


Agenda Report Reviewed by:
City Manager: 

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM

Meeting Date: April 18, 2023
To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
From: Vice Mayor Diana Rich/ Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director
Subject: Quarterly Report on the Unhoused
Recommendation: Receive the Report
Funding: Currently Budgeted: _____ Yes ___x___ No _____ N/A
Net General Fund Cost: \$0

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

INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE:

This quarterly report on the unhoused is submitted by Vice Mayor Diana Rich, as City Council Liaison to Service Providers for the Unhoused, and by Planning Director Kari Svanstrom, as Staff Liaison to Oversee Issues Related to the Unhoused.

This quarterly report is submitted pursuant to the direction of the City Council at the regularly scheduled meeting of September 20, 2022. Subsequent quarterly reports are planned to cover April-June, July-August, and September-December of 2022, as well as the subsequent quarters of 2023.

BACKGROUND:

Approximately a year and a half ago, on October 5, 2021, the City Council created the Ad Hoc Committee for the Unhoused. The Ad Hoc Committee was in place through June 30, 2022. It completed a series of tasks, as assigned by the City Council, that were intended to assess the needs and impacts of the unhoused and provide the full City Council with proposals for addressing those needs and impacts. The Ad Hoc Committee’s final task was to recommend steps to be taken in the future to address issues related to the unhoused. Those recommendations were outlined in a follow up report submitted to the City Council on September 20, 2022.

As a result of the Ad Hoc Committee’s recommendations, on September 20, 2022, the City Council created the position of Liaison to Service Providers for the Unhoused (including but not limited to SAVS/Horizon Shine, WCCS, CDC/Elderberry Commons). Councilmember Diana Rich was appointed to act in that capacity for calendar year 2023. The City Council also directed the City Manager to appoint a staff member to act as Staff Liaison to Oversee Issues Related to the Unhoused, and to interface with service providers, the City Council, and others as needed. The staff member subsequently appointed to that role was Planning Director Kari Svanstrom.

The two appointed liaisons were directed to provide quarterly reports on the unhoused to the City Council. This report is the first of those quarterly reports.

DISCUSSION:

Sebastopol is fortunate to benefit from partnerships with service providers who are serving the needs of our unhoused population in a collaborative, compassionate, and effective manner. Our City staff members, including

our police chief and officers, have developed productive and mutually respectful relationships with service providers, local advocates for the unhoused, and with the unhoused themselves. We note that all these groups have worked to serve the needs of the unhoused in a manner that also respects the needs of businesses, visitors, and the community at large.

In preparing this report, we realized that major credit for the current relatively stable state of affairs for Sebastopol's unhoused community goes to the service providers. This report reflects that by incorporating their individual summaries as a means of providing the substantive content we expect the City Council would appreciate receiving.

WCCS Homeless Outreach Coordinator

The City of Sebastopol contracts with West County Community Services to provide a full time Homeless Outreach Coordinator to serve the needs of the unhoused population. Maria Ricco, who goes by "Ricco," is Sebastopol's Homeless Outreach Coordinator. Her report (see attachments) provides the numbers and statistics that capture the overall portrait of our current population of people living on our streets. Please see attached report, which includes statistics on contact with individuals, .

Horizon Shine

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 Item 11 on this meeting's agenda) Note, this report will also be presented as a regular agenda item to the Planning Commission at their meeting on April 28, 2023.

Additionally, St. Vincent de Paul, the site's owner, has been discussing the development of permanent housing for low income residents at the site.

Park Village

Park Village is a property owned by the City of Sebastopol. Since 2017, it has been managed by West County Community Services. Currently, 119 individuals live at Park Village. It is a mobile home park that also includes two RV pads; tiny homes; two city-owned apartments that were recently rehabilitated with Federal funds, and a manager's unit. Park Village provides 19 living units (mobile home spaces or apartments) that are offered at market rates, plus 12 living units that are offered at heavily subsidized rates to provide housing to those with very limited incomes. A full-time case manager provides case management and supportive services to Park Village residents. WCCS also employs a Resident Manager who lives onsite and provides oversight and tenant services to all residents.

Elderberry Commons

Elderberry Commons is currently owned by the County of Sonoma. It has been providing temporary housing to Covid-vulnerable elderly. Elderberry Commons is undergoing changes now that the pandemic emergency has ended. The intent is to convert the facility to permanent supportive housing. The 31 rooms will be renovated as part of the process, with a specific goal of adding kitchen facilities to each room.

The County has assured the City of Sebastopol that all current residents are being provided assistance in finding substitute living arrangements. This is a changing situation, in flux as this Staff Report is being drafted. Supervisor Lynda Hopkins has committed to providing a Town Hall presentation for the residents and businesses of Sebastopol, in order to share information and answer questions. The County has developed an FAQ which can be found [here: https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/ElderberryFAQ](https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/ElderberryFAQ).

City administration, as well as the Liaisons submitting this report, are in communication with key County representatives and have been assured that the City will be kept informed of developments. West County's Continuum of Care representative Una Glass is actively monitoring the situation and is also in active communication

with County representatives. Please see the Informational Statement and FAQ from the County included in the attachments. Additionally, the County will be hosting an informational Town Hall Meeting regarding the transition of Elderberry Commons on May 1, 2023 at 6 pm via zoom (details to follow).

Warming Center

One of the recommendations made by the Ad Hoc Committee for the Unhoused was that the Director of Emergency Services develop a warming/cooling center plan and incorporate it into the City's Emergency Operations Plan, that the Fire Department budget include funding for warming/cooling centers, and that WCCS be considered for possible oversight of warming/cooling centers. That recommendation was adopted by the City Council on April 19, 2022. The Emergency Operations Plan is in the process of being updated, and is intended to include a warming/cooling center plan. The current fiscal year budget includes \$600 in funding for warming/cooling centers.

It is worth noting that although a formal warming/cooling center plan has not yet been developed, this community has shown itself to be ready and willing to take action without the formality of a "plan" when the need is great. That was the case in December of 2022, when the Community Center, SAVS, advocates for the unhoused, and volunteers came together to open a warming center during a particularly cold winter period. The \$600 in funding was accessed to reimburse the Community Center for staff costs associated with the December 2022 warming center. The City's current practice is to provide transportation to any unhoused needing shelter when the weather is particularly harsh. Our police department offers this service to anyone, no questions asked. The effectiveness of this safety net is proven by the fact that our unhoused have availed themselves of the service, and have been transported to shelters as they requested. Although this may not be an effective measure in some communities, in ours, with officers who have fostered respectful relationships with the unhoused, it's proving to be quite effective.

