AGENDA
ITEM

16

AGENDA STAFF REPORT

DATE: October 20, 2021

TO: Mayor and City Council

APPROVED BY: Miguel Figueroa, City Manager MV

PREPARED BY: Miguel Figueroa, City Manager

SUBJECT: Consideration to Approve Proposed Farmworker Service Center in the City of Calexico

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Recommendation (by Councilmembers Raul Urena and Gloria G. Romo):

Discussion to consider approving a Farmworker Service Center in the City of Calexico.

Background:

As of March 2021, Mayor Javier Moreno has provided six (6) presentation updates on a proposed Farmworker Service Center in the City of Calexico. Mayor Moreno presented a proposed plan to address the need to provide shelter and social services for seasonal farmworkers that work an annual basis at different locations in our region. Updates were presented by Mayor Moreno during the following City Council meetings, March 3rd, March 8th, May 5th, May 19th, August 4th, and October 6th.

Discussion:

The update presentations from Mayor Moreno have informed that the proposed Farmworker Service Center will protect the rights and well-being of farmworkers and their families. The resources to develop and sustain the operations and services of the Farmworker Service Center have not been determined at this time.

Attachment:

- Farmworker Service Center Proposal by Mayor Javier Moreno

AGENDA ITEM 16

FARMWORKER SERVICE CENTER PROPOSAL AND ACTION PLAN FOR THE CITY OF CALEXICO AND IMPERIAL VALLEY

CENTRO DEL CAMPESINO
FARMWORKER CENTER

equity | health | shelter opportunity

AUTHORED BY: JAVIER MORENO

FEBRUARY 2021

"From the depth of need and despair, people can work together, can organize themselves to solve their own problems and fill their own needs with dignity and strength." – Cesar Chavez

Contents

1. Executive Summary

The Imperial Valley makes it one of the country's most dynamic migration regions, with thousands of Hispanic farmworkers entering the agricultural labor market each year. There's an estimated 2.4 million hired farmworkers in the US, including migrant, seasonal, year-round, and guest program workers.[1] Approximately 15,000 farmworkers cross the US-Mexico border daily to work in the agricultural fields of Imperial Valley. Imperial Valley is the main source of vegetables and other products of the U.S. food system. Imperial Valley offers 90 percent of the winter vegetables consumed in the U.S. – from lettuce and spinach to broccoli and cauliflower.[2]

For decades, Hispanic farmworkers have traveled for work within the Imperial Valley. The City of Calexico ("the City") has been a conduit allowing farmworkers movement throughout the Imperial Valley. Thousands of farmworkers who live in Mexicali have entered the U.S. legally through the Port of entry in the middle of the night and waited in downtown Calexico for rides to the fields in Imperial Valley. On any given day, for example, about 1,000 Hispanic farmworkers line-up to cross the border for work in the fields, and soon another 8,000 to 10,000 join the line behind them.[3] At the height of the morning rush, at 4:30 a.m., the line extends through an underground tunnel, and back out onto the city streets. By the time they make it across the border, they've been online for three hours. A shorter line at the Port of Entry means a longer wait on a dark street corner in the City is a home to thousands of farmworkers.

The City lacks services or a centralized location for farmworkers, thus many of them are dispersed throughout the city without shelter opportunities. This is far from a new problem. Temporary shelter needs in the City identify that thousands of migrant and seasonal farmworkers lack temporary shelter opportunities and sanitary facilities during the early morning hours is among the most prevailing persistent issue. The City has been experiencing temporary shelter inefficiencies for decades. As a result, the lack of equity has remained an issue.

The protection of the rights and well-being of Hispanic farmworkers and their families is a fundamental concern. In fact, the most important way to ensure that farmworkers families benefit from labor migration is to ensure their human and labor rights of farmworkers are respected. To promote those rights, as part of an action plan process, this proposal identifies some specific needs, barriers, and solutions to the lack of basic services in Calexico. The basis for this plan develops around a collaborative community and stakeholder engagement process to provide temporary shelter opportunities and sanitary facilities to farmworkers; therefore, maximize the benefits of farmworker labor while reducing the risks. This plan provides direction, and the goals and objectives align with this proposal.

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[1] Gabriel Thompson, ed., Chasing the Harvest: Migrant Workers in California Agriculture. New York: Verso, 2017

[2] Farm Labor: Background. Economic Research Service. USDA, May 5, 2028.

[3] Census of Agriculture (2014). US Summary and State Data, Vol., 1. US Department of Agriculture, May 2014.

