



City of Sebastopol Planning Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: April 25, 2023
Agenda Item: 6B
To: Planning Commission
From: Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director; Sonoma Applied Villages (SAVS)
Subject: Sonoma Applied Villages (SAVS) Quarterly Informational Report (as required by Use Permit)
Recommendation: Receive the Report

Applicant/Owner: Sonoma Applied Villages (SAVS)
File Number: 2022-073 (Approved November 15, 2023)
Address: 845 Gravenstein Hwy North

Introduction:

This item is the first quarter report from the Sonoma Applied Villages for the Horizon Shine 24/7 RV safe parking village at 845 Gravenstein Highway North, as required by their Temporary Use Permit.

DISCUSSION:

The Horizon Shine RV Village opened in February of 2022 and has remained operational since then. The property is owned by St. Vincent de Paul Sonoma County, leased to Sonoma Applied Village Services (SAVS). Horizon Shine provides a much needed safe, sanitary, compassionate, and respectful location for RVs and other lived-in vehicles. Wrap around services are included, with a focus on improving the lives of those residing there. We urge you to read the report from Horizon Shine carefully (see attachments).

The Horizon Shine applied for a Temporary Use Permit that was approved by the Planning Commission, and upheld on appeal by the City Council, in 2022 for operation of the site as a temporary housing use through December 2024. As part of that approval, quarterly reports are required to be submitted to both the City Council and the Planning Commission, to address any

This report was presented as a regular agenda item to the City Council at their meeting on April 18, 2023, regular meeting. The Council had the following comments/concerns:

- Questions about mental health and behavioral health services and options for residents who might need assistance (and request to include additional information on this in future reports, particularly as it relates to those that might be asked to leave, etc.)
 - West County Community Health Center makes frequent visits to the site to provide services
 - 1-2 additional personnel from the County who provide this type of services available to the site
 - SAVS does coordinate and connect individuals with the County Continuum of Care (homeless services provided by the county)
 - SAVS is looking to hire a staff member who is licensed mental health professional
- Councilmembers asked questions regarding when people are asked to leave the site how this is facilitated, particularly as it relates to mental health and potential safety to the community.
 - Police are involved on some level with persons being asked to leave

GOALS:

This action supports the following General Plan Goals/Policies and Actions:

Goal D-2: Support Housing to Meet Special Needs (unhoused individuals are a special needs population)

Policy D-1: The City will promote the development of new housing units affordable to extremely low, very low, low, and moderate income households and housing units that are affordable to and appropriate for special needs households, including seniors, disabled persons, developmentally disabled persons, farmworkers, large families, and homeless.

Policy D-2: The City will encourage the expansion of housing opportunities for extremely low income households.

Policy D-6: Sebastopol will work to prevent homelessness and support housing services for the homeless.

Public Comment:

Public comments received as of this staff report (including comments to City Council for their April 18, 2023 meeting) are included in the Attachments to this staff report.

Recommendation:

Receive report, provide any feedback to SAVS.

Attachments:

SAVS Quarterly Report

Public Comments



Quarterly Report

SAVS Contract with the City of Sebastopol for Horizon Shine Village

April 10, 2023

On February 15, 2022, SAVS set up and began managing Horizon Shine Village per contracts with The City of Sebastopol and the Community Development Commission of Sonoma County. Operated on a lot owned by St. Vincent de Paul at 845 N. Gravenstein Hwy, the village is designed as a safe-parking site with a mix of cars, vans, trailers and RVs, which are currently used as primary residences for Sebastopol homeless. SAVS provides site management including sanitary and water facilities, a waste management system, security, access to food, and individual whole-person care and support for the villagers.

Quarterly Overview

Currently, there are 23 villagers at Horizon Shine and there are no openings. All the villagers are entered in the Sonoma County Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Upon the hiring of SAVS' new Executive Director, the village operation has undergone a leadership transition, meeting and overcoming unforeseen challenges. Great effort has been put into changes that better serve SAVS clients and that maintain good relationships with the larger community of Sebastopol.

In addition to the many positive changes, two shocking events shook this community – one was the death of a former employee, and the other was the death of a partner of a villager, neither occurred at the village. We offered support to the individuals most affected as well as to the community as a whole. We also found it necessary to ask four villagers to leave (See Security below).

Covid took its toll on staff and caused 2 lockdown periods. Amber Palm, the new Program Manager at the village, along with other staff, was temporarily sidelined.

Trainings were conducted for both staff and villagers: Narcan administration, secondary trauma, conflict resolution, mental health crisis, substance use disorder, sexual harassment.

