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San Diego City Council
District 1

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Day 1 of Budget Deliberations: Homelessness as a Top Priority

San Diego— During budget deliberations, my guiding principles are transparency, equity and accountability. One of our city's most pressing issues is how we are addressing our unsheltered population in terms of total dollars being spent and the effectiveness of our spending. On the first day of budget deliberations, I asked the Library and Park and Recreation Departments if they could quantify how much of their budget has been used to address issues related to our unsheltered population. For example, the bathrooms in Balboa Park are now open 24 hours a day, and our libraries have added security. City staff explained that one of the reasons that they could not quantify the dollar figure is because they don't differentiate between patrons and the unsheltered. I want to thank City staff for treating all of our residents with dignity and respect.

I appreciated the comments from my colleagues, particularly about the increase in police overtime and if there's a better way of homeless outreach using trained social workers and other professionals. I asked the Mayor's Office about the cost per person, per month of housing a person in a bridge shelter. I am looking forward to getting that information which I will share once I receive it.

It is frustrating that the Mayor's budget does not account for our total homeless spending in one place. What I've seen from my more than two years at City Hall is that we lack a comprehensive, data-driven homeless plan. This is why we continue to bounce from reactive decision to reactive decision.

Council President Pro Tem Barbara Bry represents San Diego City Council District 1, which includes the communities of Carmel Valley, Del Mar Heights, Del Mar Mesa, La Jolla, Pacific Highlands Ranch, Torrey Hills, Torrey Pines, and University City.

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