It is expected that the Director of Emergency Services will provide a recommendation to the City Council on the appropriate approach to the warming/cooling center issue when the updated Emergency Operations Plan is submitted to the Council for approval.

Continuum of Care Report

The Sonoma County Continuum of Care is responsible for coordinating the homeless services system of care. Governed by a seventeen-member Continuum of Care Board, the countywide effort is responsible for oversight of funds designated to the Continuum of Care and planning/policy development for addressing homelessness, and is involved in funding distributions and recommendations regarding issues involving the unhoused. One of the seats on the Continuum of Care is for a representative from West Sonoma County. The Sebastopol City Council appoints the West County representative to the Continuum of Care. Our current appointee is Una Glass, former City Councilmember and former Mayor. Please see Una Glass's report included in the attachments.

Future Funding

The City is part of the Joint Powers Authority with the Unincorporated County and other smaller cities in the County, and have begun the process of recommending funding to the Board of Supervisors for distribution of a large number of Federal and State funds related to homelessness, affordable housing, and supportive services. These draft recommendations include funding for WCCS Homeless Outreach Coordinator and Rapid Rehousing Programs and SAVS Horizon Village. These recommendations will be heard as part of a public hearing by the Sonoma County Community Development Commission and Cities and Towns Advisory Committee (a JPA, with Sebastopol represented by Planning Director Svanstrom, current chair of this committee) on April 19, and be finalized by the Board of Supervisors in the coming months, for funding during fiscal year 23-24. The summary of recommendations that will be heard on April 19 is attached to this report.

GOALS:

City Council Goals

Goal 5: Provide Open and Responsive Municipal Government Leadership

5.3.3. Encourage and increase public awareness of City Policies, decisions, programs and all public processes and meetings, by investigating effective methods of communication and obtaining feedback from the community.

General Plan Goals

Policy D-6 – Work to prevent homelessness and support housing services to the homeless.

Action CHW 5c: Practice an open-door policy in City programs, and actively engage and encourage participation from all individuals regardless of ethnicity, race, religion, class, disability, sexual orientation, and gender.

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 schedule meeting date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None, informational only

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive Report

Attachments:

1. WCCS Homeless Outreach Coordinator Report (pg 5 of the packet for this item)
2. WCCC Park Village Report (pg 13 of the packet for this item)
3. County Funding Recommendations (pg 14 of the packet for this item)
4. West County Representative to the Continuum of Care Report (pg 16 of the packet for this item)
5. County Informational Summary & FAQ (pg 18 of the packet for this item)/Page 25 - Sonoma County Town Hall Media Release Elderberry Commons Transition Plan: Date of Town Hall: May 1, 2023 at 6:00 pm/Zoom
Please see Item 11 on Tonight's Agenda for the Report from Horizon Shine

County Press Release Regarding May 1 Town Hall on Elderberry Commons - "Expected to be released soon."

City of Sebastopol
Homeless Services Outreach Coordinator (HSOC)
March 2023 Report
Submitted: April 5, 2023 by Maria Rico

Refer people without homes to Coordinated Entry as proper:

Introduction

As HSOC, my primary responsibility is to identify and aid homeless individuals in our community. This report outlines the referrals and services provided to homeless individuals over the past month.

Referrals to Coordinated Entry

As directed, I enrolled 12 homeless individuals to Coordinated Entry to place them in the housing prioritization list for Sonoma County. I offered shelter referrals to all the unhoused population to the CNS in Guerneville, COTS in Petaluma, Sam Jones and the Caritas Warming Center in Santa Rosa. I am pleased to report that one individual was able to reach out to me in desperate need and accepted a referral for the CNS in Guerneville. He was accepted and admitted within 24 hours of being referred. HSOC met this individual at the bus stop in Sebastopol, gave him a lunch from the Christian Church and a bus pass with instructions on where to get off in Guerneville. Upon arrival, the CNS referral was met by the Homeless Outreach worker in Guerneville who welcomed him and walked him into the CNS. I am also please to inform you that we have placed the first chronically homeless person from Sebastopol in permanent supportive housing at Park Village in the first tiny home. This individual is currently still in the process of going into his new home but he is looking forward to getting off the streets and having a warm place to sleep that he can call home.

Provision of Basic Needs

In addition to referrals, I also provided basic needs to the homeless individuals. I was able to refer individuals and remind them of the free lunch provided every Saturday by the following Churches: Sebastopol Christian Church, Sebastopol Community Church, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and the Sebastopol Methodist Church. I was able to obtain some donations from some of the churches to distribute such as used clothes, hats, hygiene products and shoes. I'm also constantly reminding homeless individuals about the free breakfast, 15 minute showers and lunches to go at the Sebastopol Christian Church every Monday and Thursday from 7:30 am- 11am as well as free Laundry Day every other Tuesday at the Hi-Tide Laundromat.

I'm pleased to inform you that 8 unhoused individuals from Sebastopol attended the Job and Resource Fair in Santa Rosa on March 22, 2023 from 11 am- 2pm. HSOC collaborated with the Sebastopol Library and the Sonoma County Job Link transportation staff Lili Roman to ensure that the homeless individuals in need of transportation had transportation to and from the event. I witness the majority of individuals that attended from Sebastopol stay in the event and walk around networking with employment agencies, and resourceful agencies to help meet their needs or set goals for the future.

Furthermore, I am proud to report that the HSOC partnered with the Sonoma Clerk-Record office at the Social Worker Day event at the Sebastopol Library. The purpose of this partnership was to provide confirmation of homeless status by signing affidavits to waive the application fees for requesting birth certificates. This partnership allowed us to serve the homeless community in a more effective manner by removing one of the barriers that prevent them from obtaining necessary identification. I had two homeless individuals in need of requesting a birth certificates and I was happy to assist them. This month the Sonoma Clerk-Record staff member Amanda King was at the Job and Resource fair the day after Social Work day at the Sebastopol Library. Amanda was able to request the birth certificate of the individuals I assisted the day before and HSOC made sure to direct the homeless individuals to go up to her booth and complete the request process.

