

From: [Kate Haug](#)
To: [Mary Gourley](#)
Cc: [Dante Del Prete](#); [Fernandez, Evert](#); [Kathy Oetinger](#); [Lawrence McLaughlin](#); [Ana Kwong](#); [Kevin Kilgore](#)
Subject: Public Comment - "Laguna Encampment Mitigation" & Council's Obligation to Constituents
Date: Friday, October 15, 2021 11:41:42 AM

Dear Council Members,

I am writing in regards to Agenda Item "Laguna Encampment Mitigation."

1.
How many people in total were contacted? From your report, it looks like a total of 11 people accepted shelter.;
2.
How many people were camping illegally?;
3.
Of those contacted, how many were employed? How many employed in Sebastopol?;
4.
How much did this cost the citizens of Sebastopol? It looks like 4-5 days of work for Public Work staff, at least 4 days of work for Law Enforcement and several days for other City Staff. Please include the total cost amount in the budget for this year.;
5.
Why are the citizens of Sebastopol paying for this when it does nothing to alleviate the burden that is placed on our community by the illegal RV encampment on Morris Street?;
6.
What measures are in place so that people do not start illegally camping in the environmentally sensitive, public recreational space of the Laguna? Will this happen again?;
7.
How does this expense benefit the citizens of Sebastopol or local businesses?;
8.
Why are the citizens of Sebastopol paying for this?; Can we get reimbursement from the County for this expense to make up for lost revenues from the Hotel Sebastopol Conversion and the City of Sebastopol's own increased spending on homeless services since the hotel conversion?;
9.
Has the homeless population of Sebastopol increased since December 2020 when the Sebastopol Inn was converted to homeless housing?;

10.

Did people move out of the Laguna onto Morris Street, creating more stress for the public and businesses by increasing the population of the illegal RV encampment on Morris Street?

In regards to item "Budget Wish List Final," there is no dollar amount associated with Line Item Number 9 for "Porta Potties, Garbage Cans Morris Street."

Please put in a cost for this service and include it in the budget for 2021 and 2022.

Please include a line item in the 2021-2022 budget for all homeless services which includes all tax money going toward homeless services, including but not limited to Homeless Outreach coordinator, wash stations, garbage pick up, port-o-potties, Public Works Department hours and any other staff hours, including time spend on the committee for the unhoused.

From my many times on Morris Street and my frequent walks in town, it appears that Sebastopol's RV campers and transients seem to be majority white and mostly males. I'm not aware of any demographic data at this time that would give me this information.

From my casual tracking of our transient population, I would observe that Council, like many American institutions, seems to favor the lawlessness and narcissism of white men over the safety and well-being of the community at large. Donald Trump, Jeffrey Epstein and countless other white men don't feel the rules apply to them and don't follow common social codes.

Instead, they just do what they want without any regard on how it impacts their immediate community and fellow citizens. It seems that Council, in facilitating the illegal RV encampment on Morris Street, is aligning itself with the values of the GOP's white patriarchy by choosing the comfort of men over the environment, public access to public space, safety for children to use trails and parks and using public monies to facilitate a life of lawlessness rather than one of social contribution. Trumpian tax evaders hate paying taxes, hate contributing to the common pool of money - how are these RVs guys any different?

It seems they are very comfortable taking public resources for their own use, trashing public space and have a devil-may-care attitude on how their lifestyle choices impact other people. When I see RV dwellers BBQing on a public sidewalk next to the Laguna, I wonder how, in good conscience, could anyone think that is a safe, good use of public space? How does that uphold our community values?

At one point during the 10/5/21 Council Meeting, Mayor Glass said she did not want to "evict" anyone from Morris Street. You can't evict someone living on a public street - they

don't have a lease or any contract. They are not on private property. The government and law enforcement agencies either permit it or they don't. It is unsettling that Mayor Glass is giving transients private property rights over our public space. Our public spaces are not living spaces, they are not private spaces, they are supposed to be accessible to all for their intended uses which are not as living quarters or RV parks.

As a woman, a mother, a feminists, a Biden supporter, a lifelong Democrat, I do not respect or align myself with politics which do nothing to preserve public space, to ensure the safety of children or create equity in the public sphere.

I do not identify with a practice of politics which appears to be nepotistic, niche and narrow. To say that only a "minority" of people wish to see the RVs moved from a sensitive waterways, from a public street, away from two children's playground is to ignore all the people who work in the Barlow, the business owners along Morris Street and many other people over the last 24 months who have said that the illegal RV encampment impacts their businesses, their lives, their ability to access public space and bike lanes. By saying their community members are a minority is to drown out the voices of the Council's very constituents.