We've made steady and amazing progress in refining the program and in overall operations. Much of what we've done this quarter has been crisis prevention, rebuilding our staff, reviewing policy and procedures, and setting up a licensed and certified security team.

Sixteen villagers have some kind of employment income. In the past quarter another villager gained full-time work. In addition, four villagers are newly set up with income from social service programs which they qualified for.

The good news is we have hired new staff at Horizon that have already proven they are a great asset to our program!

Status of the Villagers

Not just the staff, but villagers too have had medical crisis. The villager with a heart problem had another hospital stay and is permanently on oxygen. This client seems to be doing well given the circumstances.

Our leadership transition has not been easy and some trust was broken with the villagers in the beginning. But, as things have moved forward, that respect and trust is showing up more often. We have touched base with everyone to update their needs and goals on their path to permanent housing. This has helped us build a better rapport with the clients as our team gets stronger and better equipped to meet their needs.

The villager with cancer who we spoke about in our last report, has continued his treatment consistently. We have coordinated with staff and volunteers to get him to his treatments in San Francisco and Santa Rosa. We continue to work with him closely.

The staff had a warm and friendly Easter Dinner with the villagers that included myself (Executive Director Adrian Brumley), Horizon Shine Program Manager Amber Palm, and Security Supervisor Chris Vorlob.

We have done 5 new intakes since January; they are all settling in well. We have 2 clients (husband and wife) who are moving into permanent housing in Washington at the end of this month. There is another client who has found permanent housing in Hawaii and will be leaving at the end of the month. These are 3 great clients really making it happen, we could not be prouder of them!

Here are a few other achievements for our villagers:

- 1 client was able to get IHSS (In Home Supportive Services)
- 1 client was able to obtain the proper insurance to get a much needed abscess procedure done
- 3 clients received a new trailer
- 1 client obtained employment with the postal service
- 2 clients now have GA (General Assistance)

Security

We have obtained a Proprietary Private Security Employer license from the California Bureau of Security and Investigative services. The gate monitors are now called security guards and all have a certified Guard Card.

We developed a new security plan, which was approved by Sebastopol Police Chief Nelson and Sebastopol Police Officer Dak Thompson (Horizon Shine Liaison) as requested by Councilwoman Rich. We have since then implemented the plan. Chris Vorlob, our security supervisor, met with Chief Nelson and Officer Thompson. The contract with Whitestar Security expired on 03/28/2023 and we chose not to renew it.

When we asked four villagers to leave at the beginning of this quarter, there was an increase in

police activity. This activity has greatly decreased as the furor of these decisions is in the past.

We continue to strengthen our partnership with the Sebastopol Police Department. Chief Nelson and his staff have been extremely supportive. Horizon Shine Village is in a gray legal area. We are not a housing complex nor do we entirely fit the description of a homeless shelter. We continue to look for state-wide and local advice as to our legal standing.

Four clients were asked to leave due to violence or safety problems. The incidents are described in summary below:

Client 1 - Escalated an argument into physical assault, then used a bat to pound on trailers and a car. Entered other people's homes without permission.

Client 2 - Threw an ashtray at a gate monitor who was doing a visitor check causing an injury that required medical attention.

Client 3 - Interfered with policy enforcement, verbally assaulted staff and encouraged other villagers to threaten staff and police officer, physically assaulted a staff member.

Client 4 – Escalated an argument into physical assault and verbally threatened staff members when told he would have to leave.

All of these actions were violations of our rule against violence at the village and the perpetrators were asked to leave. All of the victims declined to press charges.

Neighborhood Relations

At our March community advisory meeting, the five attendees were extremely supportive and pleasantly surprised by improvements. There was a concern about the number of cars out on the street in front of Horizon and an open drug transaction (not known if it was a client of ours or not, but it happened in front of Horizon)

The street has parking inside and out of Horizon has been much better thanks to warnings by staff members that villagers are allowed only one vehicle and it must be parked inside. The security guards patrolling routines now include walking outside the front fence line and adjusted our security cameras to see more of the front of the property. There have been no further complaints in this regard.

Our next community advisory meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 3 from 5-6 pm. Watch your email for the zoom link. If you would like to be added to our invention list, please contact our Horizon Program Manager Amber Palm at amber@sonomavillages.org.