Conclusion

Overall, I am pleased with the progress made in helping the homeless individuals. The enrollment to Coordinated Entry and provision of basic needs show that we are making significant strides in addressing homelessness in the community of Sebastopol. Additionally, the partnership with the Sonoma Clerk-Record office and Sonoma County Job Link further underscores our commitment to helping the homeless obtain the necessary identification to access services.

Represent WCCS at relevant meetings:

Introduction

As part of my role as HSOC, I have been representing West County Community Services (WCCS) at relevant meetings in the community. This report outlines the meetings I have attended and the information shared on behalf of WCCS.

Coordinated Entry Meetings

As HSOC, I also attended Coordinated Entry meetings where I began to learn how the Coordinated Entry system works to ensure WCCS's outreach efforts are effective as I continue to learn my position. These meetings provide a platform for service providers to share best practices and identify any gaps in service delivery. By attending these meetings, I was able to represent WCCS's interests and ensure that our outreach efforts are aligned with the broader community's objectives.

Sebastopol Homeless Support Meetings:

As HSOC, I attended a meeting with Suzanne Landre (SAVS Volunteer) and Diana Rich the Vice Mayor of Sebastopol, where I participated as appropriate to inform and understand the issues affecting the homeless population at the time. The meeting is an opportunity to establish relationships with key stakeholders in the community and discuss ways to collaborate to better serve the homeless population. This month the meeting was focused on the recent deaths in the homeless community and the effects that it has on the unhoused and the community of individuals assisting them on a daily or weekly basis. West County Health Centers had a couple of licensed professionals giving us guidance on what signs to look out for in the unhoused community and how to best assist them and ourselves. The Chief of police Ron Nelson appeared during the last meeting briefly to report the official conclusion, thus far, of the recently deceased and encouraged us to share that information with the homeless community.

Meeting with Courtney Klein at the Sebastopol Library

As HSOC, I also had a meeting with Courtney Klein at the Sebastopol Library to discuss upcoming events. During the meeting, I discussed the current outreach efforts of WCCS and explored ways to collaborate with the library to better serve the homeless population. Courtney, Chris Willover from Job Link and I (HSOC) collaborated to promote and arrange transportation to the Job and Resource Fair For Those Experiencing Homelessness at the Santa Rosa's Veteran's Memorial Building. As I mentioned above, the event was a success and I was able to make connections with The Humane Society, Verity and Center Point Drug Abuse Alternatives Center (DAAC). The Humane Society offered to drop off dog and cat food for HSOC to distribute as needed from the unhoused community in Sebastopol. Verity offered several staff to come out when there are large numbers of individuals camping to offer services, especially during a sweep.

Meeting with Kris White at the Sebastopol Christian Church

As HSOC, I met with Kris White at the Sebastopol Christian Church to explore the possibility of using their space to meet with homeless individuals while they provide aid such as breakfast, lunch, showers and free laundry services.

During the meeting, I shared information on the current outreach efforts of WCCS and discussed possible areas of collaboration with the church. We also discussed the logistics of using their space and how we could work together to better serve the homeless population. Kris was able to offer a room and Wi-Fi so that HSOC can enroll homeless individuals in Coordinated Entry every Thursday and assist with Food Stamp applications. I am please to inform you that I was able to enroll 12 individuals thanks to their efforts and support as well as the guidance from my Director Danielle Danforth.

Sebastopol Police Department Meeting

Introduction

As part of my role as HSOC, I had a meeting with Michelle Beckmann and Cameron Fenske to discuss specific homeless individuals that the community continues to call due to disturbance or serious concern. The following is a summary of our discussion.

Discussion

During the meeting, we reviewed the 5 homeless individuals that have been identified as causing disturbances or serious concerns in the community. We discussed each individual's specific situation and needs and explored ways to provide appropriate support and services.

For some individuals, we identified the need for mental health services and discussed ways to connect them to appropriate resources. For others, we discussed the need for temporary shelter or long-term housing solutions. We also explored ways to collaborate with other service providers to address the various needs of the individuals.

Additionally, we discussed ways to educate the community about the various services and resources available to homeless individuals. We also discussed the importance of building relationships with homeless individuals and gaining their trust to help them access services and support.

Conclusion

The meeting was productive in identifying specific homeless individuals that require immediate attention and support. We discussed potential solutions and identified areas where collaboration and coordination between service providers could be beneficial. Moving forward, we will continue to work together to identify ways to support these individuals and address the concerns raised by the community.

Final Conclusion

Overall, my attendance at the meetings has been instrumental in establishing relationships with other service providers and introducing WCCS to the broader community. Attending these meetings has also been critical in understanding the latest trends and challenges in the community, which we can use to inform our outreach efforts. I look forward to continuing to represent WCCS at relevant meetings and explore opportunities to work together to address homelessness in the community.

Leadership coordination of services:

Introduction

As part of my role as HSOC, I have been actively coordinating services to support the homeless population in Sebastopol. I have been actively coordinating services to support the homeless population in Sebastopol. In this report, I will outline the efforts I have made to connect homeless individuals to existing services and resources, as well as my plans to continue enrolling the homeless community to Coordinated Entry for the housing prioritization list in Sonoma County.

Discussion

As mentioned in previous reports, I have been working to connect homeless individuals to various aid and services provided by the Christian church, the library, local volunteer groups, as well as resources provided by WCCS and partnering organizations. This effort has been successful in providing support to many individuals in need and has helped to build stronger relationships between the homeless population and service providers.

In addition to these efforts, I will continue to enroll individuals to Coordinated Entry that will take 45 minutes to 1 hour per individual. I am committed to enrolling the homeless individuals interested in Coordinated Entry at the Sebastopol Community Church every Thursday from 8:00 am-11:30 am. This will help to ensure that homeless individuals are receiving the appropriate services and support they need to improve their situation. I can also enroll them throughout the week by appointment or at the Saturday lunches as I attend with the Wi-Fi on the laptop or in paper if there is no secure Wi-Fi nearby.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my efforts as HSOC have been focused on leadership coordination of services to support the homeless population in Sebastopol. I have been successful in connecting individuals to existing resources and services, and my plans to schedule Coordinated Entry assessments will help to ensure that individuals are prioritized for the appropriate services they require. I will continue to work collaboratively with service providers and community partners to provide support and resources to homeless individuals.

Develop relationships with clients and connect them to services:

Introduction

As the HSOC, my primary responsibility is to develop relationships with homeless individuals and connect them to the services and resources they need to improve their situation. In this report, I will outline the efforts I have made to develop relationships with clients and connect them to services.

