

Date: May 25, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers

From: Vice Mayor Sarah Glade Gurney
Councilmember Diana Rich

Subject: Report Out – Sebastopol Unhoused – Information Collected

INTRODUCTION:

At the May 19, 2021, at the City Council Fiscal Goals and Priorities Meeting, we reported out on a potential project (hereinafter “project”) to offer safe overnight parking at local churches, and to provide case management services through West County Community Services to these “safe parkers” as well as the current vehicular unhoused on Morris Street and the greater City-wide unhoused population. There was general support at the May 19 meeting for this project. It is our understanding from the outcome of the meeting that the Housing Subcommittee will have responsibility for this project from this point onward.

Our May 19 report-out to the City Council provided substantial details regarding the information we had gathered up to that point.

The purpose of this memo is to provide additional information we feel would be useful to the Housing Subcommittee as it moves forward with this project. From this point forward, if we are contacted by anyone regarding this project, we’ll be referring them to Mayor Una Glass and Councilmember Patrick Slayter, as the City Council’s designated Housing Subcommittee members.

The contact information for the lead person at each church is being transmitted directly to the Housing Subcommittee with the understanding that the contact information will not be publicly disclosed without the party’s permission.

We note as an overall comment that our conversations with the two churches that are considering safe overnight parking have disclosed the difficult balance they face in considering this idea. On the one hand, they have a sincere desire, driven by compassion and care for their fellow human beings, to offer their parking lots as a place for people to sleep safely at night. On the other hand, they have understandable concerns about the possible negative implications for their congregations and their neighbors.

The development of these two options have required substantial personal outreach and responsiveness to these very kind-hearted but concerned churches. We mention this in the context of Tim Miller’s comment about doing safe overnight parking, which is that the greatest challenge is finding willing properties to host the overnight parkers.

The discussions with these two churches are at a prime point. Continued prompt attention to their needs and questions will be needed to help them feel fully informed and prepared to make the decision that will work best for them and for their congregations and neighbors.

REPORT-OUT (supplementing our May 19 report-out to the Council):

1. Community Church of Sebastopol: This church has safe overnight parking in place (5 spots) and is very interested in case management services by West County Community Services. Without the case management support, they will have to terminate their safe overnight parking program. On the afternoon following the March 19 Goals and Priorities Meeting, an email was sent to Gary Bachelor and Joyce Cox of Community Church informing them that the project had received support from the City Council, and that our Housing Subcommittee would be reaching out in the near future. Gary and Joyce were given the email addresses for Mayor Una Glass and Councilmember Patrick Salyter for follow-up and questions.
2. United Methodist Church: This church does not currently have safe overnight parking in place, but is interested in participating. Reimbursement for expenses and case management services by West County Community Services are an important part of the arrangement for them. On the afternoon following the March 19 Goals and Priorities Meeting, an email was sent to Wayne Stanfield, a trustee of United Methodist, informing him that the project has received support from the City Council, and that our Housing Subcommittee will be reaching out in the near future. Wayne was given the email addresses for Mayor Una Glass and Councilmember Patrick Salyter for follow-up and questions. Wayne, as well as other trustees, has already participated in a zoom meeting with Tim Miller of WCCS and Gary Bachelor of Community Church, to answer questions and provide information. The safe parking idea was then discussed at the Church's trustee meeting on May 11, and will be discussed again at the upcoming trustee meeting on June 8. It's likely that a decision will be made at the June 8 meeting. Concerns raised by this United Methodist included reimbursement for expenses (in this case including the installation of an interior door to provide security between the restrooms and the Church's main hall), case management services by West County Community Services, and providing a sense of security for neighbors, the on-site preschool, and the pastor, who lives on site. Outreach to Wayne Stanfield in advance of the June 8 meeting, to make sure all his questions are answered and addressed, will be important to continuing to engage this church in discussions. If the Church decides to host safe overnight parking, the coordinator will be Wayne Stanfield.
3. First Church of Christ, Scientist: This is the most recent church that has expressed interest in offering safe overnight parking. Caren Franci, Board President, as well as other Board members, have participated in a zoom meeting, again with Tim Miller of WCCS and Gary Bachelor of Community Church. In addition, a parking lot site visit was done to help Caren Franci visualize the placement of portable toilets and safe parkers. At that parking lot visit there were a number of spontaneous conversations with neighbors. The same concerns were raised by this Church as came up in discussions with United Methodist: reimbursement for expenses (in this case including the cost of a portable toilet and a hand washing station), case management services by West County Community Services, and providing a sense of security for neighbors. An additional concern was having sufficient volunteers to drive through the site once each night, because this Church has a very small congregation (9 members), many of whom live out of town. On May 24, an email was sent to Caren Franci, informing her that the project had received support from the City Council, and that our Housing Subcommittee

would be reaching out in the near future. Caren was given the email addresses for Mayor Una Glass and Councilmember Patrick Salyter for follow up and questions. The Church meets two times each week, and Caren indicated that discussion and decision-making regarding hosting of safe overnight parking could be done at any of those group congregation meetings. It will be important for Caren to receive communications and outreach within the next week so her questions can be answered and her interest in hosting safe overnight parking can be maintained.

4. West County Community Services: On the afternoon following the March 19 Goals and Priorities Meeting, an email was sent to Tim Miller of West County Community Services, informing him that the project had received support from the City Council, and that our Housing Subcommittee would be his contact moving forward. He was given the email addresses for Mayor Una Glass and Councilmember Patrick Salyter for follow up and questions.
5. Other Churches: We approached a number of other churches to ask about their interest in safe overnight parking. The results are as follows. The bottom line is that there are two churches who have not replied, and may be possible sites to contact if there is a future need.
 - a. Declined to Host: St Sebastian Roman Catholic Church, St. Stephens Episcopal Church, Mt Olive Lutheran Church.
 - b. Unknown (no response): Redwood Christian Fellowship, The Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints.
 - c. Not Contacted: Two outside the City limits (Sebastopol Seventh-Day Adventist Church and Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. One because it's parking lot is too small (Sebastopol Christian Church).
6. Documents: Submitted with this memo are various documents that were shared with us by Gary Bachelor of Community Church. The documents have in turn been shared with United Methodist and may have been shared with First Church of Christ, Scientist (with the permission of Gary Bachelor).