

To Seaside City Council
Submitted by Rebecca Read
Comments for Homelessness Workshop, 11/6/20

Thank you for convening this important event, to address the needs of our vulnerable neighbors in Seaside who are on the spectrum of homelessness.

I am fortunate to have never been homeless. Because of this I acknowledge my bias regarding homelessness. I have a lot to learn about all aspects of this issue in our community, as I imagine many of us do. In order to better understand what our challenges are in Seaside we need to **hear from people without fixed addresses** about their experiences, and **what their needs are**. We need to learn more about what is **already being done** and what **resources are already available**. We need to know what ideas have been **proposed or implemented and what have been the outcomes**. There is much to understand before **plans are made and actions implemented**. This workshop needs to take all these aspects into consideration. My hope is that this workshop will **not be the only action** to address this problem but an **introductory to learning more** by investigating solutions and listening to a diverse set of voices.

Winter is coming and the needs of people without homes will only increase as **cold weather arrives**. A long, drawn-out process is not what we want to engage in here. We need a **focused effort** that yields **short-term and long-term solutions** alike. In addition, we need **engagement with the greater community**. Citizens need to be **informed of progress** of this work and be invited to **voice their opinions**. If homelessness is a **symptom of a multitude of problems** in our community (affordable housing, better wages, job training, transitional services for the formerly incarcerated, domestic violence, trauma, addiction, mental illness) then the solutions to homelessness is an integral part of the work we do in making a better community.

This is not just about RVs parking illegally on city streets. It is much broader and more dynamic than that. It is about the big work to be done by a compassionate society to ensure the well-being of all citizens.

I thank you for acknowledging this important issue and for your willingness to create solutions.

Rebecca Read
328 7th Avenue
Seaside, OR 97138

So You Want To End Homelessness In Seaside

Homelessness is an ongoing issue in Seaside, and has been for many years. The city and county have both spent time and money studying the issue, but little has been done to abate it. Shelter beds in the county have decreased, and no longer exist within the city of Seaside. Yet the homeless are still present. They camp in the various wooded areas, in neighborhoods, under the bridges, and in virtually any other place they can get away from the elements. In Clatsop County, there is one stand out organization trying to do anything significant about homelessness, but even they are limited by a multitude of factors. These factors include but are not limited to cost, space, admission requirements, mental health factors, ongoing addiction issues, and more. It was recently reported that Seaside's Mayor Barber spoke to several of the homeless people in town and found that they did not want to go through the program at the facility in Astoria. Nothing was said about why. Was it a lack of space in the facility there? Was it a lack of qualifications? Was it a lack of ability to pay for that program? Was it program requirements? Personal issues with people already going through the program? A history of the program's facilities being in a state of disrepair that left them unsafe? There are lots of valid reasons for why someone would not go through a given program, regardless of if that reasoning is voiced, or understood by those hearing them. For instance, during my nearly decade of homelessness, my biggest reason for not using programs was that shelter was often needed from the shelters.

So what can be done? Research has revealed that there is one thing that actually helps, and has worked in every jurisdiction it has been utilized in. It has worked in Europe, throughout the US, in Canada, and in Asia. It costs less than relying on shelters, police, and hospital ERs. It is ridiculously common sense. The single thing that research has repeatedly shown to be the most effective and cost saving way to deal with homelessness is... House the homeless.

Here are some links on the "Housing First" approach to dealing with homelessness and its financial and social costs/savings and impacts.

Media links

<https://www.businessinsider.com/santa-clara-homelessness-study-2015-5>

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/02/how-finland-solved-homelessness/>

<https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/proven-solutions/>

<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/02/housing-first-solution-to-homelessness-utah/>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/07/the-best-way-to-end-homelessness/398282/>

<https://www.vox.com/2014/5/30/5764096/homeless-shelter-housing-help-solutions>

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/dec/10/homelessness-is-not-inevitable-and-can-be-solved-these-cities-show-us-how>

Scholarly links

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2748596>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4679128/>

<https://scienceblog.com/518122/housing-first-strategy-proves-cost-effective-especially-for-the-most-vulnerable-homeless-group/>

https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/DennisCulhane_EndingChronicHomelessness.pdf

Thank you for your attention,

Samuel “Seamus” Condrón

11/06/2020

Tonight's meeting

From: Jenna Atomic Pizza <jenna@atomic-pizza.com>

To: publiccomment@cityofseaside.us

Date: 11/6/2020 7:16 AM

Thank you for addressing the homeless situation.