Discussion

Since the start of my position, I have introduced myself to 48 homeless individuals who have opened up to me about their homeless status and desired housing goals. Through these conversations, I have been able to gain a better understanding of their needs and goals, and have been able to provide them with information about resources that can help them.

Specifically, I have offered information about resources for shelter referrals, legal aid, food banks, food stamps, veterans services, domestic violence services, substance abuse, Coordinated Entry, housing assistance and mental health resources. By providing this information, I have been able to help connect individuals to the services and resources they need to improve their situation and work towards achieving their housing goals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my efforts as HSOC have been focused on developing relationships with homeless individuals and connecting them to the services and resources they need. I will continue to work to develop relationships with homeless individuals and connect them to the services and resources they need to improve their situation.

Develop a citywide services matrix, including relevant county services, to inform housed and unhoused communities about the type and availability of services:

As HSOC, I continue to distribute the updated Sebastopol Resource Guide to unhoused individuals and other providers in the community.

I would also like to update you on the progress I have made in our efforts to develop a citywide matrix of services for the homeless population in our community. Over the past two months, I have worked tirelessly to gather information from key stakeholders and partners, and organize this information into a clear and accessible format.

Our citywide matrix includes information about a wide range of services available to those experiencing homelessness, including shelter, food assistance, medical care, job hunting, and more. We have categorized this information by type, provider, and location, and have included information about eligibility requirements, hours of operation, and contact information.

We believe that this matrix will be a powerful tool for informing housed and inhabited communities about the type and availability of services for those experiencing homelessness in our community. By making this information more accessible and easy to understand, we hope to foster greater empathy, understanding, and support for our most vulnerable neighbors.

We have collaborated closely with relevant county services and government agencies to ensure that the information in the matrix is accurate and up-to-date. We are committed to maintaining this resource on an ongoing basis, and to continue to work with our partners to address any gaps or changes in services. This matrix will be available and distributed within the next 30 days.

We are inspired by the dedication and compassion of our community partners, and are grateful for the support of the City Council in our efforts to develop this resource. We believe that by working together, we can create a more informed, compassionate, and equitable community that supports the needs of all its member.

Increase citywide understanding of rules and laws:

Introduction

As the HSOC, I understand the importance of increasing citywide understanding of rules and laws related to homelessness. In this report, I will outline the steps I have taken to increase awareness and understanding of these rules and laws among the homeless population.

Discussion

One of the primary ways I have been working to increase citywide understanding of rules and laws is by calling the shelter daily to determine if there are available beds and continuing to talk with the unhoused regarding temporary housing. By doing so, I am able to provide information about available resources and help individuals navigate the process of accessing temporary housing.

Additionally, I have been reminding the homeless population of safe parking and camping laws and the consequences of violating them. My goal is to recommend services and avoid fines for camping and illegally parking in restricted areas where strict laws are enforced. By doing so, I am helping to ensure that individuals are aware of the laws and the potential consequences of violating them.

Finally, I am referring individuals to the Sebastopol police to resolve any concerns or questions they may have about the laws and violations as they occur. I offer services and support to help individuals understand the laws and work towards compliance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, though our efforts to increase understanding of rules and laws related to homelessness, we are promoting empathy, respect, and fairness for all members of our community. By educating individuals and organizations, we are breaking down barriers and fostering a more inclusive, informed, and compassionate society. Our work is a powerful reminder of the importance of education and outreach in creating positive change.

Partner with City staff and first responders in homeless response:

Introduction

As the HSOC, I am dedicated to collaborating with city staff and first responders to provide support to the homeless population in Sebastopol.

Discussion

In regards to the 5 referrals from the Sebastopol Police Department, I have contacted with 5 of the homeless referrals either in person or by phone to offer them services or alternative solutions. The one individual I was not able to contact after the call I received from SPD, I have been working on encouraging him to at least let me sign him up for Coordinated Entry, he had moved his car on his own without my assistance and was no longer at the location I was given by the Peace Officer who called me. My goal is to continue working with these individuals to help them identify their barriers and link them to the necessary services that will address those barriers and ultimately lead to a long-term housing solution.

Conclusion

It's not always easy to find common ground and work together towards a shared goal, but when we do, the results can be truly transformative. Let's continue to build bridges between law enforcement and homeless outreach efforts, and show that empathy and understanding can overcome even the most challenging obstacles.

Develop volunteer/civic engagement opportunities around homelessness:

Introduction

As the HSOC I will continue to develop volunteer and civic engagement around homelessness. As you know, my primary goal is to connect homeless individuals in Sebastopol to the services they need to obtain long-term housing solutions.

Discussion

To that end, I have been attending the Social Worker Day every third Tuesday of the month from 1-3 pm to network with other service providers and learn about new resources that may benefit our homeless population. As mentioned earlier Courtney and I collaborated with Chris Willover at Job Link to provide transportation to and from the Job and Resource Fair for Those Experiencing Homelessness in Santa Rosa March 22 from 11 am-2 pm. I have also been attending the Sebastopol Homeless Support Meetings twice a month now.

Conclusion

Furthermore, though our efforts to develop civic engagement opportunities around homelessness, we are inspiring volunteers and community members to come together and take action. By working collaboratively with those experiencing homelessness, we are fostering empathy, understanding, and meaningful change. I will continue to keep you updated on any new developments or opportunities for collaboration.

Safe Parking:

Introduction

As the HSOC for Sebastopol, I am pleased to inform you that we are continuing our efforts to provide safe parking options for the unhoused population. The community church safe parking is currently accepting referrals for those who are living in their cars and seeking a safe place to park.

Discussion

We have several open parking spaces available for individuals who are up to date on their license, registration and insurance. If you know of anyone who could benefit from safe parking, please contact Maria Rico (707) 888-3804 to facilitate the application process and help them move closer to their housing goals. I would also like to report that I was successful in referring a senior to safe parking at the Senior Center in Gureneville after our efforts with Homeless Prevention which ended in an unfortunate eviction on March 15. After refusing the CNS referral he was successfully placed in safe parking the day of his eviction from his home in Sebastopol and was found dead a week and a half later in his car by WCCS staff from the Senior Center. Our staff was deeply affected since this was the first time they experienced something like this. The deceased had some siblings that are still in process of collecting his belongings.

