

Council item 10 homeless services budgets public comment

Councillors,

As we prepare to batten down the hatches for what looks to be a severe global economic recession over the next few months and quarters, the city of Sebastopol budget will require all the help it can get. Since a significant chunk of revenue is raised by local sales tax it is imperative to support local businesses and their local employees. The city has an alarmingly large number of empty store fronts. Sadly the pandemic ravaged small businesses and just as we are getting back to normal central banks have created raging inflation.

With the end of the rent moratorium looming, local low income working families are likely to have significant issues with their living costs while of course many of the people who rent out properties are seriously out of pocket.

The 2019 commandeering of the city's only downtown hotel by the county was enabled by the astonishing budget amounts the county choses to spend on supporting transients via various 'non profit' companies.

The data for 2021 for what was 'the Sebastopol Inn at Gravenstein Station', which is now 'homekey' transient accommodation for around 45 people:

Food: \$496,756
Medical: \$2,133,982
Security: \$820,361

So a total of \$3,451,100 was spent on the housing and well-being of a small number of 'at risk from Covid' homeless by the county, who had a \$91 million budget for these types of projects last year. This data was obtained after a great deal of effort as the county are notoriously opaque about their plans, activities, budgets and spending). I know some of you attended Governor Newsom's pop up self congratulation presser outside the former Inn last July when more of these types of project were announced.

The bed tax, jobs and tourist trade has now gone for the foreseeable future as a result of the county's actions. I'm assuming the over three quarters of a million 'security budget' was to protect the inhabitants from Sebastopol's notoriously rowdy inhabitants.

The county, with its huge budget, layers of bureaucracies, staff and 'non profit' partnerships is reasonably well equipped to deal with transients who have substance abuse issues, serious mental illness and the increasing numbers of vehicle dwelling migratory transients. Local cities such as Petaluma, Santa Rosa and others are coordinating to triage these sorts of issues.

The city of Sebastopol, with its tiny annual budget of \$10 million chose to attempt an ad hoc home brew effort last fall and has got itself into hot water rushing through a hastily executed and ill advised concentration area for transient RV dwellers within the city limits that

predictably led to the **lawsuit** vs the city by locals affected by those actions that will be heard on **Wednesday 22nd at 3pm.**

I would urge council in light of the coming recession to think very carefully about what it sets up and funds from the public purse for the future, given the already bare bones state of the way the city is currently run. The county can hire grant writers and organize at scale. We don't need one. The city of Sebastopol needs to focus on city issues instead of overreaching and biting off more than it can chew with very short term funding for ambitious and questionable projects.

Hopefully the City of Sebastopol ad hoc committee

'Status of Services to the Unhoused' "Town Hall' meeting

On June 30. 6pm-8pm

Via Zoom will not just be a self congratulation session by participants in the home brew experiment and will include detailed data, planning and budget information about how much of the tiny city budget has been consumed and what the results are, so citizens can judge the value created and achieved, comment on success and failure and future plans.

Clearly the \$3,451,100 2021 county spend on the Sebastopol Inn inhabitants needs could have been used to help far more local people in need than just the few people given 'permanent' hotel rooms in what was the only downtown hotel.

I look forward to hearing about realistic plans and budgets with less sudden announcements and execution of projects that are not thought through.

Oliver Marks
Downtown Sebastopol