2. Problem Statement

Imperial Valley offers 90 percent of the winter vegetables consumed in the U.S. – from lettuce and spinach to broccoli and cauliflower. By far the main source of vegetables and other products of the U.S. food system. One third of its vegetables, growers employ one out of three of the nation's farmworkers, exclusively in California by the state's roughly eight hundred thousand Hispanic farmworkers.[4] There's an estimated 2.4 million hired farmworkers in the US, including migrant, seasonal, year-round, and guest program workers.[5] Approximately 15,000 farmworkers cross the US-Mexico border daily to work in the agricultural fields of Imperial Valley.

For decades, thousands of farmworkers who live in Mexicali have entered the U.S. legally through the Port of Entry in the middle of the night and waited in downtown Calexico for rides to the fields in Imperial Valley. On any given day, for example, about 1,000 farmworkers line-up to cross the border for work in the fields, and soon another 8,000 to 10,000 join the line behind them. At the height of the morning rush, at 4:30 a.m., the line extends through an underground tunnel, and back out onto the city streets. By the time they make it across the border, they've been online for three hours. A shorter line at the Port of Entry means a longer wait on a dark street corner in Calexico, is a home to thousands of farmworkers.

The Donut Avenue, a local restaurant where one can buy breakfast and coffee, has become a temporary place for those commuting from Mexicali to Calexico. It offers workers a shelter from the cold, and a few minutes of rest before starting work at sunrise. Though farmworkers commute from Mexicali to the fields of Imperial Valley daily, they will not start until sunrise. But they cross the border in the middle of the night to avoid long lines at the Port of Entry – sometimes half an hour to cross – other times up to four hours. The morning trip to the Imperial Valley fields typically takes seven hours, including a mind-numbing wait to cross the border, plus two more hours returning home.

The City lacks services or a centralized location for farmworkers, thus many of them are dispersed throughout the city without shelter and or sanitary facilities. Farmworker temporary shelter needs in the City identify that thousands of migrant and seasonal farmworkers lack temporary shelter opportunities during the early morning hours is among the most prevailing persistent issue. The City has been experiencing temporary shelter inefficiencies for decades. As a result, the lack of equity has remained an issue. Harsh conditions in the City have created grave hardships for farmworkers; addressing these injustices necessitated a broader undertaking to improve the lives of farmworkers. The purpose and need for action of the Farmworker Service Center, as part of the action plan process, this proposal identifies some specific needs, barriers, and solutions to the lack of farmworker temporary shelter in the City.

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[4] Gabriel Thompson, ed., Chasing the Harvest: Migrant Workers in California Agriculture. New York: Verso, 2017

[5] Farm Labor: Background. Economic Research Service. USDA, May 5, 2028.

3. Description

A migrant farmworker is defined as an individual who is required to be absent from a permanent place of residence for the purpose of seeking remunerated employment in agricultural work.[6] Whereas seasonal farmworkers are individuals who are employed in temporary farm work but do not move from their permanent residence to seek farm work; they may also have other sources of employment. According to the US Department of Agriculture (2017), there is an estimated 2.4 million hired farmworkers in the US, including migrant, seasonal, year-round, and guest program workers.[7]

4. Objective

The Objective of this proposal is to provide support to the farmworkers and their families according to the weaknesses and opportunities identified in the proposal's planning process. The center will improve the lives of thousands of people in the farmworker community, by addressing many of the issues and alternative livelihoods options identified by the City. The center will address identified lack of reliable shelter supply and bathroom facilities, which will be addressed by the stakeholders when center is operational.

The issue of lack of public restrooms was also identified as a high priority. Existing public restrooms have been inoperative due to the lack of resources amid the COVID19 pandemic. To reopen the public restroom facilities is part of this proposal, even if the proposed reopening will contain elements of a new bathroom structure. The center's design establishes a single organization for the development of assistance for farmworkers in the City. The center's strong presence in the farm working community, together with other services to meet the needs of the farmworkers and their families. The center will provide shelter opportunities, other services including referrals, translations, and assistance filling various forms (i.e., medical and work) for better economic and health stability.

The plan will recommend a probable site for the center, federal and state government funding sources to finance building acquisition, and construction. Local government strategies to generate additional financing sources, local land use and/or purchase, and zoning reforms that could expedite and facilitate farmworker social services, and best-practice farmworker developments.

This plan provides direction for temporary shelter, supports, and assists farmworkers workers and their families. To address the identified needs, the following goals and objectives align with the listed objectives.

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[6] Census of Agriculture (2014). US Summary and State Data, Vol., 1. US Department of Agriculture, May 2014.

[7] 2 US Department of Agriculture (2017). Farm Labor: Background. Economic Research Service.