Conclusion

By providing safe parking for the homeless, we are offering a lifeline to those who are most vulnerable and in need. Our compassionate efforts are helping to restore dignity and hope to individuals who are often overlooked or marginalized. Our work is a reminder that even small acts of kindness can have a profound impact, and that by coming together as a community, we can create a brighter future for all.

April 2023 Goals

- * Enroll the homeless individuals interested in Coordinated Entry for the Home First housing prioritization list.
- * Attend Coordinated Entry meetings every Friday from 11am-12:30 pm to advocate for the homeless individuals from Sebastopol who were placed on the housing prioritization list as they come up.
- * Outreach at the Sebastopol Christian Church Thursdays 8:00 am-11:30 am.
- * Outreach at the Saturday Lunches from 11:45- 1:30pm randomly as it fits the needs of the unhoused and my schedule to complete my 40 hours.
- * Moving forward my schedule will be from Monday-Friday 7:30 am - 4:00 pm or 8:00 am - 4:30 pm, when I need to attend the Saturday lunches it will change to Tuesday-Saturday 7:30 am – 4:00 pm or 8:00 am -4:30 pm. On occasion I will also start early at 7:00 am to meet with the safe parking individuals at the Sebastopol Community Church.

DATA POINTS	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	Cumulative/Non-Cumulative
# Of new people contacted (un duplicated number)	14	25	40	56	76	89		6	26	cumulative
# Of camps citywide	6	5	6	6	7	8		6	10	cumulative
# Of camps pre sweep	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		NA	NA	non-cumulative
# Of RVs on Morris St , Laguna Pkwy & Palm St., or other areas in seb	0	2	0	4	3	4		3	7	non-cumulative
# of other vehicles Morris St, Laguna Pkwy & Greater seb. area	5	2	5	5	4	6		8	16	non-cumulative
# Of people housed by WCCS (shelters, ACS/NCS, family)	8	17	27	31	40	48		2	1	cumulative
# Of people displaced (returning to Morris)	4	4	6	5	6	6		1	2	cumulative
# Referrals/requests for outreach service (Seb.City, SPD, and community)	14	8	15	14	7	8		17	15	non-cumulative
# Of Housing referrals	8	9	24	18	17	13		5	1	non-cumulative
# Food Assistance/referrals	5	8	10	15	17	20		8	10	cumulative
# of people accessing benefits (SNAP, Cal-Fresh, UI Benefits, SSI, GA,)	2	3	3	5	3	4		3	5	non-cumulative
# Of healthcare referrals (includes IMDT refs)	4	4	3	2	3	2		2	1	non-cumulative
# Expired Registrations (Morris and Laguna, & Greater Seb. Area)	6	3	2	1	2	3		3	3	non-cumulative
# Registration Renewals (WCCS fund req. submitted)	4	7	9	9	11	2		0	1	cumulative
other types of assistance (Zoom appts, other programs/services) ie taking people to court, etc	4	4	5	6	5	3		2	5	non-cumulative
# Of Volunteers hours (6 vol. x 9 wks. x 4hr shifts)	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	non-cumulative
Community Engagement Mtgs (SAVS, WCHA, City Council, neighborhood meetings)	4	5	6	5	3	2		10	4	non-cumulative
# of people who became un-housed in sebastopol	5	5	12	11	11	7		2	4	non-cumulative
# of people who became un-housed in cities other than sebastopol	8	6	5	4	8	6		1	4	non-cumulative
# of people enrolled in Coordinated Entry									12	non-cumulative



Park Village Housing Project

Park Village is a cost-effective, public-private homeless housing partnership that supports 76 very-low and extremely-low income individuals, including 19 formerly homeless individuals, in permanent housing. A partnership between the City of Sebastopol (hereafter called the City) and non-profit service provider West County Community Services (WCCS), *Park Village* is now in its sixth year of operation at a formerly partially empty mobile home park. Founded in July 2017, the project is a proven low-cost, low-barrier and highly effective effort to successfully integrate people without homes into a long-standing community.

History

The 3.7 acre Park Village property is owned by the City of Sebastopol. Prior to WCCS taking over management of the site, the City was losing \$60,000 annually in mobile home park operations, renting eighteen spaces to very-low and extremely-low income families. Eight additional pads remained empty.

Plan

1. A five year contract (renewable each year, now on 2nd contract) through which WCCS would assume management of Park Village, staffed by an on-site Property Manager and a full-time Case Manager
2. Use the empty pads to provide housing and case management to eight Sebastopol area homeless families, as well as supportive services to the eighteen long-term households
3. WCCS would procure eight quality trailers, either donated or purchased, for housing homeless families on empty pads with connections to sewer, water and electricity
4. The City's annual management payment to WCCS would decrease each year as rental income increased through greater occupancy and operational efficiencies
5. City to provide infrastructure maintenance and repair through the city's Department of Public Works.

Impact

1. As of March 2023, *Park Village* has housed 30 formerly homeless individuals, 18 of whom have transitioned out of the project to other locations and more independent living.
2. Five new spaces have been added to Park Village: two new RV spaces, a renovated previously empty space, and two, two-bedroom apartments. These new sites currently provide homes for an additional nine previously homeless individuals.
3. Overall costs to the City of Sebastopol have decreased each year even while tenancy has increased. The FY23 cost to the City will be \$73,000, down from \$97,000 in FY17. WCCS has raised nearly \$600,000 to support the project through trailer and tiny home purchases, apartment renovations, etc.
4. The Sebastopol Fire Department reports that since 2017, fire and medical calls to Park Village have decreased by 90%; a result of better site control and case management.

