



SEBASTOPOL CHARTER A Public Waldorf School

Dear Sebastopol City Council,

I heard from a former colleague about a proposal for a Homeless RV Village to be located 1,397 feet from Sebastopol Charter School, a K-8 public school with 265 students. I have not received any direct communication from staff or elected officials from the city of Sebastopol nor from any personnel related to the non-profit institutions involved in the proposed Homeless RV Village. Yet, the Sebastopol City Council is considering approval of this project tonight.

I can understand that the city council wants to curtail the use of Morris Street as an unregulated homeless RV camp and provide restrictions on long-term parking, which many cities have done in response to RVs becoming permanent residences on public streets. However, approving a homeless RV village in a largely residential area near a public school is not appropriate for several reasons.

- By locating a city-sanctioned homeless village 1,397 feet from the entrance of a public elementary school, you are opening yourself and the homeless village to significant responsibility in tracking whether homeless sex offenders are breaking the law by residing within 2,000 feet of a public school. This is a significant liability issue and simply inappropriate.
 - About 3% of registered sex offenders are homeless.
 - There are over 6,000 homeless sex offenders in California.
- The proposed homeless RV village has no room for parking of cars. The assumption seems to be that the homeless residents will be frequenting the same walking areas and bus stops as our students.
- The nearby Joe Rodota trail, a Sonoma County Regional Park, is used by students for walking and biking to school, but it will also be the closest public park for the homeless residents. What measures will be put into place to keep students safe, knowing that homelessness is usually the result of significant mental health issues, criminal backgrounds and substance abuse problems?
- The school campus has already experienced trespassing by homeless people, vandalism, theft and trash left behind. It's reasonable to be concerned about an increase in these things with a nearby homeless camp.

We all know that homelessness is a significant problem that needs solutions that various government agencies explore with various ideas. Although it's commendable to want to provide an improved situation for homeless people with RVs, it's important to be responsible in choosing the location of a homeless RV village. It's commendable to want to help homeless people who have had a series of unfortunate situations that have led them to where they are at, but it's important to be responsible for the safety of nearby elementary school students in order to set up the homeless village for success. This is not about a privileged group of people

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not wanting to be near homeless people, but rather it's about safety. We are very supportive of a program to support homeless people where the location is appropriate.

Unfortunately, we don't know much about the details of the program which perhaps could have been gained by a meaningful and timely conversation. Finding out just two days ago about the city council possibly approving this project tonight has not provided us with any opportunity for a timely dialogue. It's very disheartening about the lack of process and respect of a school where hundreds of Sebastopol residents bring their children. It seems more appropriate to delay a decision and engage with the school for further consideration. If the city council is adamant about making a decision tonight, we are in opposition to the approval and recommend a more appropriate location for a homeless RV village.

Sincerely,

Chris Topham

Executive Director

P.S. Please find attached letter from our attorney with School & College Legal Services.

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