

Notes
The People Passing Through
October 28, 2015

Attendance

Approximately 100 people

Welcome

The Mayor welcomed the audience and explained that he called this session because of the numerous complaints, reports and requests over the past several months about people hanging out downtown and by exit 14 and behaving in ways that clash with residents and visitors.

The purpose of this listing session is to collect more information about this issue to give the Council and the community a shared collection of reports, interpretations and suggestions to move forward to deal with this issue.

The focus will be on three questions:

- 1) What behaviors have you found problematic, threatening, intimidating, and dangerous? Please say where and when this occurred.
- 2) What can you tell us about the people causing the problems?
- 3) What suggestions do you have for how we can with cope with this situation?

Note: The following are excerpts from comments expressed at the meeting. They are not verbatim.

Josh Criss: We shouldn't even talk about this. It is repellent. Is this a City or a gated community? DOJ says policing homeless is a violation of the law. Harassing and intimidating.

Lee Mattson: I have seen people blocking sidewalk as a member of the Plaza watch I have seen those behaviors occur. It is not fair. I interview hundreds of these people and this is not their intention. These are our children and our grand children. We can police ourselves, we can interact with them and they will change their behavior. Intentionally go down there.

Katharine Flanagan: Thank you for taking the time to listen. This is a complex issue it is not downtown issue or a Chamber issue. This is not about the homeless it is about people who choose to be home free and exhibit negative behavior. This is about people who do not care about our community. It chips away at our ability we want to be able to move through we are asking for a broad based solution. How bad does it have to get? The sense of place is important to us.

Kate ??: I am homeless. The homeless community is very different than the middle class community in the way they survive and their values. The culture is much more in your face. I suggest have an advisory panel of homeless to advise the Council. Lots of kids are runaways from abusive backgrounds. I've been here 10 months, there are veterans with PTSD. Bad behavior that is illegal should be handled by law enforcement.

Nick ??: Many transients set up camp across from my condo along the tracks. We almost stumble over them I have spent the last three years cleaning up after those transients, clothes, syringes, beer bottles, empty vodka bottles. I have collected bags of their trash. I see them defecating in public. They appear to be 20 to 30 year olds. Solutions: get the police to walk along the tracks and move those people along. Perhaps shelters for people who choose to be homeless are not part of our community. They pass through. Need to move concrete boulders.

Don Green: Lived here all my life. I took a walk with my grandson, I live along the tracks. In a 10 minute walk there were 12 camps all on private property. One even had a generator; I put out campfires in July. They are mostly young and homeless by choice, I think these people need to be moved along. The police need to move these illegal camps. I call the police and they are not able to respond.

Ray Cato: There are pit bulls threatening dogs, blocking sidewalks, sitting, drinking in public, come on our property, cursing and dropping the 'f' bomb outside my office all day. They sneak into the hotel and try to get a free breakfast from the hotels. They are white people ages 15 to 40. Suggestion: pass a law to prohibit panhandles. I don't know these people or where they are from but the gate is open. This is happening on Clover Lane as well.

Jeanette McGathey: I moved here because it is a safe and friendly place. Is it a community homeless problem or a safety issue? We were recently attacked in Garfield Park by five vicious dogs. I was traumatized and hurt. There were three people with their dogs sitting by the van and wagon yell f** you. I call 911. The dog people yell at the officers that they didn't commit a crime. Officer assures me that they will take care of this. I go to my neighbors, the dogs are not vaccinated and the officer encouraged me to get it checked. The people and their dogs are still there and moved to another location under a tree. I called the police. I was told no one was available and never got a return call. The people with the dogs were still there at 10:00 at night. I got a call back from the police who told me they were to leave at 11:00. The people stayed for five days. I went back to the police station. They are still around town.

Sandra Slattery: The values we hold dear and that define our quality of life are in jeopardy. What sets us apart is our welcoming commitment, care for each other we volunteer our time and financial resources to support the library, the homeless, the schools, we want to give back to this community that we love. It makes it the place we all want to live. Why do we allow and accept individuals who do not live in this community to take advantage of us? They threaten people who don't give them money. This is not about homeless issue. This is a group that have chosen a lifestyle. This is a community

issue. Frankly, this is the most important issue we face. Do we have the capacity to deal with it?

David Hill: I volunteer with St. Vincent de Paul. Like all of you I have run into sleeping bodies and ad hoc toilets in Lithia Park and have witnessed boisterous behavior on the Plaza. In my work I get to meet these people and it gives you a different perspective. Travelers come to Ashland because it's a nice place, just like the rest of us came to Ashland. When one has little to be proud of, home free people look for a little bit of pride that it is their choice. It's not really their choice, but to hold onto a bit of pride they say that it is their choice.