SONOMA COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION/CITIES AND TOWNS ADVISORY BOARD – PROPOSED FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC HEARING APRIL 19, 2023

Table 1 – Combined Action Plan Funding

Project Sponsor	Project Name	Funding Source	Recommended Award
WeeCare	BOOST	CDBG	\$258,000
Spectrum Affordable Housing	Redwood Glen Apartment – 42 affordable units	CDBG	\$200,000
Burbank Housing	Dry Creek Commons - 57 affordable units	CDBG	\$259,144
City of Cloverdale	1st Street ADA barrier removal	CDBG	\$392,000
Sonoma County CDC	Housing Rehabilitation & Earthquake Resistant Bracing System Programs	CDBG	\$500,000 Program Income
Mid-Peninsula The Farm	Summer Oaks – Contingency project 71 affordable units	CDBG	\$0
Legal Aid of Sonoma Co.	HOME - Housing Justice Program	CDBG - Public Services	\$170,956
Fair Housing Advocates of Northern CA	Fair Housing Education & Enforcement	CDBG - Public Services	\$85,000
Fair Housing Advocates of Northern CA	Fair Housing Education & Enforcement	CDBG-CV	\$25,000
Community Action Partnership	Sloan House Women’s Shelter	CDBG - CV	\$82,155
Homeless Action Sonoma	Home & Safe Navigation Center	CDBG - CV	\$300,000
Social Advocates for Youth	Street Outreach & Rapid ReHousing	CDBG - CV	\$133,213
Sonoma Applied Villages Services	Horizon Shine Transitional Housing & Navigation Center	CDBG - CV	\$100,000
West County Community Services	West County Homeless Outreach	CDBG - CV	\$200,000
West County Community Services	Service Navigation, Health & Mental Health Services Project Contingency	CDBG – CV	\$213,851
City of Healdsburg	Northern Sonoma County Homeless Services Expansion	CDBG – CV	\$141,636
Burbank Housing	Dry Creek Commons - 57 affordable units	HOME	\$212,751
Mid-Peninsula The Farm	Summer Oaks – 71 affordable units	HOME	\$343,120
Sonoma County Housing Authority	Tenant Based Rental Assistance	HOME	\$88,000
Mid-Peninsula The Farm	Summer Oaks – 71 affordable units	HOME – CHDO	\$128,775
Sonoma Applied Villages	SAVS Outreach	ESG	\$139,478
Social Advocates for Youth	Rapid ReHousing	LMIHAF	\$75,400
TLC Child & Family Services	TLC Transition Age Youth Rapid Re-Housing Program	LMIHAF	\$102,400

West County Community Services	West County Homeless Prevention	LMIHAF	\$72,200
SCCDC Administration and Planning Costs	Program Administrative Costs	CDBG, HOME, ESG	\$438,431
Total Funding			\$4,661,510

Note, many of the above programs are open to residents throughout the County. The Highlighted amounts are related to the City's non-profit partners noted in the Liaison Report.

ATTACHMENT 4: West County Representative to the Continuum of Care Report

Memo

From: Una JM Glass, Sebastopol/West County COC Board Member

To: Sebastopol City Council

Date: 04/12/2023

Regarding: Sonoma County Continuum of Care update

The Continuum of Care (CoC) is Sonoma County's collaborative effort representing the homeless services system of care. This system of care includes local governments, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and businesses. Governed by a seventeen-member Continuum of Care Board, the countywide effort is responsible for oversight of funds designated to the Continuum of Care and planning/policy development for addressing homelessness countywide regardless of funding source. The Board consists of local elected officials and appointees, nonprofit representatives, subject matter experts, and individuals with lived homeless experience.

Every geographic area nationally (usually counties) is required by HUD/the federal government to establish a Continuum of Care Governance structure that includes three things: (1) A Lead Agency to manage the business of the CoC and support the CoC Board, (2) an entity to manage an HMIS (Homelessness Management Information System) system and select a federally approved HMIS software system, and (3) an entity/system that tracks unhoused individuals cases and that manages coordinated entry to the homeless system of care between jurisdictions and providers. In Sonoma County these entities are:

- The Lead Agency has been designated by the CoC Board as the County of Sonoma.
- The HMIS system has been designated by the CoC Board as the County which also contracts with a software vendor.
- The Coordinated Entry system maintenance and management has been designated by the CoC Board as nonprofit vendor, HomeFirst.

The CoC Board meets monthly via Zoom. Its agenda, reports and link to its meetings can be found [here](#). Additionally, the COC has subcommittees that include Board members and designated individuals from the community. Sebastopol/West County's COC representative is Una Glass, who is a member of the Funding and Evaluation Committee as well as a member of the governing Board.

The CoC Board adopted a 5 Year Strategic Plan in December of 2022. The plan was also adopted by the County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors. The Plan's three primary objectives are:

1. **Invest in more housing and prevention.** It is imperative to reduce the inflow of people into homelessness and create more pathways to long-term housing stability. Doing so will require investments in both homelessness prevention and housing solutions.
2. **Strengthen supportive services.** The current system of care strains to meet the complex and diverse supportive services needs of people in the community who are experiencing the crisis of homelessness. That strain is felt not only by people experiencing homelessness, but also by homeless service providers, who are overtaxed and under-resourced. Building

supportive services capacity is critical to ease this strain and better meet the needs of those in a housing crisis.

3. **Operate as one coordinated system.** Sonoma is a large county with many local governments and a broad array of service providers and other stakeholders whose work directly or indirectly impacts homelessness. To achieve functional zero, partners across the county must work to develop shared priorities, aligned investments, seamless coordination, and equitable solutions to the crisis of homelessness. (note: Functional Zero is that point when a community's homeless services system is able to prevent homelessness whenever possible and ensure that when homelessness does occur, it is rare, brief and one-time.)

These three goals are meant to guide the priorities of all the jurisdictions throughout the County.

The CoC also includes “memberships”. Some of the seats on the CoC Board are elected by member organizations. The member organizations are listed at the bottom of this report. The CoC holds quarterly membership meetings that provide a venue for information exchange between members.

Recent CoC Board Activity

Much of the CoC Board’s recent work has focused on developing and adopting a Five Year Strategic Plan, developing a funding strategy for that plan, developing policies in support of the Plan, and working to improve the Continuum of Care’s governance and Data Collection. Board Member Una Glass has sought to promote the collection of better information and a more strategic approach to funding by aligning grant allocations and evaluations with strategic plan objectives.

Clear improvements have been made to the CoC system since it was re-structured in 2022. However, there is still a lot of room for improvement. Many jurisdictions, staff, and Board members are not clear on the role of the CoC as stipulated by the Federal Government, and how it can operate as the catalyst to successfully address the homeless crisis in Sonoma County. It *should* serve as the primary forum for a coordinated response to the homeless crisis countywide, but as yet this is far from being achieved. Board member Glass intends to advocate for training materials for CoC Board members as well as its member partners to improve performance of the CoC.

The Board has approved Notices of Funding Availability (NOFAs) and MOUs. Information regarding these items (which are very lengthy) can be seen on the CoC website. Additionally, the CoC has begun its Rating and Ranking process for homelessness projects. Information these can be viewed [here](#) and [here](#).

