



COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HOMELESSNESS (CACH) SLEEP SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

November 5, 2019

The CACH sleep subcommittee has continued working on addressing issues related to unhoused people's need to lawfully sleep somewhere in our community.

Our initial list of goals was as follows:

1. Urgently develop City policy and land use regulations to alleviate the immediate challenges around people sleeping outdoors, including policies facilitating making winter shelter beds more accessible
2. Build the operational, fiscal, and land use criteria for long term solutions around homeless programs such as safe sleeping, safe parking, navigation center/emergency shelter, and transitional campgrounds
3. Identify an alternative site for the individuals at the River St. Camp

Update on Goal #1:

As discussed at our last CACH meeting, we distributed a survey to unhoused people in the city with the goal of identifying various programmatic changes that could be made to the existing emergency shelter system in the city of Santa Cruz. Salvation Army, one of the largest providers of emergency shelter services, has offered, not only to meet with us as we asked once, but monthly. The Salvation Army is open to making programmatic changes informed by the survey results. We are currently planning to discuss and develop these programmatic changes with the Salvation Army. Creating an ongoing meeting would be one step towards creating something in-line with the ombudsman recommendation from the 2000 report. This could be broadened to include conversations with other shelters.

An additional improvement to the current system we are recommending is relocating the shuttle pick-up site for the Laurel Street shelter program to an indoors or sheltered location (to achieve the goal of making the Laurel shelter program more accessible). City staff

have been looking into the feasibility of various options for a new pick-up site. The County staff has also been directed by the Board of Supervisors to work on identifying a new pick-up site location and that work is already being coordinated between staffs of both jurisdictions. We recommend that the CACH continue to advocate for the opening of a new sheltered pick-up site, and to continue to be involved in the planning process for this project with city and county staff to ensure that the final product is in line with our committees values.

We are also recommending the creation of an additional managed emergency shelter program in the sphere of influence of the city (either in the city limits or with a shuttle service from the city to the shelter) to be opened this winter. An emergency shelter program will offset this winter's loss of the beds that have typically been available at the VFW in years past. Specifically, due to presumed budget constraints, we have been focused on creating a staffed "dusk to dawn" safe sleep and storage program similar to what had previously been proposed for Lot 24 at Depot Park last spring, or a pop-up, occasional use, rotating warming program, but we would prefer a managed 24 hour program similar to the River Street camp, (if not an indoors facility) if funding were available. We have learned that while the "dusk to dawn" safe sleep and storage program idea had been proposed by staff, there was little in the way of formal program design work done besides the creation of a proposal presented to city council that was short on details. We would like to resume the direction the city was taking in that area, but involve the community in developing the program design, ensuring that the needs of both the housed and unhoused people in our community are met. Any recommended program would require community input in developing the program model as well as ongoing feedback to ensure community needs are continuing to be met. Identifying locations for any such emergency shelter program can be done in concert with the site identification for relocating the River Street Camp shelter.

Funding for such a program in the short term would have to come out of city and/or county general funds, and would thus require financial commitment from our local leaders to execute. If general funds were agreed to be allocated proportionally to the way they are for the existing winter shelter programs, the county would be responsible for the majority of the operational costs, while the city would be responsible for significantly less, with the remainder possibly funded by the cities of Scotts Valley and Capitola. In the spring, some limited one-time state funding (HAPS) could become available. Private donations could serve as a stop-gap for this winter, but there are significant challenges to securing those resources.

An infrastructure improvement we are recommending is the creation of an RV sewage dumping site somewhere in the city limits. This dumping site would be beneficial for both the housed and RV dwelling members of our community because it would lower barriers low-income RV dwellers face to dump their sewage, and hopefully reduce the amount of illegal

dumping that occurs in the city. There is no public sewage dumping location currently in the city limits, and many RV dwellers are burdened by fuel costs to utilize the dumping stations elsewhere in the county.

Update on Goal #2:

We envision many of the operational and land-use criteria for long term sleep solutions to be developed out of the CACH's community engagement process. Developing a sustainable funding model will also require support from city and county leaders to create an ongoing financing model for emergency shelter services. Some ideas which have been discussed are bond issuances and new taxes, but these face significant political barriers, as would reallocation of revenues supporting existing general funds.

Update on Goal #3:

The River Street camp is set to close by 3/31/19. The city is set to begin a water infrastructure project at this location, and the existing funding model for this shelter program, paid primarily with one-time state HEAP grants, does not extend past 3/31/19 at this time either. The county is hopefully willing to extend the existing contract with Salvation Army if a suitable site can be identified, presumably funding the operations via general funds until new one-time funding from the state (HAPS) may become available in the spring. **We recommend that the city continue to help fund the shelter program by supporting the county to write a new contract with the Salvation Army to continue services.** City staff have taken the lead on identifying a feasible alternative location for the camp, and have looked at several possible sites. Because of the politics involved in site selection, it is critical that community-involved programmatic design work be done in concert with the site selection process. We are at least 4-6 weeks away from having some answers about site feasibility, and then more time would be necessary to select finalists and work with the community to design site-specific program requirements.

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