

From: [Ludmilla Bade](#)
To: [Mary Gourley](#)
Subject: Proposed RV Parking Restrictions
Date: Tuesday, February 15, 2022 4:30:22 PM

Dear Citizens and Councilmembers,

I understand that some citizens are concerned that some RVs have been parked at street locations for more than 72 hours.

I agree with you that a few RV owners have parked their vehicles in a way, location, or time frame that is not consistent with some residents or business owner's visions for a particular street or vista.

I also notice that some individuals are conflating their fears, stereotypes, "internal stories", and prejudices with the actual in-real-life and sometimes death situations of people living with disabilities, aging, and without the means to afford a brick and mortar home.

I do not in any way agree with anyone taking items (including gas) without the owner's permission, entering or residing on private property without the owner's permission, or touching or entering someone's vehicle without the owner's permission. These actions can and should be cited, investigated, and followed up on with involved individuals.

I also do not agree with individuals or special groups misusing public spaces by disproportionately utilizing them in a way that excludes use by other members of the public. Campers and RV dwellers should continue to behave and maintain their stuff in ways that safely allow space for others to use parking areas and walkways, etc. And other socioeconomic classes should also behave in ways that allow use of public spaces for other groups, and individuals in other socioeconomic classes to feel safe while utilizing these resources.

I think everyone agrees that we/they/individuals do not want people in RVs to be permanently parked on streets.

The problem here, is that we need to solve the correct problem. A long time ago, I wondered why some wars continue so long. The key in winning a war, is first correctly identify the enemy - if the actual enemy is not addressed, then it's just a continuing mess with relatively innocent people bashing each other around, and casualties/drained resources for the "good" side as well as the "others". In problem solving, if the primary actual problem remains unsolved, then the problem will continue to be a problem.

The current proposed RV ordinance is intended to target unhoused people, in a completely misguided attempt to "motivate" them to magically levitate into some invisible space.

Those of us who have found a brief landing spot on the streets of Sebastopol (as I did, and my son before me when he started working in Sonoma County after graduating from college) are already motivated. I don't know of any RV dwellers (or anyone else for that matter) who grew up telling their family that their life goal was to live in a vehicle on the streets of Sebastopol.

It is an extremely silly investment for the citizens of Sebastopol to spend an estimated

\$350,000 on "you're not welcome here" signs, additional police enforcement, and ticketing and fining nightmares for every RV or trailer-owning citizen, visitor, or service worker to Sebastopol from here on out.

The proposed ordinance would disproportionately impact citizens who have an extra vehicle, but share housing, with limited driveway space. It would disproportionately favor citizens who occupy relatively spacious single-family property with extra land or driveway space.

The SAVs group with the RV parking (thank you Councilmembers, Citizens, and others for giving space and time and energy to creating and allowing and defending!(yikes) this project) is already prioritizing the street RVs that have been in Sebastopol the longest.

There is no need to "pile on" and minimize the good effect that SAVs (and other similar efforts in Santa Rosa and elsewhere) are having by adding on administratively violent hate actions to "convince already traumatized people that they are unwanted and unwelcome" or "fining impoverished people so that it is harder to find the resources to maintain a vehicle or pay a security deposit on housing" or "removing and towing a living space so that someone has to return to camping in the surrounding woods" or whatever it is that some NIMBYs think will be sufficient violence to convince people that property ownership is the only "right path" to right living.

The reasons that homeless people have had difficulty being housed vary from individual to individual, and it is often a mistake to paint everyone with the same brush, and even moreso to seek the same solution for every situation. But I can tell you that successfully getting onto social services is more difficult than applying to college. I can tell you that out of 280 federal housing vouchers provided to this county in August 2021, as of January 2022 only about 50 had been found homes despite the efforts of several major agencies and non-profits - the rest are in some kind of limbo waiting for a landlord or a space to open up. I can tell you that the shelters in this county do not have a space nearby for RVs, so if someone has a vehicle they have no safe space to park it, and they may lose all of their possessions and their vehicle may be harmed as well if it's parked offsite. I can tell you that if someone has a family pet, often there is no space that will take them and their furry family as well.

I can also tell you that several public or private efforts have been made to find additional space for homeless people in vehicles, but "neighbors" in other communities have raised so much concern, based on their stereotypes and fears, that numerous options have been shut down or never got started. I can say that millions of dollars go to "facilitating" homeless programs, studies, meetings, conferences, and whatnot, but very little of it benefits the person on the street. Most non-profits will not offer much help with any connections, work options, or other services unless the person gets housing or shelter through them, and those of us who are only moderately traumatized or disabled or aging often do not qualify for their housing or shelter program because we don't score high enough on their "vulnerability" scale. In short, the people who might be able to work part-time, who are capable and able enough to drive, to own a vehicle, and to keep their stuff in some kind of order, are those most left out of the current "homeless resolution" programs, and also (because they have a vehicle) are the most targeted by police, code enforcement, and NIMBY hate-mongers.

I could go on about the connection between connections with people vs addiction. I could go on and on about being excluded and re-excluded, and how much time is lost recovering from each incident. I could mention the different mind/behavior states of stress functioning, vs

personal and life development. I could wax poetic about the possibilities of education and being able to catch one's breath.

Some people are travelling around West County and temporarily landing in Sebastopol because Code Enforcement has been going around (at the insistence of "complainers") and aggressively shutting down and punitively fining (to the point of intending that they lose their land) rural property owners who "dare" to provide housing or parking space for low income people - I hear that in the last year alone they've *proudly* shut down almost 200 land owners' capacity to help arrange shelter and utilities for multiple low income people. 20 people in one that I know of, 9 in another - I believe most of these sites each involved multiple low income people. Some RV owners may be travelling through Sebastopol - but mostly not because they can get "free resources" - I understand they are looking for connection, for community, for work, and for hope.

I agree with many of you that the County could be doing a much better job with handling issues related to homelessness than it is. But I also would encourage more people to be less angry with people who are currently labelled as "homeless", because they often aren't particularly consuming local resources.

I hear the police chief's frustration with enforcement. The current non-enforcement ad-infinitum run around is not working, and not a good use of police resources.

Instead of this violence and fear-based urban copycat hypocritically enforced RV parking ban, I suggest and support a much more solid enforcement of the 72 hour rule:

- Put a largish notice (preferably green - the orange are kind of scary) on any problem-parked vehicle, the first time it is seen parked somewhere. Proposed Text: The City of Sebastopol has a strictly enforced 72 hour parking rule. This vehicle needs to be moved off of this street at least 2 blocks or _____ (specified distance) away, by _____ date (72 hrs after notice). Please do not park on residential streets. Police phone number _____ /or online site _____ (so residents can call or register online if it's their vehicle in front of their own house). If vehicle is not moved by the above time, it is subject to citation.

Thank you for considering this relatively simple, inexpensive, and potentially more effective solution. I would love to see you able to invest your valuable funds and energy in art and other projects that will enhance the city instead.

Thank you,

Ludmilla Bade



Try to make at least one person happy every day,

and then in ten years you may have made three thousand, six hundred and fifty persons happy, or brightened a small town by your contribution to the fund of general enjoyment.

- Sydney Smith