The plan covers three statutory objectives:

1. Providing decent and reasonable temporary shelter,
2. Creates a suitable living environment, and/or
3. Expands on health and economic opportunities

The plan develops around a collaborative community engagement process. Several needs were identified relating to the problems of temporary shelter affordability. To address such needs, the following goals and objectives align with the listed objectives.
Goal 1: Collaborate with local and regional stakeholders on provision of temporary shelter for farmworkers.

- Objective 1.1 – Ensure sustainable investments for temporary shelter
- Objective 1.2 – Support and continue temporary shelter efforts
- Objective 1.3 – Expand temporary shelter choices and ensure access

Goal 2: Enhance the quality of life of Hispanic farmworkers and seasonal farmworker residents of Calexico through sustainability efforts and social service activities.

- Objective 2.1 – Support infrastructure improvements and community efforts
- Objective 2.2 – Prevent temporary shelter discrimination in Calexico
- Objective 2.3 – Expand access to public services to encourage self-sufficiency

Goal 3: Use an all-inclusive strategy to eliminate and prevent lack of temporary shelter.

- Objective 3.1 – Support activities to end deficits in temporary shelter chances
- Objective 3.2 – Collaborate with local stakeholders to share data and resources
- Objective 3.3 – Expand activities that focus on preventing access to services

5. Methodology

The City and stakeholders will meet in mid-February 2021 to actively discuss the goals for the center to include temporary shelter, restrooms, healthcare, education, employment, and literacy. By working closely with the City to carefully assess budget, facility needs and objectives the stakeholders can transform the vison for the par improvement into a reality. This work session will consist of the City and involved stakeholders to review the design vision and discuss the priorities that will drive the design direction. The team must be clear on any decisions, ideas, or planning that is in place so that the team can make fully informed decisions during the development phases of the proposed center before the project is recommended to the City Council. It is crucial to balance the project with the building and other operational costs along with service and equity plans. Good stewardship of the project and process will help maximize planning for the established budget and to meet the programmatic needs established by the team.

Upon discussing goals and objectives for the proposal, the team will develop a detailed schedule to align the project with the City. At the initial meeting, the team will provide:

- The Farmworker Service Center proposal.
- Attendance list of project team members and contact information.

As part of the action plan, the center's design will reflect the spirit of the struggle to bring dignity to the farmworker community. A place to rest before farmworkers take buses to various agricultural fields. Through its *vision* and *mission* as guidelines, this concept satisfies the identified requirements and serves as the cornerstone for addressing present and future needs of farmworkers.

The building will be a service center where activities will take place that will contribute to the development of the farmworker community. Managed by a local project already involved during the development phase, with support from an advisory committee. The center will be a hub for other organizations or service providers that do work related to local agricultural employment, work migration, translation services, medical or health checks, and vocational or financial skills training.

During a second visit, which will be arranged in March 2021, a Local Economic Development Planning exercise will be initiated. The different groups of stakeholders identified, and interviews will be conducted with these groups to collect their input to the plan in terms of identifying the weaknesses the farmworkers are experiencing in their community, what opportunities they see for the future and to create a vision for the future of the community. A meeting will take place to elaborate an overview of the planning process, how it will be presented to the community. Additional site visits will occur to elaborate the details of the proposed center will be conducted in April/May/ and June 2021.

6. Vision and Mission Statements

Vision –

> *Envision a place where all Hispanic farmworkers and their families have the opportunities and resources needed to thrive. A community that welcomes and values the contributions, strengths, and assets of farmworkers.*

Mission –

> *To improve the lives of Hispanic farmworkers and their families through equity, health, and economic opportunity. The farmworkers are the heart of the center and encourage and champion labor.*

7. Collaboration and Coalition Building

To address the identified needs, the center will collaborate with regional public institutions, local private businesses, and local non-profit organizations. The center will work closely with other local organizations, including non-profit organizations working together under one umbrella to build collaborative fostering relationships, plus more shared sense of vision and scale. Because there's an importance of working with other organizations that fight for and uphold the values of dignity and respect for all persons, the center will operate under an intersectional framework where all matters will be interconnected.

8. Public Outreach

The City, in collaboration with the stakeholders, will facilitate public meetings for the design of the center to engage center users and other community members. These meetings will allow to educate the public about the proposed center, its design and process, and to establish open lines of communication. Particularly, provide the public the knowledge so they can provide informed input that will determine the ultimate vision for the center.

