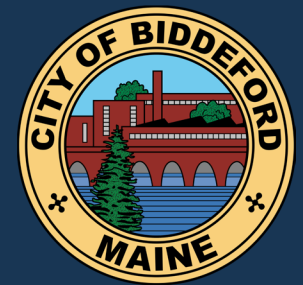


IMPACTS OF HOMELESSNESS OPERATIONAL BRIEF

April 21st, 2026



Purpose of Presentation

This brief provides the City Council and department leaders with a clear, factual overview of how homelessness directly affects the day-to-day operations of the City of Biddeford. The goal is to ensure decision-makers have the data they need to act.

Operational Overview

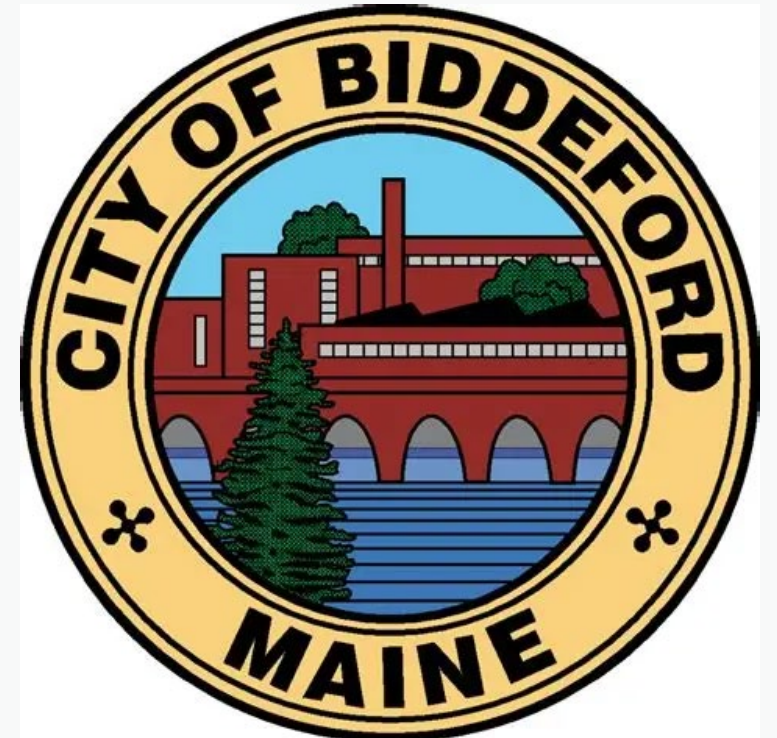
Understand how homelessness shapes workload and resource demands across multiple city departments on a daily basis.

Financial Impacts

Identify measurable costs: personnel time, overtime, and service delivery attributable to homelessness-related incidents and encampments.

Policy & Operational Options

Present actionable options for Council consideration to better manage impacts and improve coordination across city services.



Departments Directly Impacted:



Code Enforcement

Encampment complaints, no trespass postings, and welfare checks year-round



Public Works

Encampment clean up operations and other infrastructure repairs as needed



Police Department

Hundreds of calls annually involving unhoused individuals across multiple city corridors



General Assistance

Processing eligibility for GA, recouping Shelter costs, and coordinating housing resources



Fire Department

Medical Emergencies and overdose response driving rising call volumes

Current Management Framework

The City currently manages homelessness impacts through a combination of enforcement authority, inter-agency partnerships, and local resource coordination. These mechanisms form the operational foundation for all departmental responses.

Ordinance Sec. 46-13a

Prohibits presence in public parks from dusk to dawn. Provides a legal basis for enforcement during overnight hours.

Ordinance Sec. 40-70

Authorizes the Police Chief to approve no-trespass postings on city-owned property, enabling targeted enforcement at problem locations.

Seeds of Hope Partnership

City partners with Seeds of Hope Warming Center to provide overnight shelter services, reducing street exposure and emergency call volume.