Dot Fisher Smith: Lived here since 1981. I want to point to a bigger picture; it is symptomatic of a larger society of war and taking care of one another. I greet them with a smile, I am old and they give back what they get. More ordinance and laws just becomes more oppressive. It is the behaviors of just a few. Suggestions: if people go to the free meals and speak with them maybe we should have ambassadors, main street ambassadors similar to OSF brick ambassadors.

David Wick: On the Plaza I was asked for money, I declined, and I was screamed at. This is a community issue and I am part of the Peace Commission how do we create a culture of peace? It is about relationships. What is our expectation of our quality of life?

Gail Pagent: I took in a young lady who was a traveler and stayed with me until she could graduate from HS. I regularly go to the dog park, but many people are afraid to go because of a lot of disrespect from the young men. It is a deterrent; I am called names. I don't take guests downtown they way I used to. I won't give you money but I'll buy you some lunch and she swore at me. If you are part of the traveler community please tell people to be respectful.

Cynthia Ryder: I have a teenage daughter and she is sexually harassed even when I am with her. She has been flanked on both sides taunting her down the street and she was able to get away. She is growing up thinking that being sexually harassed in her community is OK. Ryder read a letter from a teacher who brought a group of students to OSF to see plays. I tell my students never to travel in less than a group. My students and parents no longer consider Ashland a safe place to visit. The harassment has escalated.

Pam Hammon: I too have lived here a long time and I raised my family here. My daughter spoke to the Council last November about being consistently harassed and sexually taunted on her way to work and read a letter from her daughter. Another incident that occurred at my store: This women lives downtown. She has lost her dignity, and her clothes are filthy. She comes into the store and sprays herself with perfume samples. She is undernourished. We should not have humans that live like this. I heard of a new law in California Laura's law. We need a code of conduct for our community. Keep it legal.

Jason Diamond: Grew up in Ashland. I have been harassed called an A*hole. It's hard for me to go downtown anymore. "No, I cannot help you", is responded to with screams. The general clutter not just the person but their clutter, tripping over rugs, squatter vans, pots and pans.

Jacee Gray: I work in retail across from Starbucks, I saw a man hanging from the bronze statue in front of the Chamber. As a mother I called to him to get off before he hurts himself. He screamed at me with everything you could imagine and tried to bate me to come out. He had hung his laundry on rope strung between Chamber trees. Every day we have stories of our employees not allowing them to push the button cross walk.

Tom Herrara: Holiday Inn Express manager. There has been an increase in transient homeless..It has become more aggressive, we used to have to run people off for trying to steal breakfast but now we have the same individuals coming back and breaking into the hotel. Social Media has identified our hotel as a place that is a homeless hotel. These are posts coming from our guests. I don't know who they are, they congregate at the Food Bank and the Access program. I don't know who they are. I like the idea the idea of getting the community involved. If I can be helpful I can be involved and give my time.

Susan Grant: Conduct upsetting. I find it disturbing to use children and babies as a means of begging. I also find it upsetting to have a very large individual approach me and many homeless people smoking weed in the bushes near the library. We must have public bathroom open and in locations, must have a location where homeless can engage in their activities, if they don't have a bathroom they urinate in public, if there is some place for people to go to smoke weed. Is there a Mental Health network to help the homeless and. We have traveled extensively. In Japan there is a high sense of public responsibility. Ask to comply with standards of conduct

Name???: I don't live in Ashland. I came here when the culture of peach first started. I live in Grants Pass. First came to visit Ashland in 2004. I have never lost the first person that spoke and used the term refugee is correct. These travelers are refugees. It will be too late if we don't start now to develop this culture of peace. If it can't be done here in Ashland where can it be done?

Alice Mallory: My entire career working in the barrio in east Los Angeles. I am not afraid to work with these types of people I am a volunteer ambassador on the Plaza. A couple asked where the free showers, free food and free resources are. They ask why those services are not available every day? My answer is "these are provided by our community to do the best they can". I asked where do you find out about Ashland. Oh it is all over the streets of LA. Because we are a theater town we are a destination. Nice looking guy gave me a card that said I am a Human Being too. They are trying to move us off the Plaza, and try to exclude us from the downtown. Travelers like you, put his fists up at me...but you have to respect others right to walk in that space.

Carolyn Anderson: Business next to the library and I am on the Board OHRA. We operate the resource center because of a generous grant from the City. I do not doubt the

stories I hear tonight. How can we pass a law that regulates behavior? At the resource center we can tell them to leave and they have to leave it is much more difficult for the City to tell people to leave because it violates their rights. We provide a lot of services. We are always looking for volunteers.