9. Health Care Access

Farmworkers may receive coverage under the Affordable Care Act and authorized to have minimal essential coverage. Farmworkers whose annual income is below 138% of the federal poverty line may receive health care through Medicaid; whereas those above 138% may be eligible for subsidized insurance due to their low incomes.[8] Particularly, Hispanic farmworkers are unable to access health insurance due to immigration status, affordability, or exemptions for seasonal work under the employer mandates. Many eligible migrant workers found the enrollment process lengthy and complicated, the application itself a barrier for non-citizen applicants.

Even though community health centers receive funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Migrant Health Center Program, HRSA-funded health centers have served almost a million agricultural workers and their families.[9] The aim of this plan is to implement a collaborative model that links agricultural workers to care and services to reduce healthy disparities and inequities access for Hispanic farmworkers in Imperial Valley.

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[8] Schenker M, McCurdy S et al. (2015). Improving the health of agricultural workers and their families in California Current status and policy recommendations. Retrieved from http://www.ucghi.universityofcalifornia.edu/docs.

[9] Garcia D, Hopewell J, Liebman AK, Mountain K. (2012). The migrant clinicians' network: connecting practice to need and patients to care, 17(1):5-14.

10. The Farmworker Service Center Concept

The stakeholders aspire to be the catalyst that spurs investment in underserved farmworkers and their families and sets the bar for what can be achieved both individually and community wide. The plan is to galvanize an initiative into one long-term effort to build wealth and lasting change in our farmworker community by directing economic investment, fostering a myriad of new initiatives. Cesar Chavez believed community service is the only way to achieve lasting, transformational, positive change.[10] This proposal inspires a sense of community and encourage people to serve others while also helping their own families prosper.

A center will be a building with physical space where farmworkers and their families and other community members can visit to obtain information and assistance. The building of about 5,000 square foot will include temporary shelter, restrooms, healthcare, education, employment, and literacy. As part of the action plan, the center's design will reflect the spirit of the struggle to bring dignity to the farmworker community. A place to rest before farmworkers take buses to various agricultural fields. Through its vision and mission as guidelines, this concept satisfies the identified requirements and serves as the cornerstone for addressing present and future needs of farmworkers. The building will be a service center where activities will take place that will contribute to the development of the farmworker community. Managed by a local project already involved during the development phase, with support from an advisory committee.

Additionally, the center will be a hub for other organizations or service providers that do work related to local agricultural employment, work migration, translation services, medical or health checks, and vocational or financial skills training. Staff will conduct outreach activities, training, and share information to other community organizations, ensuring that information provided is accurate and consistent. A key element in its development is linking regional elements, connecting the center to other centers for sharing and integration of information. Including expanding capabilities focused on other services to support further planned elements, incorporating countywide social services.

Integrating services will be a high priority as representative from different countywide departments will provide all-in-one services, which will aid in more efficient services and possibly reducing inequalities. Until such time as a new center is built, it is recommended that interim upgrades be made to the exiting center. These upgrades include the replacement of old equipment such as IT and workstations as well as the purchase of additional equipment. These improvements will increase system efficiency and reliability as well as enable the center's operators to fully utilize the new facility installed as part of the new upgrades.

[10] Cesar Chavez Foundation (2021). Inspiring & transforming communities.

11. Selecting a Location

Preferably, the center should be situated in the downtown area, where many people as possible have easy access. In an easily accessible location, if possible, on a main road, with street frontage. The center should be clean, comfortable, and welcoming, so people can easily walk into a reception area from the street without staff having to open a gate or door. Other factors include closeness to other service providers and near to Calexico Transportation hub located on E. 3rd Street, between Rockwood & Heffernan Ave. The center would have at least two rooms & space for visitors and an office for staff meetings.

12. Public Participation & Stakeholder Outreach

To ensure adequate and meaningful public participation throughout the planning phase, a robust public participation and stakeholder outreach effort must occur. Especially, specific citizen engagement to generate a bi-directional free flow of constructive ideas to inform the public and in turn, the alternatives development and assessment. The primary objectives of the public's participation and stakeholder outreach plan should establish:

- ✓ Engage Stakeholders.
- ✓ Engage equity justice and farmworker populations.
- ✓ Inform the community at large; and
- ✓ Engage farmworkers from both sides of the US-Mexico border.

13. Outreach & Engagement Tools

"Outreach activities" to disseminate information outside the center is vital, as many people will not be able to visit the center because they don't have the time, they live too far away, or for other reasons. Outreach activities will be specific to the center and its location, such as:

- provide training in a community setting.
- distribute information at community meetings; and
- provide training for staff at the center.

