

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM

Meeting Date: October 4, 2022
To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
From: City Administration
Subject: Sonoma Applied village Services (SAVS) Informational Report
Presenter: Adrienne Lauby
Recommendation: That the City Council Receive the Informational Report
Funding: Currently Budgeted: _____ Yes _____ No XX N/A
Net General Fund: N/A
Amount: N/A
Net General Fund Cost: N/A

Account Code/Costs authorized in City Approved Budget (if applicable) AK (verified by Administrative Services Department)

INTRODUCTION: The item tonight is to receive an informational report from Sonoma Applied village Services (SAVS). No action is required.

BACKGROUND:

SAVS has partnered with the City to furnish professional services for Operation of Horizon Shine. Horizon Shine (the City's RV Pilot Program) is open and operational, with full occupancy. It is providing a managed, humane, safe, sanitary environment to lived-in vehicles that were formerly on Morris and adjacent streets. The opening of Horizon Shine has accomplished the priority task assigned by the Council to the Committee for the Unhoused, which was to identify a viable alternate location for the RV dwellers on Morris Street.

DISCUSSION:

The item tonight is to receive an informational report from SAVS. No action is required.

CITY COUNCIL AND/OR GENERAL PLAN GOALS:

GOALS:

Goal 5 - Provide Open and Responsive Municipal Government Leadership

5.1.4 – Enhance the use of the City of Sebastopol Committees, Commission and Board.

5.3.3 - Encourage and increase public awareness of City Policies, decisions, programs and all public processes and meetings, by investigating effective methods of communication and obtaining feedback from the community.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

As of the writing of this staff report, the City has not received any public comment. However, if staff receives public comment from interested parties following the publication and distribution of this staff report such comments will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials before or at the meeting. In addition, public comments may be offered during the public comment portion of this item.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

This item was noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to schedule meeting date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact with this report tonight as funding for SAVS has been allocated and approved.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council receive the informational report.

Attachment:

SAVS Report



SONOMA APPLIED VILLAGE SERVICES

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<https://sonomavillages.org>

Quarterly Report SAVS Contract with the City of Sebastopol for Horizon Shine Village Sept 24, 2022



In accordance with our contracts with the City of Sebastopol and the Community Development Commission of Sonoma County, SAVS set up Horizon Shine Village and operates it on a lot owned by St. Vincent de Paul at 845 Gravenstein Hwy. N. Horizon Shine is a safe parking village with a mix of cars, vans, trailers and RVs which are used as primary residences for the homeless people of Sebastopol. SAVS provides site management including sanitary and water facilities, a waste management system, security, access to food and individual whole-person-care support for the residents.

Quarterly Overview

Have we faced challenges at Horizon Shine this quarter or were the gods just seriously out to get us?

- Not one, but two, of our core case managers have had serious health issues that kept them off work for many days.
- In the middle of some major revamping, our village manager resigned without notice.

And, these were just the staff problems!

We want our quarterly reports to show steady progress -- and you can find out about some amazing things at Horizon Shine since July if you continue reading -- but much of what we've done this quarter has been crisis prevention.

In the coming quarter we'll return to the basics as we train and reset the staff, and tighten our belts so the SAVS General Fund can take us through the year.

On the good news tip: The lawsuit against the City of Sebastopol which attempted to shut down Horizon Shine was heard by the California Court of Appeals on August 18, 2022. The court upheld the decision of the Sonoma County Superior Court which ruled in favor of the City of Sebastopol with a single sentence: "...*The Writ of Mandate is denied, without prejudice to petitioner's ability to appeal the matter...*" No further appeal has been filed. We are grateful to the City of Sebastopol and the law office of Edward Grutzmacher for their legal work which had the effect of keeping the village open.

Horizon Shine Villagers

Not just the staff, but villagers too have had to deal with medical crisis. An individual with a heart problem ended up in the hospital and returned with oxygen they will have to use into the future. We've had several exacerbations of chronic illnesses, and an overdose only survived due to Narcan.



As we've gotten to know the villagers and developed more mutual trust, we've begun work with individual psychological issues. Mental health support is difficult to find but we are determined to put it in place for those who need it.

