

THE SUN GAZETTE

Goshen apartments include housing for homeless

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Supervisors approve six new units of homeless housing in next phase of Self-Help Enterprises complex in Goshen

TULARE COUNTY – Less than a month after a report designated supportive housing as the highest priority in Tulare County’s effort to reduce homelessness, the Board of Supervisors approved funding for six apartments set aside for homeless housing.

At its Jan. 7 meeting, the board of supervisors approved the issuance of up to \$25 million in bonds to build the second phase of Sequoia Commons, an apartment complex in Goshen being built by Self-Help Enterprises. Aaron Bock, assistant manager for the county’s Resource Management Agency, said the entire 38-acre project, located at the corner of (American Street) and Avenue 312 (Riggin Avenue), was approved for up to 280 multi-family units and 89 single family homes in November 2015. Since the fall of 2016, Self-Help Enterprises has completed 60 apartment units and has nearly completed all of its multi-family units for phase one. The second phase of the apartment complex will include another 60 units, of which six have been set aside as supportive housing for people who are homeless.

“I appreciate Self-Help’s efforts,” board of supervisors chair Pete Vander Poel said. “One of requirements was to set aside six units for homeless housing. The need [for supportive housing] is throughout the county.”

In anticipation of the project, the supervisors approved signal lights at the intersection of Road 76 and Avenue 312 on Dec. 17, 2019.

Money for the project will be generated in tax exempt bonds issued by the California Municipal Finance Authority, a joint powers authority created to assist member counties and cities in California with financing economic development and charitable projects. Tulare County has been a member of the authority since August 2007.

Building more permanent supportive housing was the highest priority outlined in the report “Pathway Home: Responding to Homelessness in Tulare County” presented to the supervisors as well as city councils in Visalia, Tulare and Porterville last month. Conducted by Home Base, a nationally known Bay Area firm with nearly three decades of experience developing plans to address homelessness, the report unequivocally stated that “Permanent housing – and the supports needed to retain and maintain it – is the solution to homelessness.” Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing will provide hundreds more security and vital support to achieve stability. To increase these types of housing, the report recommends establishing a 5-year countywide Housing Development Pipeline, consider repurposing vacant motels and buildings, repurpose vacant homes into bridge housing for adults exiting homelessness, heavily recruit landlords to rent subsidized rooms and expand the county’s landlord mitigation fund.

More affordable housing is needed as rent hikes continue to outpace wage increases by about 7%. More than one-third of all homeless in the county reported the loss of employment or eviction as the primary reasons why they are homeless and that number is growing. In 2015, 1 in 6 people experiencing homelessness indicated housing-related issues as their reason for homelessness (evictions, no affordable housing, foreclosure and/or substandard housing) compared with nearly 1 in 4 less than 5 years later. Only 13% of people experiencing homelessness became homeless because of mental health issues or substance use disorder. It is true that a quarter of those experiencing homelessness are diagnosed with mental illness but most of that is a result of homelessness and not the reason they became homeless. The report can be viewed at <http://bosagendas.co.tulare.ca.us/139526/139555/139780/139863/HHSA-Homelessness%20Report139863.pdf>.