CoC Representative Una Glass has also worked closely with Sebastopol Vice Mayor Diana Rich on improving the transition process of Elderberry Commons (formerly the Sebastopol Inn) from an emergency facility with a medical orientation for COVID vulnerable homeless individuals to a permanent supportive housing facility. Ms. Glass, as well as Vice Mayor Rich, have been very disappointed in the management of this transition. Neither Ms. Glass nor the City of Sebastopol were informed of this transition in advance. Glass and Rich, as well as City staff, have recently held several meetings with County officials, current and expected Elderberry Commons service providers, and others, to improve this process. This issue is ongoing.

Voting Members of the Sonoma County Continuum of Care.

1. St Vincent de Paul
2. Santa Rosa Community Health
3. Interfaith Shelter Network
4. City of Santa Rosa
5. Disability Services and Legal Center (DSLCL)
6. City of Healdsburg
7. City of Petaluma
8. Sonoma County Office of Education, Education for Homeless Children and Youth
9. City of Cotati
10. Community Support Network
11. COTS- Committee on the Shelterless
12. West County Health Center
13. Homes 4 The Homeless
14. Face to Face
15. Food for Thought
16. Dry Creek Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians
17. West County Community Services
18. Providence
19. City of Rohnert Park
20. Redwood Gospel Mission
21. Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa
22. Kaiser Permanente
23. Petaluma Health Center
24. Social Advocates for Youth
25. DEMA Consulting and Management
26. City of Sebastopol
27. County of Sonoma
28. Nation's Finest
29. Homeless Action!
30. Rohnert Park Chamber of Commerce
31. Center Point Drug Abuse Alternatives Center
32. Burbank Housing
33. SAVS (Sonoma Applied Village Services)
34. Reach for Home
35. Homeless Action Sonoma
36. HomeFirst
37. The Living Room
38. NAACP Santa Rosa-Sonoma County
39. Town of Windsor

Sonoma County's Continuum of Care (CoC) Quarterly Membership Meetings serve as a learning collaborative for members CoC's of the homeless system of care. Membership is open to any individual or organization interested in and committed to ending homelessness in Sonoma County.



County of Sonoma

Regarding Elderberry Commons

April 11, 2023

Dear Sebastopol Neighbors –

We wanted to take this time to update you concerning the County of Sonoma’s activities related to the Sebastopol Inn (or Elderberry Commons). We recognize what an important housing asset this is for Sebastopol and for those sheltered there now, many of whom came from an unhoused environment. The County has appreciated its relationship with the City of Sebastopol and service provider partners in making Elderberry a success.

As the COVID-19 pandemic ends, the County teams have been working to transition Elderberry to its **permanent use** as envisioned when the County and the City worked with the State to purchase it via [Project Homekey](#) Round #1. That use is for “permanent supportive housing” or “PSH”. PSH is a housing environment whereby individuals and families live in their long-term home but have supportive services to ensure that they stay successfully housed. These services can include behavioral health care, substance use disorder counseling, benefit navigation, budgeting and financial planning, and more.

Up to now, Elderberry Commons has served a different purpose. It has been operating as a temporary non-congregate shelter for COVID-19 vulnerable individuals. About 12-14 people are sheltering at Elderberry today, while about 35 other individuals who have sheltered at Elderberry have since moved on to other housing locations. Length of stay has ranged from about three months to more than two years.

We recognize that this transition to permanent supportive housing is not an easy one. It means that we’ll have a construction period (which could be several months) and that individuals who shelter there today will have to relocate. Further, they may not qualify to move back once the conversation to PSH use is completed. While this was made clear to all of those who were housed there by way of the entry agreements they signed at the time of admittance, we recognize that this is still a hard step. The folks who shelter at Elderberry now are in a great place, rent-free, in a great community. Who wouldn’t want to be there?

The rules involving permanent supportive housing are pretty clear. Individuals who will live at Elderberry in its PSH status will have to be referred through [Coordinated Entry](#), which is a complex but necessary system that prioritizes people in order of need for housing. Some very vulnerable, deserving people are next on the list for PSH projects like Elderberry. Some may be from Sebastopol, some might be from Elderberry Commons today, but all will have to be referred in a priority order via a fair and transparent system.

Regardless, we are working diligently to help each of those currently at Elderberry Commons to relocate. Each person sheltering at Elderberry today has housing navigation and caseworkers

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assigned to them to help them move towards their next step. We don't want anyone without housing if we can help it.

While this is a difficult change, it's an important one. Permanent Supportive Housing is a key part of reaching **functional zero** in homelessness. PSH is a long-term tenancy (like an apartment rental) and not an interim housing use. It means that people there can stay longer (or in some cases indefinitely) as if in an apartment setting. Our region is short 1,000 units of permanent supportive housing, and Elderberry is a small but important step towards getting there.

Attached is a brief FAQ that we have prepared to help answer some of the questions we've heard. If there are questions we have not addressed, please email those questions to me at dave.kiff@sonoma-county.org.

Thank you,

Dave Kiff

Division Director, Homelessness Services Division
Sonoma County Department of Health Services

FAQ

About Elderberry Commons

Elderberry Commons (the former Sebastopol Inn) consists of 28 individual shelter units plus two rooms used by staff. It was developed as a non-congregate shelter (NCS) during the COVID-19 emergency. The property was acquired using Project Homekey funds, a State program that allowed for the purchase of hotels, motels, or apartment buildings for either interim housing uses or interim housing uses that will be transitioned into permanent housing. The Elderberry Commons homekey award assumed the latter - that it would serve as interim housing but be transitioned to permanent over time.

With the ending of the COVID-19 emergency, including the ending of critical program funding, it is time to convert the NCS units into permanent supportive housing. All 28 shelter units will be vacated while being converted to permanent supportive housing and reopen when construction is complete. Construction may take several months depending on supplies, permitting, unanticipated building issues, and labor availability.

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Is the Elderberry Commons closing?

No. The Elderberry Commons is transitioning from a non-congregate shelter (currently interim housing in motel rooms) to permanent supportive housing (more permanent, apartment-like life). This requires the site to be vacated (as soon as mid-April 2023) so that the rooms can undergo construction to add kitchenettes including related plumbing and electrical changes and to make accessibility improvements.

Why is the transition happening now?