One of our villagers arrived with a mostly untreated cancer diagnosis. With exceptional support from the West County Health Center's Healthcare for the Homeless Team and several of our staff members, we're relieved to say that he's reconnected to medical care and accepting most of the treatments they offer.

There are villagers with addiction problems, and we've tried many paths to treatment for this serious illness. Recently, we tried again to connect with Narcotics Anonymous. They told us that they are getting requests from other encampments and are currently stretched thin. We're happy to see more homeless people and homeless advocates looking for this kind of help. We only wish there were more addicts in recovery willing to do this difficult and important work.

Two villagers moved out in this quarter. One gentleman was asked to leave due to violent behavior and the Sonoma County Superior Court imposed a restraining order to prevent him from harassing our staff. The second villager was accused of theft when a visitor's valuable item disappeared. He was asked to leave. This incident is under investigation and a decision on whether to invite him to return is under review.

We are currently examining our waiting list and will fill any open slots with homeless Sebastopol residents.

Villager Survey

We did a comprehensive survey of the Villagers in August which was fantastically successful. Only three people chose not to participate, and many people wrote extensively about their experiences, complaints and hopes for the future. Cynthia Poten and Barbara Lee organized this effort.

The most important answer for us was to the first question, **"How do you feel about living at Horizon Shine?"** Positive responses were the overwhelming majority. The comments included, *"Just fine. Are people really this generous?"* *"I feel like I have a legitimate place to go at the end of the day"* *"Okay,"* *"Great,"* *"Hopeful, thankful. Living at [Horizon Shine] has afforded me time and space to achieve or try to achieve other needs."*

In the Improvements Section people had a desire for more consistent rules, a garden, a permanent site, on-site storage and more. Here's some of the other questions and responses:

Have you found the mandatory resident meetings helpful? 5 Yes. 4 Somewhat/sometimes.

Do you value your vote at these meetings? 12 Yes. 1 Yes absolutely. 3 No.

Do you agree with the current Horizon Shine rules? 5 Yes. 2 No or Mostly.

What kind of event would you like at the Village: Dances? Talent Night? Movies? Movies were vastly preferred but other events were suggested including drug counseling, barbeques, music-making nights & a rummage sale.

Do you feel you are 'job-ready'? 3 yes. 6 No or Mostly.

Do you know how to administer Narcan? 11 Yes. 8 No.

How do you feel about the people who come to the village to help with your pets, your health issues, job readiness, etc? "They are freakin' AWESOME." "Love them." "Wary." "Some of them have been particularly helpful. West County Health Center got me hooked up with my primary care Dr. again and I went to the dentist also."

Would you like to have a volunteer mentor? 6 Yes. 4 No. Perhaps.

It's impossible to summarize the many rich and varied comments. Here's a few more examples:

"[My hope is to] be settled in permanent housing and re-integrating my family into my life .. well, some."

"[In six months I want to be in] permanent housing, hopefully w/ some custody of my daughter back. Maybe w/ a job/small business started."

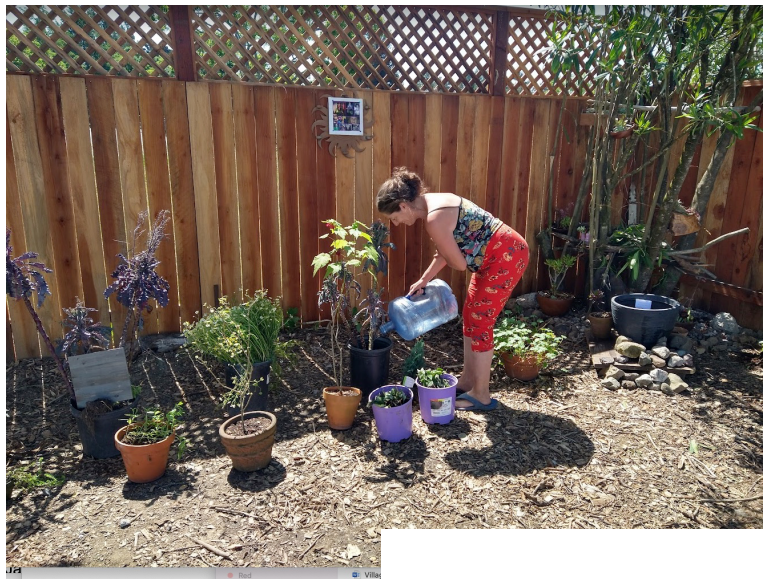
"Why can't there be classes for people who have problems with each other before they get so degraded their spirit goes to nothing – worse than they were before."

