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To: [Mary Gourley](#)
Cc: [Kevin Kilgore](#); [Dante Del Prete](#); [Lawrence McLaughlin](#); [Fernandez, Evert](#); [Kathy Oetinger](#)
Subject: Support RV Parking Ordinance, Item 7 01/18/22 Meeting Public Comment
Date: Saturday, January 15, 2022 12:16:43 PM

Dear Council Members,

I am writing in support of Agenda Item 7 the Recreational Vehicle Parking Ordinance. I support this ordinance as written and thank Chief Kilgore and the Committee on the Unhoused for drafting such a clear and comprehensive document.

I am writing in support of this ordinance because our current parking regulations are not working. They do not help the transient community. Encampments and transient vehicular living strain our City's finances. Our current parking regulations do not help our low income communities, particularly low-income students and working families in our local schools.

Current System - 3 Known Transient Deaths

Allowing people to live in vehicles, in a laissez faire manner, has led to three known deaths. Cynthia Janssen, an RV Dweller was shot to death on August 20, 2020. A man was found dead in his vehicle on Morris Street in August 2020, cause of death unknown. A woman overdosed on Morris Street in the spring of 2021. If Council continues to let people live in their vehicles, they are enabling a system that leads to death and overdose. There is a well-documented national drug epidemic. In San Francisco, more people died in COVID hotel rooms of drug overdose than of COVID.

Current System - Not Helping Transients

Simply allowing people to live in their vehicles or use Sebastopol City streets as an illegal, unzoned RV camp has not helped transients transition into permanent housing, gain employment or become sober. There is no record of a single RV Camper, who has been living rent free on the streets of Sebastopol, obtaining housing or employment. SAVS has been working on Morris Street for over a year. During that time, they have not transitioned a single person to permanent housing despite COVID relief money, a labor shortage, free rent for over a year and regular distribution of food, supplies and other services. In addition, the citizens of Sebastopl have been paying for port-o-potties, garbage pick up and a \$72,000 per year homeless outreach coordinator, Jennifer Lake, who helps register vehicles and connect people with services.

The main drivers of homelessness are mental illness, drug addiction and former incarceration. Simply letting people live in their vehicles on our City streets does not address any root causes of homelessness.

Current System - Strain on City Budget

The current system of encouraging and supporting illegal RV encampments is a strain on

public resources and City finances. At this time, all Sebastopol's vital public departments including City Administration, Police, Fire and Public Works are understaffed and underfunded. The encampment on Morris Street has cost citizens money in terms of port-o-potties, garbage pick up, public works time, police time and the cost of a homeless outreach coordinator. At the 12/21/21 Council Meeting, Council said there was not enough funds to run a RV permit program, which would serve the 7500 tax paying residents of Sebastopol. How is this possible when we are paying \$72,000 per year on a homeless outreach coordinator who only serves a transient community of less than 300 people? Council Members suggested that a volunteer run a permit program. Why isn't a volunteer registering homeless vehicles instead? Transients do not contribute to City revenue and therefore should not take priority in City funding.

Current System - Transients Use Social Media and Social Networks

Transients like the rest of society use social media and social networks. This can make cities that do not have parking restrictions vulnerable to those who want to RV camp for free. Whether it's people using "boondocking" networks or people living on Morris Street making YouTube videos, there are a host of networks connecting people to "free RV camping". Sadly, nothing is "free" as people pay taxes for garbage, public works, public restrooms, roads, sidewalks and other city amenities. That is why hotels charge a transient occupancy tax - because visitors have an impact on city budgets. That is why parks charge entrance fees.

Sebastopol can't be a free campground; the City's budget is less than \$10,000,000.

This article features the "overnight stay."

<https://blog.campingworld.com/at-the-campsite/boondocking/3-types-boondocking-every-rver-should-know-about/>

<https://go.campendium.com/what-is-boondocking/>

<https://thedyrt.com/magazine/lifestyle/boondocking-guide-free-camping/>

If you watch this YouTube video by Rick G., you will see at 2 minutes 37 seconds, he says "It's legal to live in Sebastopol as long as you move every three days."

<https://youtu.be/eUenefLvkAw>

Current System - Not Helping Low Income Communities

Statistically the demographic most likely to live in poverty are children, specifically children living single mothers. Not the men who live on Morris Street and comprise the majority of Sebastopol's transient community. In fact, men still have a significant economic advantage over women from pay discrimination to access to reproductive choice.

Over 25% of West County High's student population qualifies for free and reduced lunch.

Over 45% of the students of Parkside Elementary qualify for free and reduced lunch.

School representatives have spoken about the transient impacts on public school

campuses which include fire, trash, vandalism, feces and trespassing.

Sebastopol has many, many low income students in our community who deserve safe, clean parks, school commutes and neighborhoods. To serve low income children, Council needs to support clean and safe school campuses. Council needs to protect and maintain our public spaces and school commute paths. The public needs parks that do not present harmful substances like human excrement and used hypodermic needles.

If Council wants to help low-income people, support this ordinance which prevents illegal RV living in our resident neighborhoods, around our parks and around schools. Working parents do not have the bandwidth to clean up human feces, used hypodermic needles and trash. Working parents need to feel that their neighborhoods, their parks, the sidewalk and the trails used by children for school commutes are clean and safe.

As I've written about in a previous public comment, I saw a transient shooting up at Ives' Park in the middle of the day. That is not a safe environment for a child and it's not healthy for a community.

The main drivers of homelessness are mental illness, drug addiction and former incarceration. Homeless people are poor because drug addiction, mental illness and former incarceration tend to lead to poverty; letting people live in their vehicles or park on our City streets does not address any of these root causes of homelessness.

Council should not conflate the real needs of transients with the real needs of low-income people, It is a damaging disservice to both groups and results in bad policy that accomplishes nothing.

Change the Current System

Sebastopol needs to change its current parking system and adopt the Recreational Ordinance drafted by Chief Kilgore and the Committee on the Unhoused. By adopting this ordinance, the City will encourage illegal RV dwellers to accept help and resources, reduce the strain on our City budget and support our low-income students and working families.

If we are a compassionate community, we will encourage transients to take advantage of tax funded resources, comply with the law and become sober. If we are a compassionate community, we will make sure that low income children and working families in our community have access to clean and safe sidewalks and commute routes, supported school campuses and clean and safe public spaces.

Thank you for your adoption of the Recreational Vehicle Parking Ordinance. It is a holistic solution which brings benefits to all.

Kate Haug

Sebastopol