My comment is please take quick action so that the city of Seaside does not get in the situation that Portland is in. Portland allowed things to go to long and too far and now Portland is completely overwhelmed with camps, garbage and crime.

Thank you.

Jenna

S Edgewood

Homelessness situation

From: Wendy Lincoln <windge26@gmail.com>

To: publiccomment@cityofseaside.us

Date: 11/4/2020 7:59 AM

Dear City of Seaside,

I understand you are holding a special workshop to address homelessness. This is my comment on the matter:

As you explore solutions to this problem, I ask you to please operate with empathy as your guiding principle. People who lose their homes are at an extreme disadvantage. They need help, not punishment. They need support, not shaming. They need help meeting their basic needs for food, water, and shelter. It is our responsibility to provide solutions, and it is in the best interests of our community to not have camps or people sleeping in doorways.

Please pursue solutions that provide the basics so that these people can help themselves and get back to normal life as quickly as possible. That means that we should provide them with food, water, clothing, medical care, and a place to live. Nobody can “lift themselves up by their bootstraps” when they are exhausted from not sleeping, experiencing the pains of hunger, feeling deflated and listless from thirst, sick, or any combination of these conditions.

In Portland, there have been successful tent communities which have enabled people to stabilize their lives and get themselves out of homelessness without putting undue strain on the community. The city provided basic services and access to programs. These camps have been successful and are one of the potential solutions Seaside should explore. It is low-cost option.

But it must not be created as a “police state”. People must be allowed to come and go freely and live without constant surveillance for it to work. Seaside would need to provide a number of services, including trash, access to showers and restrooms, food, water, transportation, basic medical care, COVID screening, and camping gear.

The city would need to choose a location that is both central to infrastructure but also not an eyesore. And the community would need to be organized to provide opportunities for these individuals to get back to normal life, including job and life skills training, and opportunities to make money so that they can pay to return home, if they wish.

Another option, perhaps one that is painfully obvious, would be to repurpose existing buildings and allow people to camp inside — the old schools could serve this purpose extremely well.

The city could then build additional solutions from there, taking feedback from the homeless and the community at every step. Homelessness is a chronic problem and there are no easy solutions. Needs change over time, and the city will have to continue to manage the situation with empathy for the foreseeable future.

For a long-term solution, you may want to look into the Housing First program run by the state of Utah. While it has recently come under scrutiny, it has also helped so many people crawl back from homelessness. It is an empathetic approach that the city should consider for a long-term solution. It would also help us address one of the underlying problems: a lack of housing, especially housing that somebody working in one of our shops or restaurants can afford.

To fund all this, you may want to consider a hotel and short-term rental tax. Tourism, while highly beneficial to this community, contributes to our housing crisis. And because it does, it should be part of the solution.

Thank you so much for inviting input from the community.

Regards,

11/6/2020

Wendy Lincoln

Homelessness

From: Sharon Kathleen Johnson <sharonkathleenjohnson@yahoo.com>

To: publiccomment@cityofseaside.us <publiccomment@cityofseaside.us>

Date: 11/4/2020 8:58 AM

I don't know why we can't buy the old high school and turn it into emergency housing and rehabilitation. Assisted living for low-income seniors would be another good use of the extensive facility, especially since I have noticed many homeless people are older and have a harder time assimilating into our coastal economy.

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android

11/6/2020

Seaside Homelessness Workshop Input

From: Michael Hinton <michaelhinton@centurylink.net>

To: publiccomment@cityofseaside.us

Cc: Lita Estevez-Hinton <soleilah@hotmail.com>

Date: 11/6/2020 1:49 PM

Honorable Mayor and City Councilors,

The issue before us has been around for quite some time and is difficult to understand in its entirety. It is complex since many are homeless for different reasons yet many gravitate to trespass and needful scrounging to survive. It is hard to know how effective aide can be given to them through our community partners; social services, possible housing, jobs for the willing who are able to help themselves or contribute to the community welfare somehow. Property theft is increasing. Public Safety is dwindling for ourselves and our visitors.

It is senseless to “punish” them for what they cannot help though some commit lasting willful, lasting property damage to our City Parks and riffle through our trash cans on Recology days. Our Parks are overwhelmed as apparent homeless individuals mar our Children’s playgrounds and playing fields at great expense. There is risk to Public Health. Many are mentally ill, sociopathic and lack care. Others may be hiding from legal obligations, child support, warrants. We have hundreds of sexual predators throughout the County! Many have chosen this path as their personal freedom and individual right to live as they chose and are protected by our Constitution. Car Campers move their whole entourage (with unregistered vehicles) back and forth, one park to the next, week after week, often leaving a trail of trash behind for Public Works to clean up.