To say that a "minority" of people are negatively impacted by homeless is to be grossly misinformed. Recent polls in Sonoma County and the Bay Area show that people feel their quality of life has worsened over the last 5 years and one of the primary driving factors is the impact of homelessness and homeless encampments.

Press Democrat 8/7/21

<https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/sonoma-county-voters-say-quality-of-life-has-worsened>

SF Gate 10/12/21

<https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/poll-silicon-valley-leaving-grass-is-greener-movin-16527214.php?IPID=SFGate-HP-Editors-Picks>

The poll which was used for the SF Gate article reveals that homelessness is cited as a force driving people's decision to move out of the Bay Area. The poll's data shows that although people's jobs and finances seem pretty solid, there is still an urge to move with homelessness ranked third after high housing and cost of living.

<https://jointventure.org/images/stories/pdf/sv-poll-2021-report.pdf>

In California, 99.4% of people are housed despite high costs of living, low wages, immigration status and countless other handicaps. The vast majority of people are housed. While there is a social obligation to help those who are incapable of providing shelter for themselves, there is also the social obligation of those who need help to accept help and to

receive opportunity for change when it is offered. It is not a social obligation nor is it socially constructive to create a system where people are no longer responsible for their actions and are not law abiding.

Arthur George, Adrienne Lauby, Tim Miller are good people with passion for their mission. They are homeless activists and lobby for the benefit of their constituents who happen to be homeless; they are like other advocates who might lobby for abortion rights, environmental regulation, or the petroleum industry.

They are not advocates for the citizens of Sebastopol. They are not advocates for Sebastopol's small business owners. They are not advocates for Sebastopol's children. They are not advocates for the Laguna. They are not advocates for Sonoma County cyclists.

They are advocates for a very particular segment of the population and their job is to get money, resources and volunteers for their clients. Their job is to sit in on Council meetings, on Board of Supervisor meetings to advocate for their constituents, to create policies which they think will help their constituents, to try to get money for their programs.

We often hear Arthur George and Adrienne Lauby's names in Council meetings and Board of Supervisor meetings because it is their job to be there and be vocal. That is the job of an advocate.

If Council members would like to be advocates for the homeless, they should step down from Council and join one of the many homeless advocate groups as the Council's constituents are not homeless. They are housed, many of whom just received property tax bills with the understanding that their tax money is going toward the viability, sustainability and enrichment of their community.

Council's constituents want safe parks and streets, they want to have access to their sidewalks and bike lanes, they want their environment protected and preserved, they want health and safety laws enforced, they want fire prevention laws enforced, they don't want drug dealing in public, near children.

The Council's constituents are small business owners who get up everyday, 7 days per work to provide local jobs, generate sales tax revenue, and provide crucial community amenities.

Our local small businesses have had significant hardships over the last 4 years including massive wildfires, flooding, a global pandemic, labor shortages and supply chain issues. They are also trying to function in a climate of online competition, which has increased significantly over the last 18 months.

It's shocking that Council does not do more to help our local businesses. It's even more shocking that Council has received - on multiple occasions - detailed information on how the Morris Street encampment is damaging local businesses, impacting their workforce during a labor shortage. And yet, Council gives priority to transients over countless businesses, their employees and customers.

Council does not need to hire a "relaunch consultant" or "economic vitality" consultant. Council could simply focus on the known and well-documented hindrances to local business. They could focus on making Sebastopol an attractive place to relocate or open a business.

At the 10/5/21 meeting, Robert Hillman gave an important piece of information to the Council, which is that he has businesses seeking to relocate to Sebastopol with good jobs that would bring revenue into our City and business to our local merchants and restaurant owners.

Sadly, these companies did not relocate to Sebastopol because of the illegal activities and RV encampment on Morris Street. Potential employers see the garbage, they see people trespassing on private property, they see people retrieving gasoline cans from the bushes and do not want to invest in our community and do not want to bring jobs into our community.

When we lose opportunities like this, how much does that impact the whole of Sebastopol? What negative impact does that have on City finances and local merchants? If we miss this opportunity, when will another one come again?

Does Council need a consultant to figure out that losing jobs and having vacant office space downtown is bad for not only the City but the community at large? If Council was advocating for its business community, it would do everything in its power to attract new businesses, new employers and reduce our downtown vacancies. Businesses need other businesses to survive and sustain themselves.

If Council does hire a "relaunch consultant," I hope they have the consultant interview local business owners on Main Street, in the Barlow, along 116. I hope the Consultants walk the streets of Sebastopol, walk through Ives park, walk down Main Street, sit in the Plaza and take note of what they see, how they feel, and ask themselves if they would make the financial and personal commitment to open a business here, take out a loan, hire employees, apply for permits, follow the rules. What would make them want to do that work and take that risk here instead of another location?