"[The visitor policy is] bulls--t, unnecessary, Freedom inhibitive, punitive, damaging."

I think [security] works out how it is currently."

"Yes, [the mandatory meetings] help keep me informed of changes and what's going on in the park, & problems we're facing. But then they do seem a bit tense at times."

"I really seriously need to like basically empty out the front area of my RV and reorganize it and I have nowhere to store my belongings other than out in front of my RV (AKA my front yard area) and I don't want my space to start looking like a junkyard or for my things to get taken, since it is against the rules to have piles of stuff outside our RVs."



“[I’d like to see] paved driveway or clear of rocks.

If you would like to read the 10 page report on the survey, please contact adrienne@sonomavillages.org. We’d be happy to send you a copy.

Security

Other than routine police business with particular villagers, there were three police calls at Horizon Shine in this quarter.

1. Our neighbor’s complaint about loud drumming. The police informed him that no law was being broken. (see “Calls from Neighbors” below)
2. A violent threat from a villager which happened despite this person’s written agreement to walk away rather than engage in angry exchanges. This incident led to the villager being asked to leave and the court granting a restraining order against that person.
3. An argument that grew over time to involve three villagers and a staff member. The police were called and spoke to various individuals involved. We are continuing to investigate this incident. Apparently, no charges were filed.

We recently hired two new staff members to work on the Gate Monitor team. With agreement by the city, we will soon be expanding to cover the overnight gate work as well as the daytime shifts.

Neighborhood Relations

We’ve only had one neighborhood complaint in the last 3 months, from the neighbor who lives on the south side of the Village. He personally complained that someone was drumming too often. Then he followed up with a letter to the Press Democrat and a complaint to the Sebastopol police. The villager began using a drum set with headphones so the noise is no longer a problem. The police informed our neighbor that the drummer wasn’t breaking any laws.

Our community advisory committee returns from summer break the second week of October. Watch your email for date and time. To be added to our list of interested community members, contact Cynthia Poten at cynthia@sonomavillages.org

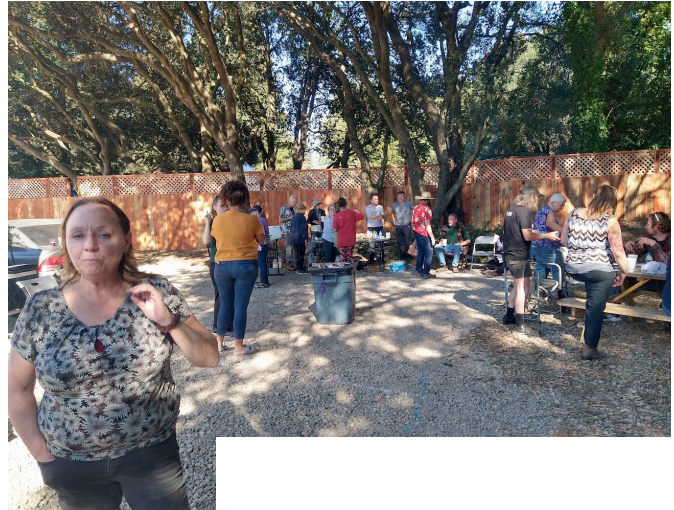


Development of Programmatic Offerings at the Village

This quarter we've focused on the medical front and, although it's slower than we wish, we are seeing a steady increase in villagers who have regular check ins with their doctor and are receiving needed medical attention. Big shout out to West County Health Center's Healthcare for the Homeless Team and Volunteer Suzanne Lande. Ms Lande sets up most medical appointments and often knocks on doors to check in with people with health issues.

Our work with Job Link continues. We were recently able to celebrate with one of our villagers when she was offered and accepted a job. This was a direct result of her work with Job Link. Our relationship with West County Community Center continues to our mutual benefit. Their outreach worker, Jennifer Lake, can often be seen at the village consulting either for one of her clients or for one of ours.

