


Agenda Report Reviewed by:
City Manager: 

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
CITY COUNCIL
AGEND ITEM

Meeting Date: April 18, 2023
To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
From: Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director; SAVS (Sonoma Applied Villages)
Subject: Sonoma Applied Villages (SAVS) Quarterly Informational Report as required by Use Permit
Recommendation : Receive report
Funding: Currently Budgeted: _____ Yes _____ No XX N/A
Net General Fund Cost: N/A
Amount: \$0

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

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 20243. As part of that approval, quarterly reports are required to be submitted to both the City Council and the Planning Commission, to address any

Note, this report will also be presented as a regular agenda item to the Planning Commission at their meeting on April 28, 2023.

GOALS:

This action supports the following City Council Goals

Goal 9 - Enhance housing opportunities in Sebastopol and, when possible, provide assistance to housing projects. and 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:

As of the writing of this staff report, the City has not received any public comment. However, staff anticipates receiving 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 the agenda 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 scheduled meeting date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive report, provide any feedback to SAVS.

ATTACHMENTS:

SAVS Quarterly Report



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

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Executive Director

Sonoma Applied Village Services

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