

From: [Rachel Bartz](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Mary Gourley](#)
Subject: Comment for 6.21 Meeting, Agenda Item 5, is there still a Homeless State of Emergency?
Date: Monday, June 20, 2022 11:36:31 AM

Dear Members of the City Council,

It's true that our City and County has homelessness problems, but I question the practice of continuing to call this state of affairs an "emergency."

The homeless situation has become persistent - it's now a challenging "new normal" — much like living with drought, or like living with Covid-19 and its variants— but, passing time and observation has shown us that homelessness in Sebastopol is neither unique to Sebastopol, nor creating heightened "emergencies" such as a fire that destroys a section of homes and requires immediate resources for victims.

In my experience, when governments declare a "state of emergency" it's for political purposes — to find shortcuts that circumvent regular, lawful practices that are put in place to limit government over-reach. This is a dramatic example, but we all know that tyrants like to declare states of emergency to limit civil liberties.

So please define for us... what is the threshold for a situation being a continuing challenge (like road maintenance, potholes / or drought and water management), and for a situation being a true emergency (such as relief for fire victims)? If everything is an emergency, then nothing is.

The City should be transparent about its purpose for extending state of emergency declarations — is it to receive extra State money (a potential benefit?) .. or is it to amplify a particular agenda? Is the Council using this declaration to prioritize homeless services over competing interests such as funding for fire-fighting services? What are the pros and cons of rubber-stamping this homelessness declaration? Please help us understand more at the upcoming meeting.

With best regards,
Rachel Allen