

From: [Kate Haug](#)
To: [Mary Gourley](#)
Cc: [Kevin Kilgore](#); [Bill Braga](#); [Dante Del Prete](#); [Fernandez, Evert](#); [Kathy Oetinger](#); [Ana Kwong](#)
Subject: Fund Fire Department not Transients - Public Comment - 3/15/22 - Item 17
Date: Thursday, March 10, 2022 6:47:36 PM

Dear Council Members,

WHERE IS BUDGET FOR TRANSIENT SERVICES?

I am asking that the Committee on the Unhoused submit a budget for all the expenses current citizens (7500 people) are paying for a small group of transients (less than 70?) who are in the City of Sebastopol.

This would include police, public works, fire and City administration time, funding for Park Village, funding for the homeless outreach coordinator, port-o-potties, hand washing stations, garbage cans and pickup, and outside attorney time,

As this and the previous report clearly documents, citizens, City Staff and Council have spent an extraordinary amount of time and resources on a very small segment of the population. Although we pay are paying \$72,000 per year for a Homeless Outreach Coordinator, there is no data which says how many transients live in Sebastopol (this might be anticipated as they are transient) but it would be reasonable to put the number at 70 or less which means that the 99.2% of Sebastopol's population is housed. Would it be fair to say that Council, City Staff and Citizens should only be spending .08% of time and resources on transients instead of 25% or 50%?

What percentage of the annual budget of Sebastopol is spent on a micro population of transients who do not pay any property tax but instead live off the services paid for by property owners? Is Council's spending fair to taxpayers given the fact that the fire and police departments are underfunded, Main Street and Downtown are unkempt, sidewalks are dangerous and roads are the worst in Sonoma County?

SEBASTOPOL - HIGHEST PER CAPITA BEDS FOR TRANSIENTS IN SONOMA COUNTY

As has been previously mentioned, Sebastopol has the highest per capita of transient beds of any city in Sonoma County. The County itself would need 11,000 beds to match Sebastopol's ratio of transient beds.

USE FUNDING FOR TRANSIENTS FOR FIRE DEPARTMENT

I ask that the Council does not fund any more transient services, including funding more safe parking sites and funding warming/cooling centers, until the County and/or other cities match our ratio of transient beds. Sebastopol is generously funding many services for transients and many transient beds. Sebastopol has not replaced the lost revenues from the conversion of the Sebastopol Inn to transient housing, which has also decreased tourist

foot traffic downtown.

I ask that the Council not employ a homeless outreach coordinator until we have fully supported our fire department, including offering housing stipends to volunteer firefighters so that it is easier for volunteers to live in town. \$72,000 is \$6000 per month. You could give 10 volunteer firefighters \$600 per month toward housing costs. This would help retain and recruit volunteers to our fire department. The \$72,000 is just one transient expense. Port-o-potties and handwashing stations are probably another \$72,000. If we transfer these funds to volunteer firefighter housing stipends, that could support another 10 volunteer fire fighters. In these two reallocations, we could support 20 volunteer firefighters.

I ask that Council use the money that has been spent on transients to support our fire department through equipment purchases and housing stipends for volunteer firefighters. Fire season is upon us, we need to have a functioning and responsive fire department.

Instead of funding transients, we need to make sure our volunteer firefighters can live in town so that our fire department is fully staffed and prepared for an emergency situation. Why are we funding transients to live in Sebastopol if our own firefighters can't afford to live here?

Sebastopol is one of the last volunteer fire departments left in the State. If we do not retain our volunteers and make it viable for them to live in town, we will not have a fire department.

Sebastopol needs a fire department. We are a community of elders. We live in a fire prone area. The impacts of climate change are increasing weather events which result in emergency situations.

In addition, our fire department provides mutual aid to other neighboring communities, which is essential given the history of wildfires. Our fire department helps to pay for itself when it serves as a strike team.

COUNCIL PRIORITIZE CITIZEN AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

I ask that the Council prioritize community safety and essential resident services before funding any more transient services. We cannot afford a homeless outreach coordinator when we are not able to support our volunteer firefighters. We cannot afford any additional transient services such as additional safe parking and additional heating and cooling centers.

Sonoma County has many cities that have much bigger budgets and more hotel revenue. Windsor, Healdsburg, Cloverdale, Rohnert Park, Sonoma all have much larger budgets and fewer transient services. It's time for other cities and the County to fulfill their obligations to transients and to let Sebastopol recover from providing an outsized amount of services.

Best,
Kate Haug