

EUGENE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



Work Session and Possible Action: Homeless Camping

Meeting Date: September 23, 2013
Department: Public Works
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Agenda Item Number: 5
Staff Contact: Kurt Corey
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ISSUE STATEMENT

This work session provides an opportunity for the council to discuss and possibly take action on a proposed ordinance related to overnight homeless camping and to receive updates from staff on the process for selecting a site for a 90-day overnight sleeping pilot program and creating an overnight camping resource network.

BACKGROUND

Ordinance Concerning Permitted Overnight Sleeping

The City Council held work sessions on homeless camping in parks and open spaces on April 24, 2013, May 20, 2013, June 26, 2013, and July 10, 2013. On July 10, 2013, the City Council directed the City Manager to include in a proposed ordinance a provision removing the sunset on the ordinance authorizing Conestoga huts. The council also directed the City Manager to bring back an ordinance that develops and establishes rules for a 90-day pilot overnight sleeping program or "rest stop." In addition, the council requested information concerning the additional cost of increasing the number of vehicles allowed to be used for sleeping at any one time on a site. Subsequently, staff responded that the cost of portable toilets, solid waste collection, and supervision is not likely to be appreciably different for six vehicles as compared to three since the same general type and size of facilities would be required. The cost of site cleanup would probably be reasonably proportional to the number of vehicles and would likely vary based upon the effectiveness of the site supervision.

A public hearing on the proposed ordinance provisions was held on September 16, 2013. Twenty-six people testified. Common themes were the magnitude of the need for homeless camping facilities, the urgency of the problem with winter approaching, and requests to keep the rest stop(s) open 24 hours a day. Specific to the ordinance, several people spoke in favor of the provisions making permanent the definition of "vehicle" to include Conestoga huts and expanding to six the number of vehicles permitted on a registered site.

Camping Resource Network

At the July 10, 2013, work session on homeless camping, the council asked staff to draft for council consideration a plan to create and operate a homeless temporary overnight camping resource network to match up those with appropriate space to those with need.

An interdepartmental staff team with representatives from Public Works, Planning and Development and Central Services considered options for collecting information, processing the information received, and distributing the information so it could be used to make the desired matches.

- Data collection from interested hosts could be relatively simple and utilize technology currently being used by the City. A sign-up form could be created and made available on the internet. Estimated cost for a functional database and form with customized fields would be less than \$5,000.
- The cost associated with processing the information is primarily in staff time. If there is demand for the service, an estimated 10 hours per month would be required to manage the database, confirm that registrants own the property they are offering and ensure that registrants understand various code requirements associated with allowing campers on private property. Staff also would compile periodic reports to distribute as appropriate. Complaints and requests for code enforcement are anticipated from neighbors of those hosting a homeless camper, which will increase the amount of staff time required.
- The effective distribution of the compiled host information and the actual matching of people with space to people with needs would be the most challenging aspects of the concept. In all likelihood it would require active participation by one or more social service agencies that have connections with people in need of shelter and also have experience in managing social service referral programs. To be successful, the resource network needs to build relationships and make meaningful matches. This most likely would be achieved through an experienced social service provider.
- The staff team also identified several other potential areas that need to be addressed:
 - The proposal assumes there is sufficient interest among homeowners to host those seeking shelter and that a social service provider will see the benefit of the service and be willing to help manage it. While there is no easy way to assess the potential supply side before implementing the program, additional research is needed to determine interest among social service providers and what the costs would be to contract this service.
 - Additional expense and staff time would be incurred to adequately market the service. In addition to increasing awareness about the code and where to sign up to be a host there would need to be significant outreach to those seeking shelter so that they are aware of any newly emerging options. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the resource network would also add expense to the project. Since this would likely be a pilot project some kind of data collection and reporting would be required to provide the council with recommendations for the future of the program. Evaluation should include utilization numbers and ideally also satisfaction surveys for both hosts and guests who have utilized the service. Other stakeholders such as neighbors, code enforcement staff, and the Eugene Police Department may also need to be involved in evaluation of the success of the program. Marketing, monitoring, and evaluation could be done under contract to a social service provider.
 - Liability and risk should be considered, particularly if the City facilitates matches between homeless people and local property owners. This liability could be addressed

in part by contracting with a responsible social service provider to manage the actual match-ups.

If the council is interested in further developing this plan, next steps might include conducting a full needs assessment, formally contacting local social service providers to request proposals for participating in this effort, identifying in greater detail liability issues, and looking for funding for those costs that the City would bear.

Pilot Project and Site Selection

Regarding the pilot project and the possible selection of a site, the ordinance under consideration by the council was drafted with the following elements:

- One site shall be recommended by the City Manager and approved by the council at a City-owned site, religious institution, non-profit organization or business located in a commercial or industrial zone.
- The site shall allow no more than 15 people at the site in vehicles, tents campers, or trailers.
- City Manager shall develop a public-private partnership whereby the private partner shall provide for adequate garbage, toilets and supervision at the site at no cost to the City.
- Overnight camping at this site shall be allowed between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m.
- Each day the site shall be completely cleaned up by 7 a.m. and all personal property shall be removed so that the site does not become a 24-hour site.
- The 90-day start of the program shall begin after things are fully up and running.
- The agency that provides site supervision should work with surrounding and nearby neighbors (businesses or residences) to address any concerns.

On July 10, 2013, the council directed the City Manager to remove from the list of potential homeless camping sites any site located in a residential area or close to a school.

The list of example City-owned sites was provided to the council on June 26, 2013, based upon criteria referenced by the council in previous work sessions. An updated list of non-park, City-owned sites meeting the appropriate criteria is included as Attachment B. A prospective list of privately owned sites located in commercial or industrial zones, or owned and operated by a religious institution or non-profit could be derived through an RFP process if desired. The council has previously expressed a preference for approving the specific site.

RELATED CITY POLICIES

Eugene Code 4.815 Prohibited Camping and Eugene Code 4.816 Permitted Camping.

COUNCIL OPTIONS

Proposed ordinance:

- The council can choose to approve the ordinance, as drafted or with amendments, at the September 23, 2013, work session; or bring back the ordinance, as drafted or with amendments, at the regular council meeting on October 14, 2013; or choose to not move forward with the ordinance at this time.

Overnight camping resource center:

- The council can choose to provide direction to the City Manager to conduct a full needs assessment which would include further gauging the demand for the resource center and soliciting proposals from service providers to determine their interest in managing the matches, and potential sources of funding for this effort; the council also could choose to take no action at this time.

Selection of a pilot project “rest stop” site:

- The council can choose to select a pilot project site from the list of example sites, provide further criteria for potential additional sites, direct that a list of privately-owned sites be solicited thru an RFP process, or select a different option.

CITY MANAGER’S RECOMMENDATION

The City Manager intends to email the council his recommendation on Friday.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Proposed Ordinance Concerning Permitted Overnight Sleeping
- B. Updated List of City-Owned, Non-Park Sites and Related Criteria

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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