No matter the issue, Homelessness, puts the community at risk when it encroaches on our sensibilities, normality as expressed in community goals and responsible daily life.

I think a “park” should be created to provide for “campers”, similar to what I’m seeing in parts of Portland. We have to remove illegal camping from our City Parks, and adjacent private lands that are reserved for wetland parks and passive recreation. It is possible the Millponds need to be closed altogether until the invasive nature of homelessness can be removed, It is worse than weeds or invasive species.

I understand zoning would be a problem for special camps of this nature. Can we look to the County for this?

Public Works is overwhelmed with damage control day to day! Likely our Police, too!

Where are they coming from? Do any have kin nearby who can help? Will the client accept “help”? Folks that may have been sent here with a bus ticket “home” can find nothing except a milder climate but no services. Some need to stay where they were found. Likely we need a statewide mandate that can be legally exercised . It needs to be an “Emergency Order”! A solution is going to be costly and with Covid-19 still in our midst, very complex as well.

Respectfully,

Michael Hinton
1015 S. Irvine Place
Seaside,OR 97138

Public Comment re: Homeless Workshop

From: Kathy Kleczek <kathy4seaside@gmail.com>

To: PublicComment@cityofseaside.us

Date: 11/6/2020 3:55 PM

Dear Seaside City Council,

I would like to request that the public comments you receive prior to meetings be read into the public record, so they may in fact be public.

I applaud you for scheduling a workshop inviting public involvement to work on the homelessness issues in the City of Seaside. There are many sides to homelessness and how the community as a whole is affected is a large task to handle.

However, I am discouraged by how the process is being handled. Not clearly stating in advance whether or not there will be actual public comment permitted does not send a clear message to the public about whether input is actually desired or not. Asking the public to comment in advance on things that presumably the PD, City Attorney and City Manager have done research on as the notice states "The City Council has asked the City Attorney, Police Chief, and City Manager to come back to the Council with options of what can be done or can't be done to implement possible solutions." does not feel like the city is open to discussing possible solutions outside of what the aforementioned people present.

Seaside is not alone in feeling the impacts of homelessness. It would be encouraging to see the City invited as many potential avenues for solutions as possible.

One suggestion I would like to propose is that the Cities, Police Departments, and Fire Departments in the County join together to fund a program modeled after the CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) program in Eugene, Oregon. . The program has reduced significantly the number of mental health calls Police and Fire have needed to respond to freeing them for calls more in line with their training.

Solutions come from trying new things. I encourage you to look outside the box for something that may well serve our community.

Sincerely,

Kathy Kleczek

Kimberley Jordan

From: Rebecca Read <rebeccaread8@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, November 7, 2020 1:00 PM
To: Jay Barber; rfrank@cityofseaside.us; Kirstin Horning; monterotita1@gmail.com; smorrissey@cityofseaside.us; miss-or@seasurf.net; swright@cityofseaside.us; Mark Winstanley; Dave Ham
Subject: Homeless Workshop

Dear Mayor, City Council, City Manager, Police Chief

Thank you for convening the Nov 6 workshop on homelessness.

After listening to the workshop discussion I am concerned about the pace in which Seaside moves forward, considering winter is encroaching. Yes, we need valuable input and engagement from the public but we also need to concurrently be gathering ideas, engaging county partners, and implementing actions for immediate needs. I think it's agreed we don't need to reinvent the wheel. We can look at what other communities and organizations are doing to find solutions that match our particular needs and devise our own unique solutions. We can connect with resources available in the county, and fill in those resource gaps as we are able. Links to ideas have already been offered.

We need short-term and long-term solutions alike; short-term provisions for vulnerable people this winter, and long-term strategies that address the root causes why people end up without permanent addresses. It was apparent at the workshop that people need additional information to help inform decisions. City council, city attorney and city staff will benefit by engaging with county agencies and partners in this field to get a better grasp of what are the issues and what is being proposed and implemented to address the problems.

Yesterday, at the monthly Public Safety Coordinating Council meeting, I invited members to view the workshop to be better informed about Seaside's efforts.

Thanks.
Rebecca Read

Please forward this to City Attorney Van Thiel