

Ad-Hoc Homeless Steering Committee (HSC)
Wednesday, August 3, 2011
3:00 - 5:00pm
Gresham Room, Ashland Public Library

1. Call to order
2. Approval of Minutes
3. Review and discussion of follow up research on proposals
 - Chamber Donation Boxes (Seltzer)
 - Public toilets (Parker)
 - Homeless Steering Committee (Voisin and Rohde)
 - Location for Day Use Center (Ayars)
 - Listening Post (Hopkins-Powell and Lewis)
4. Review memo from Chief Holderness
5. Discussion on two proposals received in late July
6. Discussion on presentation to City Council September 20
7. Adjournment



Minutes
July 14, 2011
Ad hoc Homelessness Steering Committee
Guanajuato Room, Ashland Public Library
3:00 – 5:00

Attendance

Rohde, Lewis, Hopkins-Powell, Ayars, Parker, Voisin (council liaison), Seltzer (city staff)

Absent

Everson, Saldana, O'Bryon, Slattery (council liaison)

Call to Order

Rhode called the meeting to order at 3:05.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the June 27 meeting were approved with corrections.

The committee reviewed the “parking lot” items.

Mobility Hospitality Cart

Voisin indicated La Clinica was interested in securing a mobile unit. There was general discussion about partnering with La Clinica. Voisin will contact La Clinica and let them know about the proposal for a Mobile Hospitality Center.

Hospkins-Powell raised the question “What is the committee’s role” and asked if it is the responsibility of the committee to link providers with proposals.

Jobs

The committee reiterated the next outreach for proposals should be more focused. Suggestions of jobs or housing were put forth. The committee did not vote on the specific issues for the next round until it is clear what is being done with the existing proposals approved to forward to Council.

The committee decided to focus their discussion on the proposals to be forwarded to the Council and set aside the “parking lot” ideas for a future discussion.

Forward to Council proposals

It was noted Listening Post needs to be included in the list of proposals to forward to Council. The committee reviewed each proposal to identify what information is still needed for each and what the proposal is requesting of the City.

Chamber Donation Boxes

- Identify the non-profit who will oversee the collection and distribution of funds
- Number and location of the proposed boxes
- Proposed language for sign

- Request permission from City to place donation boxes on public property. Seltzer will contact the Chamber.

Public Toilets

Location of portable toilets

Possible cost of maintaining public toilets open 24/7

It was suggested portable toilets be located at each end of town and specifically noted a location near the bikepath at Valley View Road. It was also suggested the public restrooms on the Calle and near the dog park be open 24/7.

Parker will contact submitter Steve Auerbach for more information.

Standing Homeless Committee

The committee reviewed the “charge” of the committee as outlined in the proposal.

Rohde and Voisin will work together on this proposal

Day Use Center

Identify possible locations, either City property or private property that might be available rent free for the center.

Ayars will research possible locations.

Listening Post

Hopkins-Powell reported that she is working with Lewis and it is possible the Methodist Church could provide space for Listening Post services. At this point they are not asking for City office space but may need to do so in the future.

The committee agreed each person would provide an update of their research at the next committee meeting. That meeting is set for Wednesday, August 3 at 3:00. Seltzer will check with the library for available meeting space.

Report to Council

The committee will report to the City Council on September 20. There was general discussion about what should be included in the report. The committee agreed it should include a summary of all the proposals received so the Council and the community are aware of the number of the proposals.

Seltzer reported she will be available for the August 3 meeting but not available for the August 18 meeting and another staff person will attend.

Next Meeting Dates:

August 3, 3:00-5:00 Location TBD

August 18, 4:00 – 6:00 Ashland Library, Gresham Room

Memo

DATE: July 12, 2011
TO: Homelessness Steering Committee via email
FROM: Terry Holderness, Chief of Police
CC: Ruth Coulthard via email
RE: Response to Peace House Policing Proposal Statements

Thank you for the opportunity to address the statements included in the Peace House policing proposal submitted by Ruth Coulthard.

