. Last Saturday morning, City directors and contractors visited Buder for the purpose of determining its condition and whether or not it was a viable option for a temporary shelter. They spent much of the weekend assessing what was needed. It was determined that with some renovations it would be suitable for around 30 individuals socially distanced.

This past week contractors and employees have been working at a very fast pace to make the needed repairs – including lighting, plumbing & fixtures, carpentry, painting, and extensive cleaning.

Last Monday, Alderwoman Ingrassia provided an email to GDEN. It was only about 48 hours after the first visit, but I understand that we should have reached out to GDEN earlier. I understand that homeless housing is very concerning to neighbors – even those who are sympathetic to the plight of these individuals.

Buder will be used as a temporary shelter for up to 30 men for the next 60-90 days. There will be supervision, case management, and 24 hour security for the benefit of the individuals and to avoid a negative effect on the neighborhood. There are new bathrooms, a serving kitchen, new lighting, washers & dryers, a tented outdoor area, and a new screened fence.

If there is an upside to all this, the rec center will be nicer and more usable for the kids, once we are able to restart recreation programs in a few months.

I apologize and ask for your understanding. We were moving quickly to fill a serious gap, in the midst of a pandemic. We are seeing individuals from all over the region, the state and from Illinois come to St Louis in the hopes of finding services not offered where they are from. It is challenging - but we should have done better in communicating with you.

Lyda Krewson – Mayor  
Steve Conway – Chief of Staff  
Dr Fred Echols – Health Director