Ben Morgan: Lived here for 8 months. We don't hide things. It is beautiful. People go downtown to socialize. We need to centralize the resources.

David French: Love the community, we volunteer, I don't allow my daughter to go downtown by herself. Ten years ago, this bad behavior was not part of Ashland. We need to require people to be respectful. I have toyed with opening a business downtown, but I won't do it. The trip advisors posts will come to haunt this community. I'll chip in to help. Less what they look like but how they act. I am a grown man and I feel threatened. I say "sorry I can't help you out today" and then they come after me.

Trina ????: Born and raised here. We own property on Tolman Creek. Our property is littered with trash. When I don't give money they yell and scream. I waited for an officer to arrive to remove two homeless tents who had set up camp on our property. For an hour I waited for the officer. I was the one that had to clean up their trash. We have shoveled human feces off our property. We have been physically threatened. I had a guy jump on my car and had to be pulled off. I used to go to the Plaza.

Spencer Hill: HS student. It is not just at the Plaza or exit 14. How do we teach these people that defecating on the sidewalk is not acceptable.

Judy Shee: My husband and I walk in Lithia Park in the morning...ordinance says not sleeping, no dogs, no overnight parking. We see people walking their dog in the park, trailer parked with people living there for days. Sleeping bags with people inside. If these ordinances are in place why aren't they enforced? Our visiting family members are harassed and verbally assaulted. Our daughter and husband and child to the reservoir and they found a shirtless man resting on their lounge chair in the private backyard and concern for safety in their own backyard. We too have a right to feel comfortable

Amy Blossom: We have a code of conduct at the library. We treat people with respect and they generally respect us. We have more people coming in and they are carrying more stuff.

Cindy Bernard: Great to have the conversation out in the open. I work on Clover Lane. I have had a few incidents happen going to and from work. I have had my way blocked, been called every name in the book, and it is a behavior issue. I have been told that I should speak to the director of the resource center and complain. Initially the director was flip and dismissive. I've asked them to walk the perimeter. I have heard tonight the speakers that work for OHRA. They leave the resource center but then they hang on the street, camp in their cars, numerous dogs, the police say it is kind of a gray area. We have a platform for education at the resource center, and it could start there. Teaching people how to be respectful. The resource center needs to start that conversation.

Francesca ??: Accosted at the grocery store, four dogs fighting in front of the Chamber, drugs being offered to my friends, my kids are not allowed downtown or allowed to ride their bikes. I smell more weed in Lithia Park. I recently called police because the travelers had a “party on my property” police asked them to leave. B&B. A man passed out so drunk police said there is no way to take him.

Gwen Davies: lived here 40 years. The terrible things that happened to the woman at Garfield I was warned about this group camping at Garden Way Park. Luckily she warned me...every single person in that park stared at me and the dogs were loose.

Kathy Kennedy: Ashland is developing a reputation we don't want. I have had a number of incidents of spending the night inside my building. Turning off the exterior lights in order to hide. I have had to pick up their trash, excrement. I wonder if there are cities that have solved this issue and have more decorum. If we have to be respectful why shouldn't they?

Natalie Richie: Screamed at, sexually accosted, followed by five men yelling cat calls at my son's girlfriend. I was told there were 17 different programs for homeless...I visited and walked through OHRA and Food Bank. There were many people at the various stations, a movie playing, people charging their phones and playing on computers. A very small percentage of people through OHRA have had success. Not one person had gotten a job. The people are sitting around being waited on, no one was helping. Why can get free meals and free showers without giving back?

Name???: People yell at us, as a citizen I honor the social contract and everyone needs to honor the social contract. Laguna Beach same as Ashland and it does not have this problem. Ask Laguna Beach how they have avoided the problem, solved the problem.

Brigitta ??: I am a homeless transient. I was homefree by choice. The travelers are everywhere and they are an entire generation. This is a rebellion. My generation ...they don't want anything. They don't want your things and your services. What is not OK is illegal behavior. They don't want to obey.

Marie Donovan: I am a mother, grandmother, created a career for myself and a home for my family. I want to have a community to thrive; I want my children to be able to go downtown to eat ice cream. My downtown business and building is this behavior must stop.

Speck ???: I am here to talk about the people on the sidewalks yelling at me for money and in my way. Maybe we could set up a work program for these people to sign up to work. Ask other cities. Hope we get serious about this.

Katie Rupp: We count on tourist dollars. The people who are the “walking ATMs” are the tourists. They are giving money.. Don't give money to people on the street. We have 17 resources to help the homeless. Giving directly creates problems.

Derek Johnson: DOJ says you can't criminalize homeless.

Maddy ????: My solution: people want to have a purpose. If they are feeling lost give them a purpose. If you want to live here and pitch a tent then give back. Have to give people a chance to give back. You have to give back to the community. Let's figure out a way to give them an opportunity to give back.

