

## #AI: 17a, 'Council liaison on homeless' report

Particularly now that the City of Sebastopol recently declared a state of financial emergency alongside our long standing 'homeless emergency' declaration, it would be helpful to have a report out on broader past council/staff decisions and actions.

The bigger picture, rather than just a round up report of recent city events and issues, would be valuable for broader perspective, whether those past actions were collaborating or in parallel with the \$125 million+ annual county 'homeless services' budget.

Tina Riviera heads up the county Community Development Commission (CDC) and Dave Kiff is a very capable and experienced government manager in the role of director of the Sonoma County Homelessness Services Division. District five supervisor Hopkins has taken a very active role in actioning some of the the state governor's past 'Homekey' initiatives.

How has and does our CoS salaried 'homeless outreach coordinator' Maria Rico interact with the above entities and what performance metrics and statistics are used to determine the goals, efficacy and results of our specific city programs over time?

What is the status of the lawsuit filed on behalf of residents of the 'Rise 'n' Shine' RV parking spaces site by California Rural Legal Aid, the ACLU and various other well funded non profit advocacy organizations? **Which is more important to council, the city's financial emergency or their homeless emergency?**

Given our financial emergency, is it reasonable to continue running independent altruistic city projects on behalf of California's enormous homeless population, in some cases duplicating the county's far more substantially funded and staffed homeless services bureaucracies?

The \$125 million+ county homeless services budget required the 22 people living at the former Sebastopol Inn hotel, now county owned 'homekey' project (at a cost to county tax payers of well over \$3m per annum) to vacate and potentially be relocated to sites around the county, based on their priorities criteria, while they began converting hotel bedrooms into 'homes'.

The city of Sebastopol had a far more liberal local arrangement in offering city services to those who decided to park their vehicles here regardless of origin. What is the future strategy with the county to find accommodation going forward, given the March closure of the RV parking site and our fiscal emergency? How many of the people who have lived free on city property at the St Vincent Depaul owned site have been transitioned back into society by Sonoma Applied Village Services, and what is that organization now contributing to help both our city and their various clients?

Given the parlous deficit position of the state budget, it is reasonable to assume significant state funding shortfalls in the coming years. The county will have to do more with less, and in turn other places within the county will need to step up and more

evenly share the load with the City of Sebastopol.

The council liaison for the homeless never get into any of the above, instead just discussing upcoming events and projects rather than evaluating past efficacy. The city is still paying the mortgage on 'Park Village' in Tomogachi Park which they are allowing a non profit to collect rent on, who also receive county funding.

I would argue the time has now come to tie in much more closely with county wide planning to avoid our west county city infrastructure becoming a convenient dumping ground for state and county wide problems, and to focus on bringing in Transient Occupancy and Sales taxes to help shore up our city finances and hopefully eventually also fund future altruism when we are solvent again.

We are at a vitally important time for the city in deciding **which is more important, our 'fiscal emergency'** (which some would argue is partially caused by past councils and some current councillors decisions around turning the city into a landing place for drifters, transients and the destitute) **or the 'homeless emergency'?**

**Everyone wants the homeless, the mentally ill and the addicted to be appropriately cared for, that is not up for debate.** The larger question is how we rebuild our city to be viable in the internet and post county hub era so that tax revenues sustain our essential services. We do that by making the city an attractive place to visit and by providing appropriate triage facilities with county services in separate areas of the city away from schools, retail and local hubs such as the town square, parks and the library.

Right now what is left of our downtown retail hub, parks and library are frequently a hub for panhandlers, homeless people hanging out and increasingly petty crimes. The result is a shabby, scruffy look to the place which hurts our brave local retailers who are hanging on in a difficult economic climate and discourages visitors.

Of course we need to have non profits, some of whom are doing sterling work, helping the unfortunate, as are some of the county bureaucrats and services staff. **What we don't need are well funded non profits and advocacy lawyer cliques conspiring to sue the city for their good deeds and punish us for going above and beyond.**

Let's evaluate and learn from our past mistakes, refocus and regroup to rebuild a city strategy that is viable and practical, serving all areas of society.

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