Coordinated Entry System

Integration into Maine's Statewide Coordinated Entry System connects individuals to housing resources and case management services.

Encampment Cleanups

Authorized by City Manager on an as-needed basis, coordinating Public Works and other departments for site remediation.

Direct Support/ Outreach

City staff and regional partners connect with individuals living outside to address resource needs and work toward housing options.

Code Enforcement

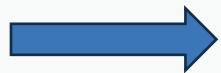
Scope of Activity

One full-time Code Enforcement staff member is dedicated year-round to responding to encampment complaints across the city. Responsibilities span initial complaint response, posting and enforcing no-trespass notices, and conducting welfare checks on individuals in encampments or public spaces.

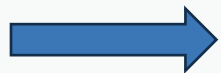
Workload increases substantially during the warmer months as outdoor encampment activity rises. The \$25,000 FY25 cost reflects staff time only and does not capture associated administrative or remediation costs.



Respond to complaints from residents and businesses



Post and enforce no-trespass notices on city property



Conduct welfare checks for individuals in encampments

\$25,000

Total estimated staff cost in FY25-
FY26 projected to be similar

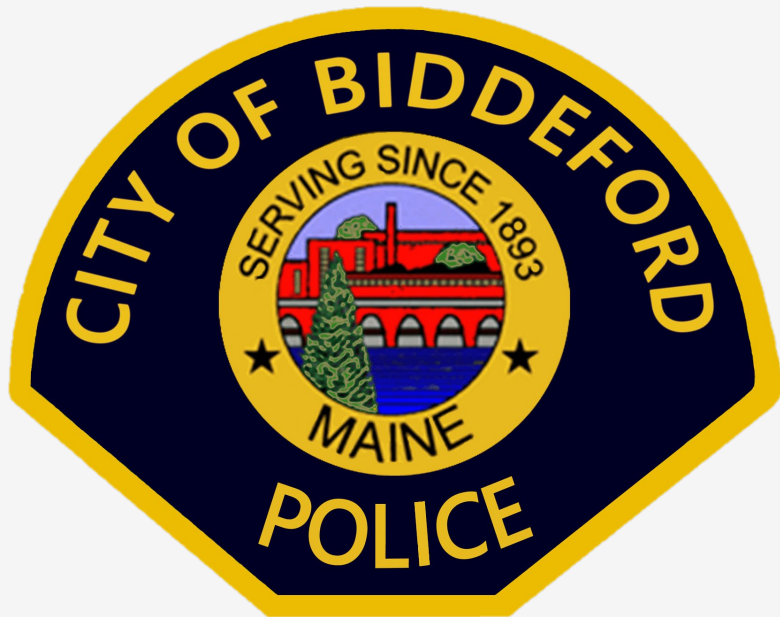
1 Staff Member

performs year-round
encampment response

Peak Season

Workload increases
substantially during
warmer months

Police Department Scope of Activity



Calls are coded based on behavior

383 calls including words "homeless" or "unhoused" in FY25

45 minute average time on call

2.5 officers average per incident

\$33,225 -estimated personnel cost for FY25

Frequent transports to York County Jail and Maine Medical Center- Biddeford

Police Department Scope

Five Geographic corridors account for the highest concentration of homelessness-related police calls in Biddeford. Each area presents a distinct pattern of incidents driven by local land use, services and encampment proximity.

Outer Alfred Retail Corridor

Trespass, theft, welfare checks and disorderly conduct-concentrated around commercial properties and parking areas

Elm-Lincoln-Pearl Corridor/Parking Garage

Vehicle checks, suspicious activity, drug complaints, and disturbances in and around parking garage

Clifford Park

Trespass, welfare checks, and disorderly conduct concentrated around Clifford Park and its neighboring properties

South St/Graham St/ Seeds of Hope

Medical calls, trespass incidents, domestic disturbances, and disorderly conduct geographically focused near Seeds of Hope and Bon Appetit.

