

Kari Svanstrom

From: Kate Haug <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, March 06, 2022 5:17 PM
To: Kari Svanstrom
Cc: Fritz, Paul; Kathy Oetinger; John Jay
Subject: Needle Exchange Inside of Teen Clinic - Public Comment 3/8/22

Dear Commissioners,

I was quite startled to find out a needle exchange had opened up in the same space as a Teen Health Center. The needle exchange is run in the [West County Teen Clinic](https://soconews.org/scn_sebastopol_west_county/news/harm-reduction-and-needle-exchange-program-offers-safer-supplies-in-sebastopol/article_edbae14e-9337-11ec-8dfd-d774d9f947c8.html) at 652 Petaluma Avenue, Suite F. https://soconews.org/scn_sebastopol_west_county/news/harm-reduction-and-needle-exchange-program-offers-safer-supplies-in-sebastopol/article_edbae14e-9337-11ec-8dfd-d774d9f947c8.html

I am writing to ask that this matter be put on the agenda for public discussion. I sent a letter to the City Council as well.

From my time on the Planning Commission, I know we did not approve a "smoke shop" near Whole Foods because of its proximity to the high school and school aged students. It seems that a needle exchange would require similar vetting and permitting, especially if it is located in a Teen Health Center.

In addition, I wonder how many IV drug users live in Sebastopol?. Does a needle exchange serve current residents or does it draw in addicts from other communities? How will a needle exchange impact the surrounding businesses?

From the article's own reporting, there is not a high need but the clinic is advertising this service via social media to attract more addicts: "These days, Texas said a steady trickle of one or two people per day come in looking for harm reduction supplies, jumping sometimes when patients arrive in groups. Word is slowly getting out by word of mouth, flyers and recent Instagram posts."

I would like the needle exchange to be addressed in public with input from neighboring businesses, school administrators, and parents whose teens might be utilizing the Teen Health Center.

As a parent, I would not want my teenager using a site that is designated for adolescents to also contain a needle exchange. I do not feel it is an appropriate pairing in terms of representing healthy living and making good choices for future health.

It should be clear to any person that the site is not just a Teen Health Center but also a needle exchange. It seems extremely deceptive for someone (parent or teen) who is expecting adolescent health care to actually be entering into a needle exchange. I have never seen a needle exchange paired with any sort of pediatric or adolescent medicine, especially in a small, local clinic.

While I do support the distribution of Narcan and the collection of dirty needles, the site should not give out free needles and other paraphernalia that enables drug use. We are in a drug epidemic and are experiencing record numbers of overdoses. See this New York Times article: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/13/briefing/opioids-drug-overdose-death-toll.html>

In addition, we should not be normalizing drug use and drug addiction for teenagers. Drug addiction, given the current type and availability of opioid based drugs, is extremely damaging and can easily lead to death. Enabling people in their drug addiction has no social benefit. We should be encouraging people to avoid drug addiction and to avoid consuming fentanyl and other IV drugs as they are very hard to quit once addicted.

Once again, I doubt that there is a high demand from Sebastopol's current residents for clean needles and therefore the site is not really a service to residents of Sebastopol. It seems to be targeting transients who might come in for other services such as free meals and/or showers. It might be more appropriate to distribute Narcan and collect dirty needles at some of the church sites which offer free meals and showers.

Thank you for addressing this issue.

Best,
Kate Haug