We have one active one-on-one mentor currently. This program shows promise and we want to expand it. If you have any interest or questions, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Barbara Lee at barbaralee6745@gmail.com



Some staff report that general drug use is down, both overall and for individuals. We continue to monitor this. Given that there is no private room at the village where we can preserve anonymity, we encourage villagers to make use of Narcotics Anonymous meetings around the county.

Led by our Case Worker Goldameir Clemente, we've been pushing to get the documents people need, especially for housing. Two particularly difficult problems were getting an out-of-state birth certificate and untangling one villager's very complicated situation with a bank, the IRS and an ex-domestic partner. This last problem is not entirely complete but promises to greatly improve this villager's income.

Another villager reported that they had over 150 traffic tickets and approximately \$30,000 in fines. We were able to get 70% of the tickets wiped off so this villager could register their vehicle and renew their driver's license.

"I used to go to the casino a lot, but now I have something better to do so I don't go nearly so often," one villager reported. *"It gives me money in my pocket."*

We've heard similar anecdotes which indicate that survival shoplifting and petty theft have also dropped.



We continue to offer one meal a day to the villagers. Most meals are provided by the Harvest Café from the Sebastopol Senior Center and we love working with them. Volunteer extraordinaire Mary Maki Rich continues to provide meals twice a week. In addition, community members often drop off dry goods, pastries and other useful food items. We are grateful to each and every one.

The Women's Circle hosted by Anne Scott continues to meet weekly.

Safety or rule violations and instances of physical violence

There have been no safety violations. There have been rule violations, mostly having to do with visitors, accumulation of property, and a dog that is allowed off leash. We also have minor anger management issues. Staff deals with these

problems individually and through the disciplinary process. Currently we are trying to use these infractions to discuss and reinforce adult behavior in a community setting.

We are still hampered by the lack of actual consequences we can impose. Currently, the most we can do is impose a temporary ban on the individual's visitors. We are exploring our legal options and are on our third iteration of the Village Council.

Staff

Dr. Len Wynn-Summers, one of our case managers, left on advice from his doctor. He was well-respected by the villagers and we hope to work with him again sometime in the future. Our Village Manager, Taylor Anderson-Stevenson, resigned as well. Ms Anderson-Stevenson stepped up to the challenge of being our first Village Manager. While we'll miss her high energy and commitment to the villagers, the changes she made with her hands-on approach and excellent program design will remain.

We've been able to make two excellent emergency hires.

Cynthia Poten has stepped into the role of Village Manager on an interim basis. Ms Poten is a member of our board. She has spent many volunteer hours working at Horizon Shine in the last seven months, most recently to develop and implement our first Village Survey.

Long-time homeless advocate, Ka'Lané Raposa, has stepped in to fill Dr. Summer's shoes. Mr. Raposa has lived expertise in homelessness. He brings a sharp mind and deep commitment to the issues of the homeless community.

General Information About Horizon Shine Village

Horizon Shine Village currently holds 19 mini-homes and 25 villagers. These individuals and their vehicles formerly lived on Morris St. in Sebastopol. Horizon Shine is full and has a waiting list of Sebastopol homeless people. We receive 2-3 calls a week from homeless individuals living in their

vehicles and seeking safety, many from other areas of Sonoma County. We expect to remain full through the end of the year without exhausting our current waiting list of homeless people from Sebastopol.



Horizon Shine opened February 15, 2021.

The villagers range in age from 30 to the mid-60s with the majority in their 50s. Sixteen are men; ten are women. Three are Black, Indigenous and People of color; the rest are white. The majority of our residents became homeless 2-3 years ago; of the rest, six have been homeless for 3-5 years; five for 5-8 years; one became homeless less than a year ago. The majority have been in and out of

homelessness four or more times. Sixty-one percent have no source of income and another 19% have incomes below \$500. a month.



Basic services include Trash Pick Up, Resident Manager, Security, Intake Paperwork, Village Meetings, Case Management, and a Daily Meal.

Health Care

Medi-Cal is the most common public program people are enrolled in. Three get food stamps and two have Veterans benefits. Six people have no income and no public assistance. Seven people report a chronic physical health condition and five live with a chronic mental health condition. Six people are disabled.