

**From:** [Jim Wheaton](#)  
**To:** [Mary Gourley](#)  
**Subject:** opposition to the RV ordinance proposal  
**Date:** Monday, February 21, 2022 9:29:42 PM

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Hi Mary -

Could you please forward this letter to all the council members, Police Chief, and City Manager? Thanks so much.

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Dear Council Members:

We realize that you have been facing great challenges re: the situation at hand. However, we must state our strong opposition to several sections of the proposed RV parking ordinance:

The "Whereas..." clauses of the proposed changes talk about "conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons a property has arisen" - that language seems exaggerated. There is no reference made to any increase in crimes due to RV dwellers in town.

It appears that the real goal here is to kick the RV dwellers out of Sebastopol, but somehow do it in a way that is legal (since it is legal to sleep in your car in California except for some rare exceptions).

We agree that the Morris street situation is not good. We support and applaud the process of opening the safe RV space up on 116. We are ok with restricting parking on Morris street to overnight for RVs. But, it seems like the rest of this ordinance is fueled by a fearful anticipation that we will have RV dwellers scattered throughout the residential areas if we limit daytime parking on Morris.

You are really trying to prevent "dwelling in an RV in residential areas", but it seems that the only way you can do it is by banning the Vehicles themselves, which doesn't really address the problem. In fact, you would be creating new problems by imposing somewhat severe restrictions on law-abiding residents, at a significant cost, without directly addressing the "dwelling issue".

Residents sometimes need to park their RVs or pickup trucks or camper vans on the street because they are seldom used, or because they have no off-street parking. Most residents are thoughtful and try to find a spot not right in front of someone else's house. If there are issues with a large or particularly ugly vehicle, it can be forced to move every 72 hours under current regulations. This is enough of a deterrent. We would rather continue to use our existing deterrents and see if we have actual problems, rather than imagining and projecting problems that may not occur.

Here are some specific criticisms:

- The definition of Recreational Vehicle is too broad and not well-defined Proposed Section 10.76.040 states: "It is unlawful for a person to park or leave standing any recreational vehicle on any public street in the city that is zoned residential at any time". With these changes, we would not be allowed to park our 1990 VW Vanagon Westfalia on the streets - that is outrageous. This must be clarified. What about a pickup truck with a camper-shell? What about vans that you can't see inside of? Have you walked around town and seen how many current residents will be negatively affected by this because they don't have enough drive way, or any, to store their trailer or RV? Be prepared for the wrath of many residents if this goes through. **If you must do this, how about a length limitation (e.g. any RV under 22' is exempt from the ordinance).**
- It costs money we just don't need to spend! We don't want to put in hundreds of new parking regulation signs and don't want to hire additional police to enforce this ordinance. That is just adding insult to injury. Making it illegal to park a van on the street and then adding to the tax burden, the cost of writing a ticket and putting up a whole bunch of ugly parking signs?
- What about out-of-own folks traveling in RVs who want to park downtown and eat at restaurants? Parking tickets for the tourists? Welcome to Sebastopol! **At a minimum there should be a 2 hour parking option**

**for RV visitors downtown.**

- What about during Fire season when we might have to evacuate at a moment's notice and need to have our van/trailer/rv packed and ready to go? Or we want to care for others evacuating from burning homes? **Can we please declare these changes not enforceable during High Fire Danger times?**

Let's take one step at time and not rush in these changes. If RV dwellers move to our neighborhoods during the day and are not violating other regulations (noise, litter, damage, behavioral, etc...) they would be welcome, to us. Having a single RVer on a street is better than having a dozen on Morris Street, so spreading around the neighborhoods seems reasonable to us, if that even happens.

But ironically, most of the "RVs" that are subject to these new regulations are owned by residents and are doing no harm.

We believe that we all need to have some mercy and compassion for people who are forced to be living in their cars or RVs. If they comply with other ordinances (are quiet, don't litter, etc...), we can learn to get along. We can hope that the income inequality, lack of housing and mental health services, and other forces that have put so many people into this situation will ease, and that we won't have to create draconian parking measures such as these, that also penalize many Sebastopol home owning and renting residents, and travelers to our fair city.

Sincerely,

Jim Wheaton,

Carey Caccavo Wheaton, MSW