Horrigan Ct/Spruce-Hazel-RR Corridor

Recurring trespass, overdose response, warrant checks, fights, and weapon complaints in a historically high encampment zone.

Important note: These figures are estimates based on calls where “transient”, “homeless”, or “unhoused” are specifically referenced in the call record. They do not represent the full cost or volume of homelessness-related activity for the Police Department

Police Department/ Street Outreach Liaison

BPD has a dedicated staff member working to connect unhoused community members with life-changing services, care, and resources. Statistics below reflect FY26 activity.

1 Staff

dedicated solely to encampment and unhoused outreach

54 Active Participants

122 individuals engaged over the past year

26 Case Management Referrals

Connecting individuals to long term support services

60 Substance Use Treatment Referrals

Pathways to recovery and rehabilitation

73 Medical Referrals

30+ participants enrolled in public health programs

300+ Naloxone kits Distributed

Critical overdose prevention on the front lines

275+ Medical & Wound Care Supplies

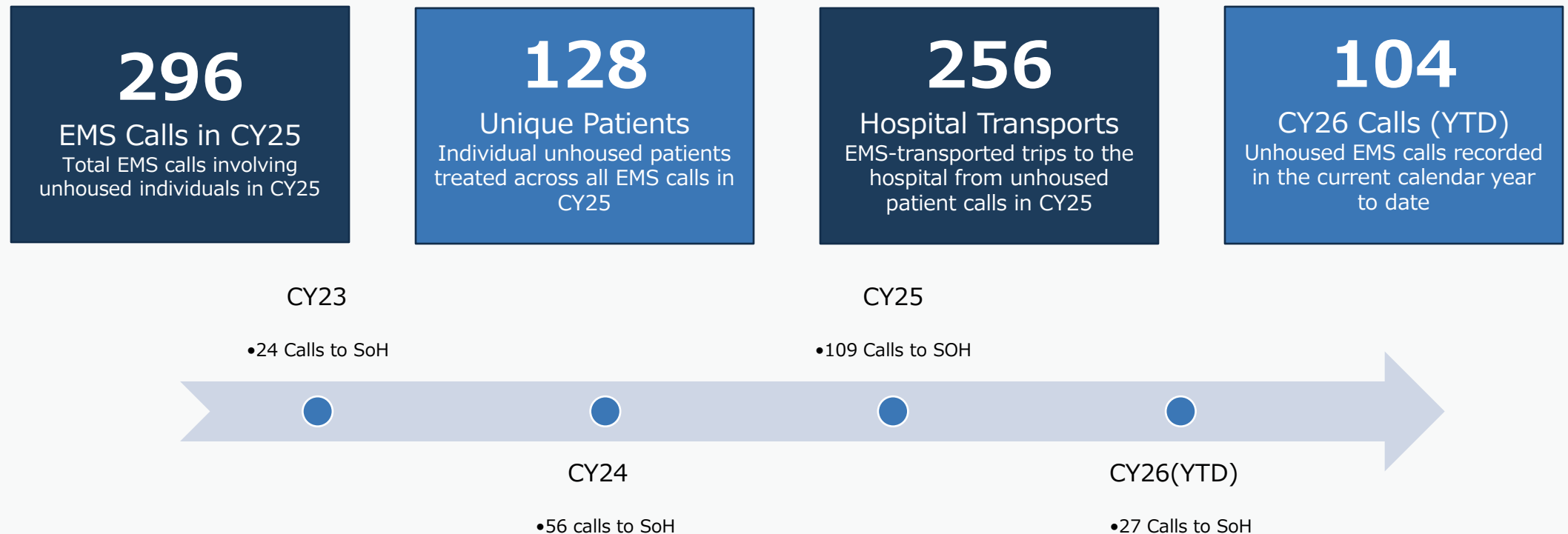
400+ cold weather safety kits distributed

25 ID Documentation Assists

Helping community members access essential services requiring identification

Fire Department/EMS Scope of Activity

EMS call volume involving unhoused individuals has grown significantly year over year, with Seeds of Hope alone generating more than double the calls in CY25 compared to CY24. These trends reflect both increased service utilization and rising acuity among community members experiencing homelessness.