In her proposal, Ms. Coulthard made a number of assumptions. To my knowledge she did not contact the Ashland Police Department for information or clarification.

Citations and Police Profiling

Ms. Coulthard states *“the use of citations as a means of control on a population...”*

One of the main functions of any law enforcement agency is to control behavior of people by enforcing laws and ordinances. The same elected officials that write the laws and ordinances determine the penalties for violations. The majority of contacts with anyone for minor offences result in warnings. Citations for minor offences, especially for municipal code violations, are usually given only if that person has been warned in the past and continue to commit the violation.

While I agree that placing economic sanctions or fines on people who either cannot or will not pay is not very effective, it is often the only option we have under existing law. I recently told the Council that we were having a problem with a small number of multiple offenders who were continually violating municipal codes with impunity since they had no intention of paying the fines. I recommended that Council adopt an ordinance that is used in other Oregon cities that would have restricted multiple offenders from returning to the area where the offence occurred for a limited time. The Council was not interested in moving forward with that type of ordinance so at this time the only sanction available to the courts for violations of municipal codes are fines.

While people can do community service in lieu of most of the fines, the court cannot force someone to do community service. We have found that our multiple offenders, 90% of whom self identify themselves as homeless, almost never chose community service in lieu of fines.

“Many of the poorest Ashland residents believe they are victims of police profiling and attention that sometimes borders on harassment”, states Ms. Coulthard.

While I am not sure exactly what Ms. Coulthard means by the term “borders on harassment” I would agree that some groups of people do have significantly more contact with police officers than the general population. More specifically people with mental health problems, people with substance abuse problems and people who continually violate laws are more likely to have contacts with law enforcement than the general population. Those contacts are not based on profiling; they are based on



behavior. The fact that some of that behavior might be the result of intoxication or mental illness does not change the fact that we as police officers need to address behavior that is unsafe or illegal. A great many of the homeless in Ashland never receive a citation and many are never even contacted by the Ashland Police Department. The small number of homeless people that are frequently contacted and receive a great many citations are not being harassed; they are contacted because they repeatedly violate laws or engage in behavior that generates complaints.

Ms. Coulthard goes on to identify four solutions. Listed below are my comments related to those suggestions.

1. *“Appoint specific officers to interface with homeless and their advocates...”*

We do have one officer who works in the downtown and is assigned to work with the homeless and their advocates. Our Central Area Patrol officer has worked directly with several groups involved in outreach and rehabilitation programs for the homeless. This has included introducing case workers to individual homeless people in an attempt to get them involved in rehabilitation programs. In addition, all officers have received training in dealing with the homeless and services available to assist the homeless. That training stresses the importance of treating the homeless with respect and the importance of knowing what resources are available to help the homeless. Homeless advocates have been invited in the past to speak and provide training at department staff meetings.

2. *“Plaza foot patrol...”*

One officer is assigned to work full time foot patrol in the downtown and all officers are encouraged to walk on foot in the downtown area when they have time available. In addition, we encourage officers to write reports, conduct interviews, and take breaks at the downtown contact station.

3. *“Police should direct those in need of sleep to an appropriate legal sleeping spot...”*

Officers provide information and directions to legal camping spots. Camping within city limits is prohibited. I understand during a recent meeting with the Homelessness Steering Committee comments were made that the police should provide information about camping on US Forest Service or BLM property and provide maps. The police department has maps of legal camping areas posted at both our main station and at the downtown contact station. We make those maps available to anyone free of charge.

4. *“Citations as the primary police/homeless interface should end...free bus tokens, current information on free meals, available shelter, camping options...”*

As already stated, at least for minor violations citations are generally only issued if warnings have been ignored. We do have information available on free meals, available shelters and legal camping options. In addition, we have partnered with local churches to provide free bus tokens for people who need to go to Medford for services not available in Ashland. We also have available free of charge personal hygiene items such as tooth brushes, soap and shampoo and can provide emergency vouchers for food and gas. The bus tokens and vouchers are available at both of our facilities but the personal hygiene items are only available at our downtown contact station.