The Consultants might see people shooting up in Ives' Park, as I did two days ago, or someone BBQing illegally on a Morris Street sidewalk or panhandling in front of the Post

Office. They might say that these experiences do not encourage businesses or consumers. They might say they impact the quality of life for residents.

A repeated question is "where will they go?," meaning where would the RV campers go if the City makes the choice to return its public sidewalks, bike lanes, trails and parks back to the public and enforce its laws of zoning, illegal dumping, health and safety. This is where the City's own \$72,000 per year homeless outreach coordinator and local homeless advocates can help solve a problem. If the City were to decide to end the illegal RV encampment for the benefit of its citizens, small businesses and general community, homeless advocates could surely step in to find housing for these 15-20 people.

The advocate's job is to try to raise funds and resources for the unhoused. Perhaps they could use donations to sponsor someone in an RV park. Perhaps they could offer taxpayer funded shelter in one of the many locations currently available - maybe even the Sebastopol Inn or Los Guillicos. Maybe the homeless advocate could help the person find a job and an affordable RV spot. Maybe the homeless advocate could help a person living illegally in their RV use their disability, veteran or social security benefits to secure an RV spot in an RV park.

There are countless options and it is the chosen work of Arthur George, Adrienne Lauby, Tim Miller and the City's homeless outreach coordinator to help the homeless find housing; they have entire networks of people and programs available to them.

The County has spent over \$93 million in the last two years on homeless programs and services. The State will spend \$12 billion over the next two years. There is a labor shortage. It appears to be an excellent environment for our experienced and passionate homeless advocates to find alternative sites for the people living on Morris Street.

The citizens of Sebastopol are under no obligation to provide on-going permanent lodging for any person who parks their RV and decides to live on a public street. The citizens of Sebastopol can't be financially obligated to provide housing for anyone who rides into town and doesn't have a job. There are no City funding sources for this. The County and State have significant resources. Why does Council insist on taking on this cost-intensive project when our City's income is less than \$10,000,000?

The small, one-time \$370,000 payment from the County to the citizens of Sebastopol to make up for the permanent loss of TOT, sales tax, and tourist dollars from the conversion of the Sebastopol Inn to homeless housing should be used for improvements that can be used by Sebastopol's citizens such as the Ives' Park ADA pathway, bathrooms at the Luther Burbank Experimental Farm, an outdoor shower at Ives' Pool, trail maintenance and clearing in the Railroad Forest, beautification of City spaces, the repair of City sidewalks and roads - all City projects that are currently under funded or not funded. Any of these

investments into our City would be valuable assets for our community.

I support guaranteed minimum income, reparations, women's reproductive rights, universal health care - all issues associated with progressive politics - what I don't support is a system that allows a small segment of the population to not follow the rules, not respect public space and not respect the environment.

We can't have a system that creates a group of people who don't have to abide by zoning, environmental, fire prevention, and common health and safety laws. The Council's active facilitation of the illegal RV encampment does not serve Sebastopol's business community, its community of workers or its citizens.

The Council is fostering and supporting a lifestyle for the unhoused which is unhealthy, economically unsustainable and socially alienating. Many transients need to be in programs to treat drug addiction and mental health issues. By enabling them to live on the streets without getting help, is enabling them in their illnesses and addiction.

The goal should be to get people off the streets and into programs that can help them, not give them the impression that what they are doing benefits themselves or anyone else. The County and State have billions of dollars going toward programs and services. Why isn't the City's homeless outreach coordinator working to get people into these programs and services and off the streets?

Why isn't the City leveraging the fact that we lost revenue from the Sebastopol Inn conversion to house our unhoused in the Sebastopol Inn? As far as I can tell, the Inn is not fully occupied and everyday I see two elder women with shopping carts downtown. Why in the world are these women not being housed in the Sebastopol Inn?

The Council should be asking the County why we still have a homeless encampment and why we have elderly women with shopping carts when the County has spent \$93,000,000 in the last two years. If Council advocated for its citizens and small businesses, it would be asking these questions instead of just going along with Governor Newsom's 3 hours public relations party on the grounds of the Sebastopol Inn. Why didn't Council take Governor Newsom over to Morris Street to have their photo taken?

The job of the homeless advocate is different from the job of elected officials of a City. The Council's job is to advocate for the health and well being of their constituents, their small business owners and their citizens. Most importantly, it is to ensure the financial viability and longevity of the community. How is the Council fulfilling this obligation?

Best regards,
Kate Haug