Fire Department

Wildfire Event – August 2025

On August 25, 2025, a large wildfire ignited in a wooded area near the Home Depot. The fire was investigated and the cause was determined to be an **unattended campfire** left by individuals living in the woods. This event highlights the public safety risks associated with unsheltered encampment adjacent to commercial and residential areas.

The incident required a significant response from BFD and mutual aid partners, resulting in **\$6,500 in overtime costs** alone. This does not include equipment wear, fuel, and other costs that may have been incurred during extended operations.

Key Takeaway: This single incident represents a direct, quantifiable, public safety and financial cost attributable to an encampment and illustrates the risks that extend well beyond routine service calls.

Public Works: Scope of Activity

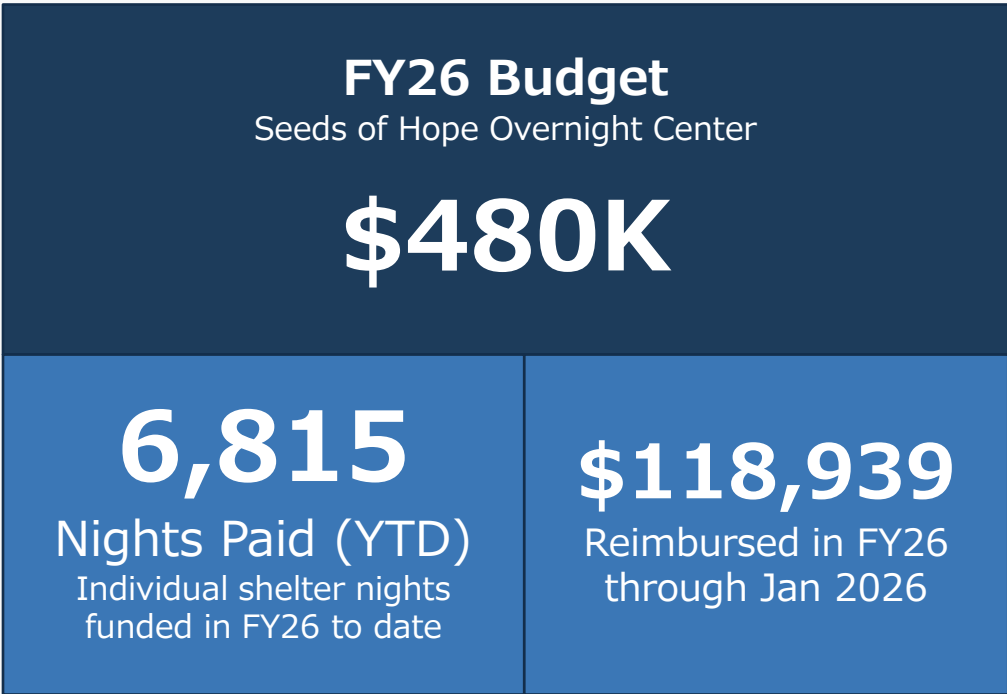
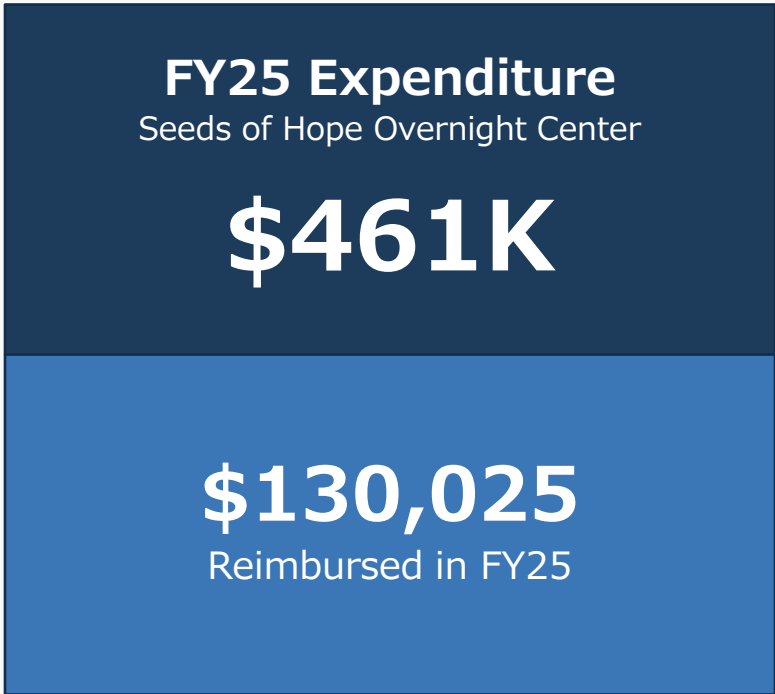
Public Works supports other departments in addressing encampment and waste remediation on City property.

