

Sebastopol City Council public comment

December 7th

This weekend a drug dealers car being chased by police crashed into and badly damaged an occupied recreational vehicle being used as permanent housing on a public City of Sebastopol street.

Here is the local corporate media write up of these events

<https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/16-mile-chase-ends-with-crash-into-sebastopol-trailer-arrests/>

'Deputies continued to chase Davis and eventually Davis lost control of the car and crashed into an occupied, parked travel trailer at the intersection of Johnson Street and Eddie Lane in Sebastopol, officials said'.

This is a textbook example of why recreational vehicle parking permits, which the city has agreed to permanently implement in 2022 as a facet of their short term RV parking project with Sonoma Applied Village Services (SAVS) enabled by a state/CoC county grant and the largesse of St Vincent DePaul, are essential for everyone's safety.

Travel trailers are **not** safe housing on city streets: the occupants are in danger from traffic collisions, there are serious public health sanitation concerns due to lack of infrastructure, fire risk, the blight impact on a city that relies heavily on tourism for jobs and tax income.

Sonoma County spent \$92 million over the last two years on homeless services to little effect, including funding SAVS liaising with the Sebastopol's transient population. The county is failing badly with no overarching strategic plan to help the unhoused with a piecemeal, short term approach to rapidly increasing issues everyone, whether housed or unhoused, are facing.

I continue to advocate for the use of rural and campus county land and infrastructure to provide shelter for the ~3000 people categorized as unhoused. Many places around the country have used significant acreage for tiny homes and travel trailer living spaces for people struggling with substance use/sobriety issues, mental illness and/or disabilities. The county is failing badly and as a result the burden on small cities such as Sebastopol with its \$10m annual budget for everything is becoming more and more onerous.

A ban on overnight parking of recreational vehicle without a pre approved permit is now typical in many California localities, despite pressures from the various homeless advocacy organizations, which Sebastopol can expect to encounter rain the coming weeks. Sadly poor county organization and the lure of outsourced funding attracts questionable 'non profit' businesses. Social media is a powerful tool to identify places that allow free camping, funding possibilities and lenient treatment of substance abuse.

As more places restrict blight in cities and organize acreage with sobriety rules for the unhoused to rebuild their lives migration to place that have no restrictions in place increase, a typical urban 'tragedy of the commons' scenario.

Fortunately the legalize is straightforward to implement parking restrictions and should be accompanied by the county getting organized in 2022 to start to build coherent management and support for homeless services. I will continue to pressure the count yon this.

Regarding SAVS, where the county is bound by the Brown Act and other law to meet in public and record all meetings, SAVS are organizing various off the record meetings that amount to sales events with assurances that the city's residents are in safe hands with them. You witnessed during the last council meeting the overwhelming opposition to their short term, underfunded plan from alarmed locals, which was sadly virtually ignored by the councillors who form 'the committee for the unhoused'.

This is a worrying trend and will make people participate in public meetings even less if their concerns are seen to be ignored. At the moment it feels as though the city's transient congregations are of much greater importance than the actual citizen who are struggling to pay their rents, mortgages and taxes. This is made worse by the schmoozy, 'we're moving in next to you and will make it a easy for you as possible' SAVS tone.

There is actually absolutely no reason for the short term 'safe parking' project to be going ahead in Sebastopol, it would be so much better if SAVS was focusing on a genuine 'Applied villages' tiny home community effort such as the various highly cost effective case histories that are easy to find online in Washington state, Texas etc.

The county were enthusiastic about this idea in 2019 but have now totally dropped the ball, leaving tiny places like Sebastopol to deal with the problem.

Let's focus in 2022 on pressuring the county to start behaving responsibly for their citizens!

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