

Dear Council Members,

I am writing in regards to Item 13, Mental Health Response.

Mental Health Crisis Response - Is Not Mental Health Care

From reading the report, it is clear that there is a need for more mental health services and facilities. This report is only addressing Mental Health Crisis Intervention. It does not address the much needed increased funding for long-term mental health care and mental health beds.

Currently, Sonoma County does not have enough mental health beds and services to treat the number of people who need long-term, consistent mental health treatment. Sonoma County does not have enough drug treatment beds for the number of people who need care for addiction.

Last year, the Sheriff said the County jail was the largest mental health facility in Sonoma County. This is a very disturbing statistic and points to the fact that we need more treatment facilities.

The programs outlined in the report are for de-escalation when a person is experiencing a mental health crisis. Is the de-escalation more cost effective if it is done by a mental health team or a trained officer?

Mental Health Crisis Intervention is Expensive

From this report, it would appear that Sebastopol does not have the current financial resources to have its own independent Crisis Response Team.

In that regard, what percentage of calls are addressed by the Mobile Support Team?

The MST is provided at no additional cost to the citizens of Sebastopol as Sebastopol Citizens pay for it via their County taxes. It seems that we should continue to partner with the MST as they do a good job and are not funded by the Sebastopol City Budget, which is extremely limited and only funded via our local sales, TOT and a portion of property tax.

From the report:

"A resource available to the Sebastopol Police Department that has been very beneficial is the County of Sonoma, Department of Health Services, Mobile Support Team (MST). We have been in partnership with them for several years. MST is available to us on a call out basis during hours they have been funded and are working which is Monday – Friday, 12:30 PM to 9:30 PM."

Measure O

Recently the County levied a tax - Measure O - to fund mental health services. Is it possible to receive a portion of Measure O funds to help increase MST support in our area? Or to support de-escalation training in our Police Department.

Chronically Homeless Mentally Ill

How can we help the chronically homeless mentally ill people get treatment and shelter?

Several people are chronically homeless within Sebastopol. These people also seem to suffer from mental illness. A young man with a husky, another young man who sleeps in front of the post-office and pushes a stroller, another young man with a beard and backpack, an older white

woman with a younger man, another white man in his 40s, and others. Have all these people been contacted by the Homeless Outreach coordinator and offered shelter? What do you do when homeless people refuse service and shelter? Are they left to wander the streets?

In San Francisco, there has been success in getting chronically homeless, mentally ill people into shelter and services through repeated, daily contact. See this article:

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/homeless-castro-district-encampment-17770957.php>

As Sebastopol is small and we have a fairly small number of chronically homeless, mentally ill people, can this model be employed? Can officers or the homeless outreach coordinator make daily contact with these people to build a relationship and move them into shelter and services?

A Call for More Mental Health Facilities and Treatment Beds

I would hope that Council would move forward with a call to the County to increase mental health and addiction treatment beds in Sonoma County. That is what is truly needed to help people stabilize from their mental health and addiction issues. The County has less beds than it did a decade ago while the need for them has significantly increased. While it is good to de-escalate a crisis situation, long-term treatment is what is needed to actually help people out of failing mental health and addiction.

Thank you for your attention to this very important issue.

Kate Haug