Abandoned property is stored for 30 days at the Department of Public Works before disposal.

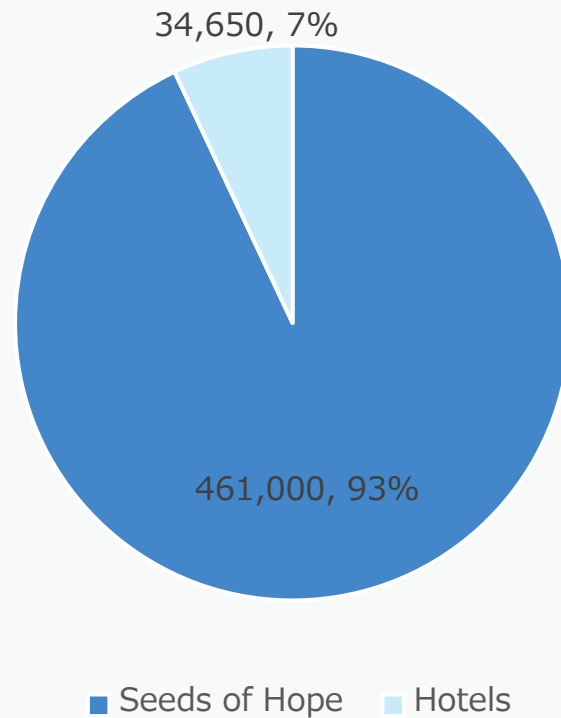


General Assistance: Scope of Activity

GA coordinates shelter funding, cleanup contracts, sanitation services, and direct applicant support; representing one of the city's largest homelessness-related expenditure areas.