A licensed private investigator recently conducted an investigation of Horizon Shine. He was opposed to another site we wished to open in Santa Rosa and set out to find our flaws. He canvassed the neighborhood and questioned both businesses and residents in the area but, as he told us on several occasions, he did not unearth a single complaint. He was pleasantly surprised and extremely impressed. We are awaiting his written report.

Development of Programmatic Offerings at the Village

This quarter we've focused on building stronger relationships with agencies we are currently working with and building new partnerships to bring more resources to our clients. We have also focused on establishing more structure in the program.

We are bringing in more programs and trainings for staff and clients on a consistent basis. We're hiring experienced case managers so that we can adequately track their success and monitor their needs more precisely.

Led by our Program Manager Amber Palm we have reestablished a Villagers Advisory Committee run by the villagers themselves. They are holding each other accountable and report that they feel heard by the Program Manager. The Program Manager gets information on issues she may not be aware of through this committee and she tries to quickly address those issues.

We have focused on the work of registering the vehicles used by villagers for transportation and revising our visitor policy. These improvements, combined with our other work, have brought a deeper sense of peace and calmness to Horizon Shine.

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. We are also incorporating villagers cooking their own meals as a community a couple days a week at their request.

Staff

SAVS has hired our first Executive Director! Adrian Brumley has an extensive leadership background, which includes running a transitional housing program. Mr. Brumley is bilingual in Spanish and has extreme passion to serve his community and country. He has served his country in the United States Navy, and his community as a firefighter, and as a high school coach for basketball and football. He currently coaches varsity football at Montgomery High and a Little League team in Santa Rosa. He ran his own auction flip and resale business for 8 years and has served as a volunteer for many non-profits. Mr. Brumley is set to make a difference in his community any way possible.

Two part-time contracted case managers have moved on and we know they will find their niche in the social service world. We have since offered a full-time Case Manager position to someone with over 25 years' experience in non-profits and social work.

The interim Program Manager Ms. Poten left as planned when we hired our new Program Manager Amber Palm. Amber has a bachelors degree in social work and is halfway through her masters in social work. She has over seven years' experience in social and has been a great asset with solid knowledge in mental health and addiction.

We also hired Chris Vorlob as our Security Supervisor. Chris has begun making useful relationships with clients, staff, local businesses, and the Sebastopol Police department. Chris has experienced homelessness himself and has a true motivational success story.

General Information About Horizon Shine Village

Horizon Shine Village currently holds 20 mini-homes, 4 port a potties, 2 showers and a new portable bathroom with actual porcelain toilets and sinks and 23 villagers. These individuals and their vehicles were formerly parked or living in tents in Sebastopol. Horizon Shine is full and has a waiting list of Sebastopol homeless people. We receive 1-3 calls a week from homeless individuals living in their vehicles and seeking safety, many from other areas of Sonoma County and 1-3 walk-in's asking to be taken in or put on the waiting list. We expect to remain full through the end of the year without exhausting our current waiting list of homeless people from Sebastopol.

Submitted:

Adrian Brumley

Adrian Brumley

Executive Director

Sonoma Applied Village Services

adrian@sonomavillages.org

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Mary Gourley](#)
Subject: Public Comment 4-18-23 RE: SAVS Most Troubling Quarterly Report Yet
Date: Monday, April 17, 2023 6:24:56 PM

Dear City Council,

This quarterly SAVS report on the RV Village is the most troubling yet. We've already seen increased litter, vandalism, and shoplifting in the area surrounding the encampment since its opening in February 2022. We'd heard of behavioral health and addiction issues on the inside but, as detailed in this report, it seems there has been an uptick in disturbing incidents - including the need for increased police involvement to secure the site.

These incidents make SAVS claim that a private investigator didn't find any local objectors or critics of the site all the more unbelievable. Take the next door neighbor who has written the city council multiple times with complaints, or the Redwood Marketplace which had to hire full time security guards to stop campers, loiterers, and shoplifters from harassing its tenants, or our neighborhood group with dozens of community members who filed a lawsuit and gave dire testimony in our appeal to prevent the site's extension. Some but not all of our experiences were documented and submitted via this online document during the appeal process last year:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YvfWN8bIIJifDr-ow_Zenn_28znY49c9C10gZmAzGFI/edit

Surprisingly, and alarmingly, the incidents described in this SAVS quarterly report are even more troubling than anything we've documented prior. For all the evidence we've presented that the site is operating illegally, it's this quarterly report itself that makes the strongest argument yet that the site is in clear violation of the city of Sebastopol's own code for temporary uses, because a temporary use must not disturb the **"health, safety, peace, comfort and general welfare of persons residing or working in the neighborhood."**

Moreover, the report raises several serious questions such as: Why is staffing in constant turnover? Why are professional security guard contracts expiring when there have been violent incidents? Why are people who are experiencing substance and/or mental health issues not being housed in a safe, institutional setting, rather than in the middle of our neighborhood? When dangerous offenders are evicted, as has been reported several times now, where do they go? Back into the streets in the surrounding areas? Why does this report fail to address these major question marks that directly impact the neighbors?

