

From: [Kate Haug](#)
To: [Mary Gourley](#)
Subject: 11/2 Public Comment - Council, Do Not Increase Our Transient Population
Date: Saturday, October 30, 2021 9:06:32 AM

10/30/21

Dear Council,

Like the Sebastopol Inn, the SAVS proposal is a losing proposition for the small business owners and residents of Sebastopol. Last year, at this time, the County came in and converted our only downtown hotel to homeless housing. The City permanently lost transient occupancy tax, sales, tourist foot traffic and property tax. The County converted a self-sustaining business into a government run, taxpayer funded housing facility for homeless people.

Now Sebastopol has a 31 room transient hotel, Safe Parking at the Community Church on Gravenstein Highway and more homeless housing at Park Village. Sebastopol has more shelter and support options than Rohnert Park.

Since the conversion of the Inn, the City of Sebastopol has spent more on homeless services, including a \$72,000 per year homeless outreach coordinator, increased its homeless population and supported an entrenched homeless encampment on Morris Street which is a public nuisance, known drug area, and environmental hazard. The conversion of the Inn into homeless housing has not decreased our homeless population, it has increased it.

Sebastopol does not need to increase its transient population. This Safe Parking proposal will not decrease our transient population, it will increase it. In this proposal, there are no limits being placed on overnight RV parking or illegal camping. This proposal opens up new RV parking, at taxpayers and residents expense, without limiting RV parking on Morris Street, around Ives' Park, 116, Palm Avenue and other residential locations.

Our recent increase of transients is impacting local business (which has been document via letters from the Barlow, Michael Carnacchi, Coaches Corner and numerous other businesses), our high school community (Linda Armstrong's public comment) and our residents (I have written about witnessing IV drug use in Ives' park in the middle of the day 100 yards from the children's playground).

A LOSING PROPOSITION

1) There is no guarantee that the illegal campers of Morris Street will move into this parking lot. As has been well documented, many RV dwellers are drug addicts. Drug addicts will not

move into places with rules. As has been witnessed, these campers don't like to follow rules, which might contribute to their current unhoused conditions.

2) It is most likely that these RV dwellers will simply move to other locations in Sebastopol or Sonoma County.

3) After observing and picking up after these folks for 18 months, does our community really want them living next to a Youth Park, a Community Center, a Little League field and public trails? Do you think they are a good match for this location based on what has been documented from 4AM drug deals to public defecation to a drug overdose?

4) The only reason anyone would consider this is because the Council let the situation get so bad, that we are desperate for a solution. Under normal circumstances, no one would ever consider moving this batch of people to this location.

5) Do citizens want to reward the Council for their failure of action, for their fostering of criminal behavior, for their disregard for public safety, for the death of one woman from overdose?

6) Do citizens want to reward the people who have been living illegally, trashing our environment, blocking our bike lanes, and costing us money with free housing? Is that the right message to send?

7) The Sebastopol Inn is a complete failure. Since the Inn's conversion to homeless housing we have increased costs, lost revenue and more homeless people. If Sebastopol Inn is the test case, then we know what this program is likely to yield.

A WIN/WIN

A win/win would be to impose time limit parking on Morris Street, citywide RV permit parking and to let the homeless advocates SAVS work with the County to find a County owned site for their contract. SAVS wants the money to do this project as it is the basis of their work. They have zero relationship to Sebastopol.

A win/win would be Council getting annual, ongoing reimbursement from the County from the lost revenue we experience from converting the Inn to homeless housing.

A win/win would be that we would reduce our expenditure on transients and reduce our homeless population, not increase both.

A WIN/WIN BENEFITS CITIZENS NOT HOMELESS ADVOCATES

When Council Members say this proposal is a win/win. Council means it's a win for SAVS who gets this contract and can enrich their portfolio. It's a win for transients who not only got a free ride on Morris Street now they're getting another free ride - all at the expense of Sebastopol's citizens.

None of what is being proposed benefits anyone in the long term except for SAVS and transients, who arrive in town with no money, no job and no plan. The Sebastopol Inn was a win for DEMA, the nonprofit that contracts with the County, but the Sebastopol Inn is a big

loss for the citizens and small businesses of Sebastopol.

SAVS and DEMA are part of the cottage industry that has grown up around the State's inability to effectively administer homeless resources and monies. The State is throwing money at small communities and then leaves them holding the bag when grants run out. The citizens of Sonoma County will be responsible for funding all the Homekey hotels after the grant runs out in 12 months. Just as the citizens and small business owners will be left footing the bill for the increased costs transients produce. The State of California spent \$13 billion on transients in the last 2 years and increased California's transient population. We don't want the same results in Sebastopol. We simply don't have the revenue. Our total budget for our town is less than \$10,000,000.

It's not a win for citizens to have our homeless population increase and to decrease our City resources. Safe Parking is a losing proposition.

Best,
Kate Haug