Proposal To The Homelessness Steering Committee

Phronesis
Jordan Whitlock
(541) 531-2011

What's the issue/problem?

Citizens who are facing homelessness and or economic hardship need a form of central transportation to get to the services in Ashland.

Some people live far away from local services such as free food in Ashland, and as their only option they must walk all the way to the these locations, sometimes taking hours. By the time they've reached the service, they must then walk back, ultimately burning away food that they had just eaten and thus resulting in more hunger when they get back. For the homeless community getting around can also be a problem depending where they are. If the homeless community is jumping from service to service then this could prove challenging because they are forced to walk. Especially since they must keep their belongings with them. The walking for the homeless, ends up resulting in the same situation as people who live far away from free food. Both classes are already in poor economic situations, meaning they have little or no capital at all that can be spent on say the bus and or other form of transportation.

Solutions:

1. Give people who are homeless and who are below the poverty line free bus passes.
2. Make Ashland Loop free again

Background of Agency:

Phronesis is a social-activist group centered around Southern Oregon University and has been involved with the issues of homelessness for almost a year. We've organized and led the Homelessness Rights march against The Exclusion Zone. We've led and organized the Town Hall event , bringing over 100 people together to talk about the problems facing our city when it comes to homelessness; taking notes and collecting the voice of the people. Months after, we held a Homelessness Campus Conversation, resulting in great dialogue and ideas to help those who are in need. Still to this day we are very involved with the Citizens Coalition and try very hard to help those who are below the poverty line. You may check our website at:
<http://www.phron.org>

Proposal to the City of Ashland Ad Hoc Homelessness Committee Provide Business Licenses

What is the issue/Problem?

The homeless and impoverished are in positions where they desperately need to be able to support themselves under adverse conditions, yet in a economy where jobs are few and far between the possibility of those in desperate situations supporting themselves under their own initiative, using their own skill sets is blocked by business laws which bar them from selling their services or products without a business license. For many these skills are all that they have left.

As it now stands the homeless and poor are told to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps” and then penalized if they try to do so. This trap must be disarmed.

Proposed Action:

Towards the end not unethically trapping and chaining members of our community in poverty we propose that free business vouchers be given out by the city to those too desperate to buy a traditional business license but who still desire to better themselves under their own power by selling their skills and products. This action would achieve a number of progressive steps including:

- It would allow the impoverished to improve their status by giving their abilities back to the community they have decided to live in.
- It would lessen panhandling by allowing the impoverished the opportunity to conduct exchanges rather than being forced into asking for handouts.
- It would give the impoverished, who have been morally beaten down by our society, a sense of self worth and self reliance knowing that the community wants the skills they have to offer and that they are capable of improving their own state.

Details and Logistics:

There are two main options which present themselves as to how to run this program.

One would be for the city to hand out the vouchers to a person who was determined to be in need and if they presented a viable business plan. The voucher would be handed out on a deferred payment plan, it would be given for free with the expectation of it being payed off at the end of a thirty day period once the recipient begins to make money for himself. If the payment is not made by the end of a thirty day period the individual could attempt to apply for a further deferral if it seemed like he could still make money off of his business plan, if not, the voucher would be canceled.

A second option would be to set up a program which itself has a business license. Those who were in need and presented a proper business plan would be allowed to function under the auspices of this program for as long as they were still unable to establish themselves on their own.

The program could be run through the infrastructure which is already in place at DHS, using the same office to house the applications and the case workers. In addition, in the first option some of the program costs could be covered by the eventually payed off business licenses.

Proposal Submitted by:

Phronesis – a community organization which has been involved with the poor and homeless community since its inception in October of last year.

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