The report continues to describe the site as if it were its own autonomous zone, where a drug deal happening out front has nothing to do with the nature of the encampment. But the fact is that the nature of the encampment has everything to do with the recent impacts on the character and safety of our neighborhood. Instead of allowing SAVS to deflect blame for these impacts, the city should require SAVS to take these matters seriously while also creating a buffer between the site and the neighborhood. Instead of relying on Redwood Marketplace's security guards for enforcement, the city should have police resources at or near the site at all times until its closure.

Lastly, if SAVS is looking to impress the community, they won't do so by spending money on

a private investigator to create a promotional piece about the encampment that denies our lived experience of it. The neighbors look forward to seeing SAVS expend resources and time on the search for a new location for the site, where our schools, businesses, and homes are not exposed to the ongoing risks documented in this quarterly report. We would appreciate updates on the city and/or SAVS search efforts for the new location in quarterly reports going forward.

Thank you,

Zachary Imbrogno
Friends of Northwest Sebastopol

Dear Council Members,

I am writing in regard to Item 10, the SAVS quarterly report.

I appreciate the honesty and transparency of the report. It clearly documents the struggles that are implicit in trying to staff and operate a facility which requires significant professional expertise and training.

SAVS has undergone many personnel changes in the last year, which are clearly documented in their previous reports. In addition, it seems that SAVS has used the Horizon Shine pilot project to refine its methods. It appears that helping people transition out of homelessness is a labor and time intensive project requiring a significant amount of trained staff.

It also appears that it requires constant vigilance to stop other problems from occurring in the surrounding areas.

I am concerned about the expulsion of 4 members for violent behavior. This is detailed on page 5:

“Four clients were asked to leave due to violence or safety problems. The incidents are described in summary below:

Client 1 - Escalated an argument into physical assault, then used a bat to pound on trailers and a car. Entered other people’s homes without permission.

Client 2 - Threw an ashtray at a gate monitor who was doing a visitor check causing an injury that required medical attention.

Client 3 - Interfered with policy enforcement, verbally assaulted staff and encouraged other villagers to threaten staff and police officer, physically assaulted a staff member.

Client 4 – Escalated an argument into physical assault and verbally threatened staff members when told he would have to leave.

All of these actions were violations of our rule against violence at the village and the perpetrators were asked to leave. All of the victims declined to press charges.”

Where do these people go when they are expelled? Are they still in the community, the neighborhoods, the parks? If they exhibit violent behavior, shouldn’t they be committed to a program to help them with their behavior?

If SAVS is expelling people without finding them proper treatment, it is extremely worrisome for our community. This means that we have people without stability and treatment who tend toward violent reactions left to their own devices in our community.

Can Council please address this issue?

In several correspondences, I have asked for an exit plan for the SAVS residents. Horizons Shine is slated to end in June 2023, which is less than 3 months away. It appears that SAVS has hired new case managers and more staff. What is the exit plan for this facility?

When Council approved this in December 2021 (a year after converting the Sebastopol Inn to homeless housing), citizens were told that the site would close in December 2022. That date was extended. Funding ends in June 2023. What is the exit strategy? The document shows that SAVS has accepted new people. Shouldn't they be transitioning people out to permanent housing as the site is slated to close? As it is extremely difficult to place people, it seems that SAVS should not be accepting any new residents.

It appears that SAVS has not concentrated on finding new locations for their residents. What will people do when the site closes?

Thank you,

Kate Haug

Where do these people go when they are expelled? Are they still in the community, the neighborhoods, the parks? If they exhibit violent behavior, shouldn't they be committed to a program to help them with their behavior?