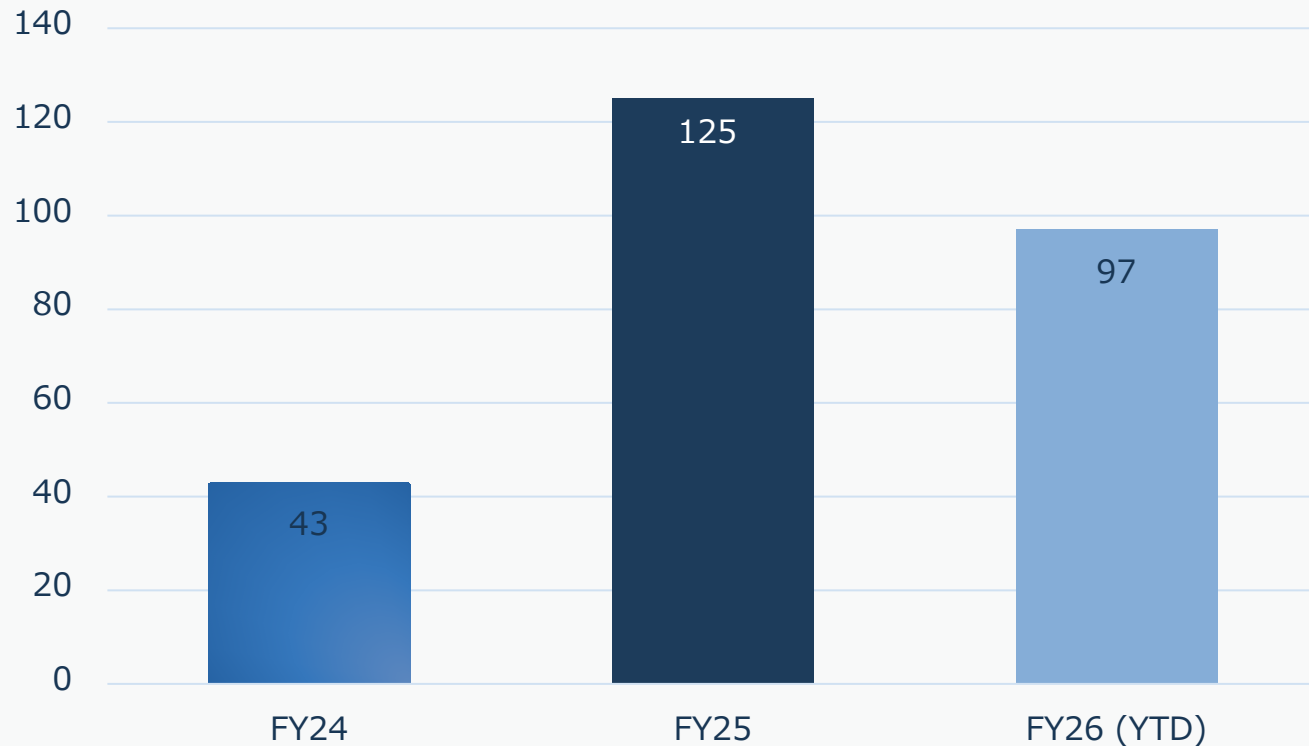
General Assistance Homelessness Expenditures FY25



\$495,650 expended in FY25 for homelessness response

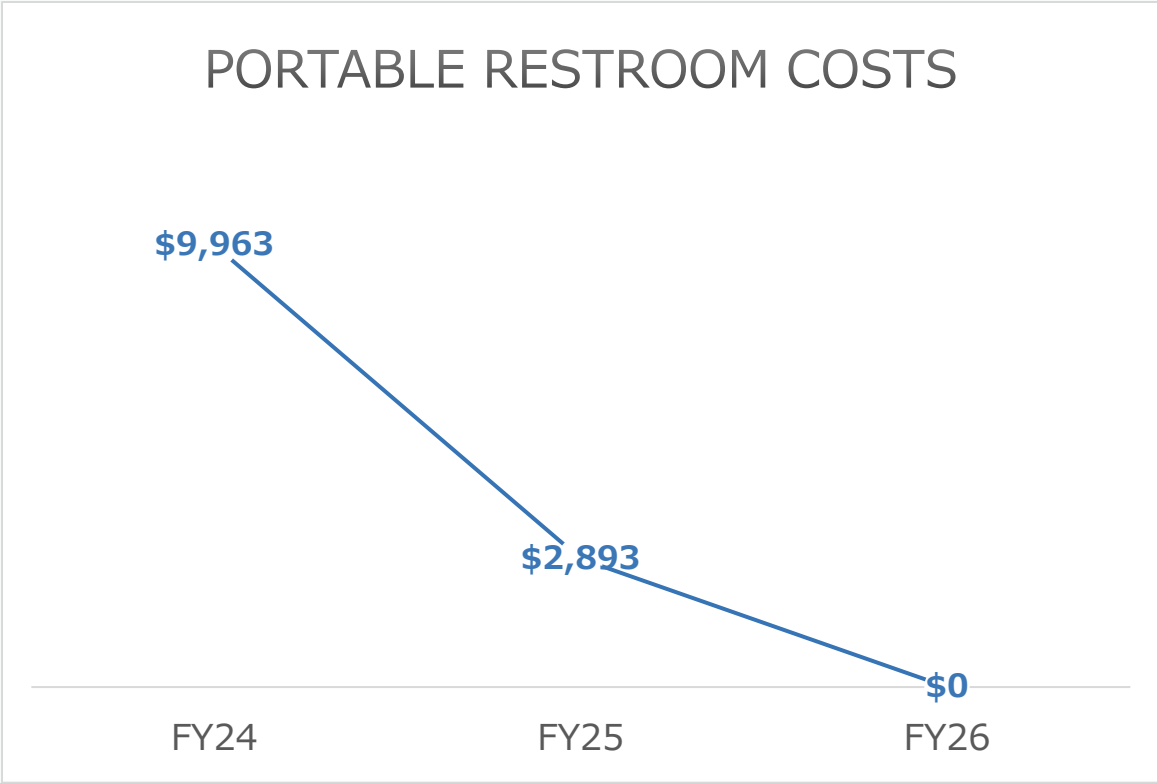
\$154,280 Reimbursed by the State in FY25