As federal and state COVID-19 benefits end, and as the site is no longer needed as a non-congregate shelter site, Elderberry Commons will begin transitioning to its intended use as a long-term permanent housing with wrap-around services. Project Homekey funds were awarded to help acquire the site to be used temporarily as a non-congregate shelter and then converted to permanent supportive housing once the emergency ended.

What about the people currently being sheltered there?

Persons who are being sheltered at Elderberry were asked upon entry to sign an agreement whereby they “acknowledge and accept this is temporary non-congregate shelter and shall not be construed as a tenancy or giving rise to a tenancy.” Individuals were made further aware in early February 2023 that the Elderberry Commons was transitioning from an alternative shelter site to permanent supportive housing.

Individuals currently staying at the site have been working with case workers and housing navigators to identify housing alternatives. Some persons with medical needs may be eligible to transition to the Mickey Zane Place site in Santa Rosa. Individuals with Housing Choice Vouchers, Emergency Housing Vouchers or Mainstream Vouchers are working to secure permanent housing both in and out of the county.

What are Housing Vouchers?

The Housing Voucher system is a [rental assistance program](#) (via the US Department of Housing and Urban Development) that is used to assist low-income families, individuals, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing. Rental assistance vouchers are one of the best tools available to use existing housing stock to or help those who qualify find a place to live in Sonoma County’s tight rental market.

But there are not nearly enough of them to meet local need - nor are there enough property owners interested in leasing properties.

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All vouchers are issued in accordance with federal regulations and are waitlist-based because the demand exceeds supply. For homeless dedicated project based vouchers, the Sonoma County Housing Authority accepts referrals, when vouchers are available, from the Coordinated Entry System or referrals from Continuum of Care (CoC) service providers.

What is Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)?

Permanent supportive housing is long-term leasing (i.e. permanent housing for an individual or a family) or rental assistance combined with supportive services such as health and mental health care for chronically homeless households. This specific type of housing is in great need in Sonoma County, as identified by a recent [Strategic Plan](#) that the County of Sonoma and the Sonoma County Continuum of Care adopted in December 2022 and January 2023.

Who will manage Elderberry once it becomes PSH?

That's yet to be determined, but the County did issue a Request for Proposals from qualified contractors, property owners, and service providers. We received qualified responses from known local entities that we were happy with. But ultimately that will be a decision for the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors based on recommendations from staff from the Sonoma County Community Development Commission (CDC).

What will I notice after the change to PSH?

You might not notice much - but importantly, the use changes from interim use (where persons sheltering there don't have a lease) to permanent housing, such as an apartment (where persons will have a lease or similar housing agreement). There are hundreds of PSH units across Sonoma County, and most neighbors are unaware that they are PSH - just that they are pretty typical neighbors. In a leased housing environment, typically security is not needed (a person can be evicted for lease violations), persons shop and cook for themselves (thus the need for kitchenettes) and life is fairly similar to any other apartment building.

Can the same individuals who are sheltering at Elderberry Commons today come back when the renovations are complete?

Once the construction is complete, and in turn, the transition to permanent supportive housing is complete, individuals will be referred to Elderberry through Coordinated Entry. Accepting referrals through Coordinated Entry is a requirement of California's Project Homekey program.

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Coordinated Entry is a nationwide process (but set up in regions, such as the [Sonoma County CE system](#)).

Coordinated Entry (CE), in short, is a housing prioritization system that works from a list of unhoused people interested in and eligible for housing. Generally, to be eligible for a permanent supportive housing placement like Elderberry, a person must be homeless (including sheltered or unsheltered homeless) for at least a year and have one or more disabilities. They must be entered into the CE system, typically by a local service provider. The local service provider also typically conducts an assessment of each person's vulnerabilities - for example, a physical or mental illness, other disabilities, and other life experiences that resulted in their homelessness.

Our local prioritization policy for Coordinated Entry states that the CE program will attempt to house the most vulnerable eligible individuals and families first. This system is used for referrals to all homeless-dedicated housing interventions. It is designed to ensure that everyone who is experiencing homelessness is able to access housing in a fair and equitable manner.

What can Sebastopol community members do to help?

The county and its two housing authorities encourage landlords to become partners for housing voucher clients and other rental assistance clients - like those being sheltered at Elderberry Commons. If you own a property and are a person willing to do a home share, rent out a room, or know of a home share, individuals from Elderberry Commons may be good candidates for your rental or sharing arrangement.

Please email us at the Sonoma County Housing Authority if you have a room or housing property that you would be interested in renting to a person currently at the Elderberry Commons - reach out to HousingHeroes@sonoma-county.org. Groups like SHARE Sonoma County are also helpful in developing room and home sharing arrangements of like-minded individuals. You can contact SHARE at info@sharesonomacounty.org

Thank you for your interest in Elderberry Commons and those who shelter there.



MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 13, 2023

County of Sonoma to host Town Hall meeting regarding Elderberry Commons transition plan

Sebastopol, CA – The County of Sonoma will be hosting a town hall meeting on Monday, May 1 at 6 p.m. to respond to community questions about the transition plan for the Elderberry Commons, formerly known as the Sebastopol Inn. The public will be invited to ask questions during the Zoom-based forum, which will be streamed live on the county's Facebook page and on YouTube in Spanish.

The meeting will be hosted by Supervisor Lynda Hopkins, who represents the 5th District including the Sebastopol area. County staff, including Dave Kiff, Division Director of the Homelessness Services within Sonoma County's Department of Health Services, will be available to provide an update on the transition plan and answer questions. Representatives of the City of Sebastopol will also be on hand to help answer questions.

To register for the webinar, [click here](#). The public will be invited to pose questions either in person or by posting them in the Q&A box on Zoom. Viewers also are welcome to leave questions in the comments area of Facebook or YouTube or send questions in advance to publicaffairs@sonoma-county.org and these will be directed to the panelists.

Elderberry Commons is transitioning to a permanent supportive housing complex, which requires converting 28 individual shelter units plus two rooms used by staff. All 28 shelter units need to be vacated while rooms are converted to permanent supportive housing and they will reopen when construction is complete. This conversion was anticipated and required as a condition of the grant funding award through Project Homekey, a program

by the state of California that provides local government agencies with funds to purchase and rehabilitate housing. Agenda Item Number: 16A

For more information, including frequently asked questions regarding the emergency shelter site, visit the county's [Project Homekey](#) webpage.

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