The outreach and public engagement activities for the center will use three elements consisting of six (6) general methodologies/strategies:

1. Qualitative research
    a) Stakeholder and steering groups
    b) Meetings & interviews
2. Community engagement and/or involvement
    a) Community workshops
    b) Walking tours

3. Public information hearings
    a) Community forums
    b) Public information resources

14. Countywide Coalitions

The coalitions must be committed to long-term change that seeks to address the root causes of farmworker sentiments to prevent inequities from flourishing in the City. United around its shared values of dignity and respect for all and develop collective strategies around these principles will be a countywide effort to advance farmworkers and their families through collaboration. A few services should include policy experts, advocacy, community-based projects, and issues concerned with farmworker rights and litigation.

15. Concept of Operations

Stakeholders identify operations goals for the center's management system. These operational requirements drive specific staffing needs for the center include:

Proposed Office Hours

- Mondays through Sundays; 12AM – 5AM
- Closed as needed

A key operational characteristic that affects each of these functions is the hours of operations of the center. While it is desired to staff the center 24 hours per day, seven days a week, it is not envisioned that continuous operations are needed at the center at this time. If the center becomes a combined operations center, the center will be evaluated, and it may be reasonable at that time to operate the center 24 hours per day.

16. Staffing Requirements

Staffing for operations and maintenance will be a function, as well as the hours of operation and additional services supported by the center. The number of users and workload will determine if the number of staff is adequate or if additional staff is required to handle the increase in workload for operations. As the center's functionality increases and operating hours are possibly extended in the near future, it is recommended that additional staff be added to support expanded the center's operations.

17. General Accounting

The center will require an Operating Budget process. The center will recover some of the cost of its operations through a charge "rate" basis. The charge to its users will be $5 and will help to recover the costs of depreciation.

18. Maintenance

A critical aspect of the center's operations is its maintenance, whether the center is operational or not operational. During non-operational hours, it is vital to maintain and repair equipment to minimize the down time of services and maximize the center's usefulness. Preventive maintenance at a regularly scheduled intervals to ensure equipment properly functions. The emphasis is a proactive approach to repair or replace defective equipment, thus ensuring that problems are not left until the equipment fails. It should be noted the lack of staff and limited funding are reasons that preventive maintenance is not performed.

19. Financing

Federal programs to satisfy a variety of community development/housing needs. Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) used for capital improvement projects, affordable housing, public service activities.

Objective 1: Proactively pursue governmental and non-governmental funds to increase access of the center.

Objective 2: Capitalize on regional/local farm worker funds and create new local funding sources for the construction, rehabilitation, acquisition, and operation.

F1. **Federal Grants:** Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and US Department of Agriculture (USDAG)

F2. **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG):** For construction of new/renovations, designed to aid low, low- to moderate-income persons.

F4. **Farm Worker Association of Florida, Inc.:** A nonprofit located in Florida. CDBG funds $1,124,000 used for construction of a new building.

F5. **Ag Business Funding:** Facilitate the creation of alternative funding mechanisms by convening agricultural representatives interested in sharing resources to build and operate farmworker housing both for year-round, permanent, and seasonable, migrant housing. Best practice includes the Napa self-assessment of wine grape growers.

20. Proposed Expenditure Budget

The operating costs of the center will be the costs associated with maintaining the existence of the business. These include operating costs and recurring costs required to operate the center monthly. For example, communication systems (wi-fi, telephone), office equipment and supplies, office space, salaries and wages, business insurance, among other costs.

NOTE: Collaboration is anticipated with other nonprofit agencies in the community thus many of our operating expenses could be utilized as "in kind" plus future foundation grants or philanthropic funds.

Development Cost Estimate:

Operating Expenses:
Estimated on annual basis

Payroll and Benefits:	$ 160,000.00
Legal and Accounting	$ 8,000.00
Supplies:	$ 15,000.00
Equipment:	$ 10,000.00
Leased Transport (2)	$ 10,000.00
Insurance:	$ 14,000.00
Utilities:	$ 16,000.00
Printing:	$ 8,000.00
Maintenance:	$ 26,000.00
Miscellaneous:	$ 30,000.00
Total:	$ 275,000.00

21. Conclusion

The Farmworker Service Center will allow us to share a vision that combines project quality and uniqueness with established processes to consistently meet the key goals of this project – *excellence, operational, scope, and budget*. We will attend to the needs of farmworkers and their families, and to make their dreams a reality. Particularly, looking at the "big picture" to determine as a group we can best add benefit.

The City is ready to begin as soon as possible on this project, priding itself on delivering community-based services that produce equity, health and temporary shelter opportunities and sanitary facilities.

We thank the stakeholders for their partnership and for the opportunity to present this proposal and look forward to working together towards this project's success!

Thank you!