Unique Homeless GA Applicants



- Applicant volume tripled from FY24 to FY25.
- FY26 figures suggest demand is not receding.

GA Encampment-Related Costs



Encampment Clean-up Costs
FY25

\$42,000

Impact if Seeds Overnight Shelter is Defunded

If Seeds of Hope reduces or closes overnight services, those individuals staying there would become the direct responsibility of Biddeford's General Assistance (GA) program by statute.

\$1,050

Cost per week at the single year-round hotel that works with GA

1-month GA cap

Under **22 M.R.S.A. §4308**, the City cannot sustain hotel placement beyond approximately one month "above the maximums"

Approximately 40 people/night at Seeds of Hope

Month One: A \$42K–\$168K Exposure

\$42,000
Estimate

40 eligible individuals access hotel accommodations for 1 week through GA

\$168,000
High Estimate

40 eligible individuals access hotel accommodations for a full month through GA

6 Months
GA processing obligation

If GA assists a client in accessing a hotel outside of Biddeford, Biddeford GA must process each case for a full 6-month period under state statute

- These costs represent Month-One only. GA's obligation to process applications continues for 6 months if placed outside of Biddeford, which is where the only GA hotel is.

Beyond the Budget: Public Health & Safety

Not everyone displaced from overnight shelter will qualify for, or be able to access, hotel placement. These individuals will either access resources elsewhere or become unsheltered in Biddeford.

Public Camping

Unsheltered individuals will camp in parks, doorways, and public spaces, particularly visible in the downtown core overnight

Public Health Risk

Exposure to the elements, lack of sanitation access, and concentration of vulnerable populations create compounding health emergencies

A surge of formerly sheltered people now unsheltered could easily overwhelm services provided by PD, FD/EMS, GA and Public Works Departments

Staff Recommendations to City Council

The following recommendations have been prepared by City Staff for Council consideration. Each item includes a rationale, analysis of pros and cons, key uncertainties, and a corresponding action request. These items address the City of Biddeford's ongoing response to unsheltered homelessness and reflect staff's commitment to balancing public safety, human dignity, and fiscal responsibility.

1. Continue Seeds of Hope Funding

Maintain overnight shelter services as currently structured

2. Adopt a Camping Ordinance

Prohibit camping on public property citywide

3. Explore a Formal Overnight Shelter

Spearhead the development of partnerships and funding for a county-wide solution

Continue Funding Seeds of Hope Overnight Center

Continue Funding Seeds of Hope Overnight Center

Staff recommend that the Council continue funding the Seeds of Hope Overnight Center as currently structured. The primary rationale is to prevent an increase in unsheltered homelessness in Biddeford's downtown. Seeds of Hope provides a critical safety net for individuals who would otherwise be sleeping outdoors, and continuity of services is essential to the outcomes the program has achieved.

