

COMMENTS BY LARRY OLMSTEAD, UNITED WAY PRESIDENT & CEO, BEFORE THE SHASTA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, JULY 26, 2016

Madame Chair, Supervisors and Staff:

Councilwoman Schreder's project has led to development of a comprehensive strategic plan to address issues of homelessness in Redding and Shasta County.

I would like to focus on just one aspect of that plan – the key initial step of funding a strengthened Continuum of Care.

Homelessness is a complex, emotional and at times politically charged issue. But regardless of how one feels about homelessness, our community is required to have a Continuum of Care in order to secure federal dollars vital to addressing the problem. The CoC also provides a valuable forum for collaboration among agencies dealing with this issue.

Since we must have a CoC, we should do whatever we can to ensure it is an effective body. That includes making sure it has the resources to do the job effectively. That's simply good governance. And the importance of this issue demands no less.

Much is controversial about homelessness, but a clear consensus has emerged around at least two points involving CoC:

1. It makes sense to transfer administration of CoC to a non-profit agency, and
2. The role of the individual who serves as CoC coordinator should be funded as a full-time – not part-time – position.

I would urge this Board to act on these points. Clarity around leadership and accountability is essential if we are to gain momentum dealing with other aspects of addressing homelessness in our community.

We are told that the CoC Executive Board has recommended an RFP process for selection of the lead agency for CoC. United Way of Northern California would be interested in submitting an application should an RFP be authorized. We trust that such a process would be conducted fairly, that all applicants would be vetted thoroughly and that the outcome would be acceptable to funding parties. Most important to United Way is not that we in particular fill this role, but that positive action occurs to address this critical issue in our community. We stand ready to help in any way that is useful to the community and the process.

Thank you.