Upon exit from Horizon Shine, all clients are offered continued support through SAVS outreach services, and WCCS outreach worker Maria Rico. If the exiting event involves violence, Horizon staff also notifies Sebastopol PD (typically officers Dack or Mykael) to inform them of the incident, and collaborate on a plan to support the member in leaving the community (and surrounding area) in as peaceful manner as possible. Should the individual decide to stay in the Sebastopol area, Sebastopol PD has the benefit of knowing that the former Villager is violent, and can provide additional monitoring to help assure the community is kept safe. As all of these individuals were residing in the area prior to admittance to Horizon, staff's partnership with Sebastopol PD has helped make officers aware of their tendencies towards violence, information they may not have had prior to program admittance. Horizon staff is also trained in Trauma Informed Care, and Behavioral Interventions, and has been able to help officers understand the motivating factors that can trigger said violence, as well as establish a support plan to help avoid these behaviors moving forward.

As for where folks go upon exit, that is left up to them, but many of them choose to leave the area. If Sebastopol PD deems the event worthy of incarceration, individuals are relocated to the Main Adult Detention Facility in Santa Rosa. Often, however, the former Villager's frustration is directed solely at the staff member exiting them, and does not create a threat to the community as a whole. A program to address/support the violent behaviors would be ideal, but unfortunately our county has a shortage in the availability of such programs. Also, all clients of SAVS are afforded the same legal rights that all of us enjoy and, short of a mental health hold or arrest, cannot be forced into such a program.

If SAVS is expelling people without finding them proper treatment, it is extremely worrisome for our community. This means that we have people without stability and treatment who tend toward violent reactions left to their own devices in our community.

Horizon staff does everything within their power to encourage all Villagers to participate in supportive services for whatever behavioral challenges they exhibit. Our staff is well trained in Substance Use Disorder, Mental Health, and other contributing factors that can result in behavioral challenges for our folks. We provide Villagers with support for these issues in both one-on-one and group settings. While it's true that some chose not to fully engage in these programs, the exposure alone can help plant a seed that will support them in recovery down the road. Again, these folks were in our community before Horizon Shine Village, so their expulsion from the program is not introducing any new individuals to the area. Even when exited for violence, their time at Horizon was not wasted. On top of the on-site behavioral support, all clients participating in our program are enrolled in HMIS and Coordinated Entry data systems to get them placed on waitlists for housing and other supportive services. Clients are also exposed to clinical interventions for emotional/behavioral challenges on site, and educated on the availability of supportive services in Sonoma County as a whole. Because these services are voluntary, Horizon staff cannot force anyone to participate in them. It is helpful for them to have the knowledge of how to access them, however, and can be instrumental in their efforts to find permanent supportive housing even after being exited from the program.

To address the issue of former Villagers choosing to stay in the area, Horizon security staff works closely with businesses in our vicinity where folks might want to loiter. SAVS staff also continues to communicate with, and support, Sebastopol PD in their efforts to keep our community safe from former clients who have shown a propensity for violence. As recently exited folks tend to focus their aggression on SAVS staff, Sebastopol PD's involvement in encouraging them to leave the area has helped to negate the potential for future violence. In several correspondences, I have asked for an exit plan for the SAVS residents.

Horizons Shine is slated to end in June 2023, which is less than 3 months away. It appears that SAVS has hired new case managers and more staff. What is the exit plan for this facility? When Council approved this in December 2021 (a year after converting the Sebastopol Inn to homeless housing), citizens were told that the site would close in December 2022.

That date was extended. Funding ends in June 2023. What is the exit strategy? The document shows that SAVS has accepted new people. Shouldn't they be transitioning people out to permanent housing as the site is slated to close? As it is extremely difficult to place people, it seems that SAVS should not be accepting any new residents. It appears that SAVS has not concentrated on finding new locations for their residents. What will people do when the site closes?

We are very aware of the need to continue the Horizon Shine Village for another fiscal year, from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024. And, we are fairly secure in thinking we will be able to continue through the entire 2024 year if our landlord is not yet ready to build affordable housing at that site. Specifically, we have submitted three major funding proposals for the next fiscal year to various homeless funding streams, one of which has already been tentatively approved for \$100,000. We will know in May if we are approved for the amount we need to run the Village at a level we believe is viable.

Of course, there is never any certainty until the final decisions are made. But, Horizon Shine is considered to be a successful start-up project. We have confidence that these agencies will decide to keep it open for at least another year.

In the worst case scenario, if we are not granted the funds to stay open, we will use our reserve funds to clean up the lot and help the villagers find other options. That would be tough and emotionally devastating - but it will be done. Although Ms. Haug is correct that current funding for Horizon Shine will run out at the end of June.

Thank you, to Ms. Haug and Sebastopol City Council for for bringing these concerns to our attention.

Adrian Brumley

Executive Director

Sonoma Applied Villages Services

adrian@sonomavillages.org

Cell 707-485-2880