

Costa Mesa settles lawsuit in Orange County Catholic Worker case

The City of Costa Mesa reached a settlement agreement with the plaintiffs in the Orange County Catholic Worker case on Monday March 4, 2019, ending a more than year-long lawsuit that has resulted in the city moving forward with plans for a 50-bed bridge shelter.

“This is a historic day for the City of Costa Mesa,” Mayor Katrina Foley said. “For nearly 20 years I’ve heard residents express concerns about the impacts and lack of shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness in our city. I am extremely proud of my City Council colleagues and the city staff who have worked tirelessly for the last three months to find compassionate solutions for those experiencing homelessness while at the same time making a commitment to improve and restore safety in our communities.”

The settlement, signed by Mayor Foley, was approved by Federal District Judge David Carter, who had given direction to the city to provide 62 shelter beds, which is based on the city’s 2017 Point-in-Time count numbers. Costa Mesa has already satisfied the need for 12 of its 62 required beds by approving an application from College Hospital to operate a 12-bed crisis unit.



Mayor Foley, right, and City Attorney Kim Barlow hold up signed settlement papers.

Additionally, the city has reached an agreement with the Lighthouse Church of the Nazarene to operate a 50-bed temporary bridge shelter on a portion of the property located at 1885 Anaheim Avenue.

The court has also agreed that once those shelter beds are available, the city can offer shelter to individuals experiencing homelessness, and in turn step up enforcement of the city's anti-encampment ordinance. In addition to housing those in need, it is hoped that the City's parks will also be more available to local residents for recreational use.

The city is working toward an early April opening of the

temporary bridge shelter at the Lighthouse.

According to the settlement agreement signed Monday, in addition to providing shelter beds, the city of Costa Mesa will pay \$24,000 in attorney fees to the Elder Law and Disability Rights Center and will make a monetary settlement in the amount of \$7,500 to plaintiff Melissa Fields to use for housing.

Monday's settlement puts to rest any claims against Costa Mesa in the lawsuit filed by the Orange County Catholic Worker and other entities on Jan. 29, 2018. The suit was filed against the City of Costa Mesa and the cities of Anaheim, Orange, Santa Ana and the County of Orange regarding encampments along the Santa Ana River trail. All of these cities have now settled the case. All of those cities have either opened or will open emergency housing shelters.