Pros, Cons & Key uncertainties

Pros

- Reduces overnight encampments and associated public health concerns in the downtown core
- Maintains continuity of services for program participants, supporting housing placement and service access
- Proven track record- Seeds of Hope has demonstrated effectiveness in keeping people safe overnight

Cons

- Represents a \$480,000 line item in the budget
- Does not address daytime impacts on surrounding streets and public spaces
- Continues concentration of service-related impacts in the South St/ Graham St neighborhood

Key Uncertainties

- Continued and unresolved neighborhood concerns about impacts
- Long-term financial stability of current funding model

ACTION: SEEDS OF HOPE OVERNIGHT CENTER

Council is asked to approve continued funding for the Seeds of Hope Overnight Center in the amount of \$480,000 as part of the FY27 budget, maintaining the program in its current structure and service model.

Staff believe this investment remains the most immediate and reliable tool available to prevent an increase in unsheltered individuals sleeping outdoors in Biddeford. While concerns about neighborhood concentration and daytime impacts are valid and must be addressed, withdrawing funding at this stage would likely result in a swift return of encampments and a loss of the service relationships staff and partners have built with program participants.

Adopt a Public Land Camping Prohibition Ordinance

Adopt a Camping Prohibition Ordinance

Staff recommend that the Council adopt an ordinance prohibiting camping on public property within the City of Biddeford. Establishing a clear legal definition of camping and prohibiting it on public property gives the City enforceable authority to manage its properties proactively before situations deteriorate to the point of requiring large-scale cleanups or emergency public safety responses. This approach creates a legal framework that supports earlier, lower-intensity interventions.

Pros, Cons, & Key Uncertainties

Pros

- Provides enforcement capacity **before** a public health or public safety emergency requires costly intervention
- Creates a clear, consistent legal standard applicable across all city-owned public properties
- Enables staff to address encampments earlier and with more defined authority
- Encourages those who are able, to access indoor resources

Cons

- Enforcement responsibility falls primarily on Law Enforcement
- Without adequate alternatives, this does not resolve underlying needs
- The concept can be politically divisive

Key Uncertainties

- Timeline required to draft, review and implement ordinance
- Level of community and Council buy-in to move forward effectively

ACTION: CAMPING PROHIBITION ORDINANCE

Staff are seeking authorization from Council to proceed with drafting a camping prohibition ordinance for public property within Biddeford. If Council is in agreement, staff would work with the City Attorney to develop ordinance language, define key terms, and establish implementation guidelines. A timeline would be developed to bring a draft ordinance back to Council for review and vote.

Explore a Formal Overnight Shelter for Unhoused Residents

Staff recommend that the Council authorize exploration of partnerships and funding streams to develop a formal overnight shelter facility for York County. Seeds of Hope provides a high level of service in helping people access social services, connecting participants to housing, and keeping people safe overnight. However, a more formally structured facility located away from residential neighborhoods is needed to serve the full scope of county-wide need. A regional approach would create a more sustainable and equitable model.

Pros, Cons, and Key Uncertainties

Pros

- Creates a dedicated overnight location with greater capacity and access to wraparound services
- Opportunity to site the facility away from downtown and residential areas
- A county-wide model spreads cost and responsibility across multiple municipalities, improving long-term sustainability

Cons

- Significant capital investment and ongoing operational funding not currently in place
- Demands infrastructure not already in place
- Dependent on Buy-in from neighboring municipalities, which is uncertain and time-intensive to secure.

Key Uncertainties

- Site identification
- Funding mechanisms
- Partnership interest from York County communities and service agencies

ACTION: Formal Overnight Shelter Exploration

Staff request that Council authorize a formal exploration phase for a regional overnight shelter facility. This would involve identifying potential locations, engaging York County and neighboring municipalities, researching available funding through state and federal housing programs, and assessing partnership opportunities with nonprofits and service providers. Staff would return to Council with findings and a recommended path forward before any capital commitment is made.

THANK YOU