Justin Donovan: long time resident and raised in Ashland. Golden rule: treat one another as you wish to be treated. I want my kids to feel safe and I want my wife to feel safe without being sexually harassed. Be kind to others and I hope that Ashland can become that again.

???: Lives in student housing at SOU. I am from Portland and they can't solve it except get into trouble and I don't want Ashland to get into trouble. Maybe we can approach some of these people and become a part of this community and we'll give you a shower, food, a bed, and they can help us run the farm. Get SOU involved.

Mother Akerman: grew up in Ashland and have returned. Do believe the center for sustainability might have a place to catch the right demographic who have an interest in organic sustainable center and. Maybe a turn around for the few that have the vision. Very close to earth.

Marny Hancock: I am new to Ashland. The last two years I have felt really intimidated. Large groups of people. You have to navigate the space. I feel intimidated and I feel sorry for them. Like the SOU idea. I came because I heard this on the news and that Eugene has declared a state of emergency.

Hawood Norton: I live behind the resource center. The real fear is fire near the resource center from people smoking and the campgrounds. Don't make eye contact they are trying to push your button.

Input received regarding Listening Session #2 “The People Passing Through” on October 28, 2015

I work part-time for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival two days a week in the Members Lounge on the OSF campus. I was excited to accept this invitation to work there as I had been a 25 year resident of Ashland previously, and now living in Medford welcomed a twice a week visit to the town I raised my now grown children in.

I hadn't been in Ashland much over a six year period, so I was shocked at what I found. In fact, I was a little afraid to walk to my car alone after dark for the first time ever.

I found numerous behaviors problematic exhibited by the young travelers choosing Ashland as their summer campground and had OSF members mention to me the exact things I noticed. The “visitors” mostly seem young and more than able to hold down a job. In other words, they are not down and out, they CHOOSE this lifestyle. I encountered them each time arriving for their stint, in their chosen location, mostly where tourists would be entering and exiting the OSF campus, dirty and laden with their gear for the day. They didn't make room for anyone else to cross their path, so people were forced to walk in the street or cross the street. They taunted people as they passed. They offered to sing or play their instruments for money. I once observed an entire group of tourists engaging a group of young visitors, offering them money for photo ops! It was sad.

These same ‘visitors’ will often make their way up the stairs to the green show area and just hang out. And our tourists move away from them.

The icing on the cake was when I was leaving my shift and discovered about twenty of these kids checking in at a van, waiting for them on Lithia Way. They were re-stocking their packs. Getting food for their dogs. California plates on the van. Amazing.

If any of this had been present when we were choosing a new place to live in 1985, we would have skipped Ashland. And indeed, it is the reason we sold our home in Ashland and moved to Medford.

Did you hear the NPR story about the kids in Arcata that admitted that they winter there until spring, pick the marijuana crop and then “migrate” to Ashland for the summer. And they answered the question, do you do drugs with a Yes. They answered do you ask for money with a Yes. They said they use their cell phones to communicate with their traveling friends and coordinate their arrivals in Ashland.

They are not in Medford and they are not in Jacksonville. Thankfully.

One person after another visiting the lounge told me they were changing many of their plans due

to this problem downtown. Weren't going to retire here after all, were abbreviating their shopping downtown to avoid them and no long lodging downtown. They were sympathetic to homeless people who were aged, or in the system and struggling – they were not sympathetic to the young people taking over the downtown.

And lastly I would direct you to the three who were arrested in Portland for the two murders in San Francisco. I recognized two of them from Ashland. I spoke to the girl. I saw them in May. I think that speaks volumes' to the question "What behaviors have you found dangerous or threatening."

If I still lived and worked in Ashland I wouldn't let my children hang out downtown. I wouldn't shop downtown. I would do most anything to avoid them.

However, I do volunteer for the homeless shelter at Trinity Episcopal Church and there I see people deserving of a break.

I encourage you to take swift action and help preserve the integrity of a sweet town I discovered 30 plus years ago, and have sadly chosen to leave, to live elsewhere. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to something that has tormented me.

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Rochelle De Forrest

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Harrassment in Ashland

Dear City Council,

I would like your help in addressing the problem of harassment in Ashland. I recently moved here from San Jose to enjoy OSF (I go to many plays) and all that Ashland has to offer. On my way down the sidewalk one night, in front of the Black Swan, there was a virtual gauntlet to walk of guys - guys who were rude, smell y and drunk. One said to my date, "hey I'm gonna f*ck your girlfriend!" as we passed by. There are many days and nights when the street residents are fine, but there are just too many when they are disgusting and aggressive, and possibly dangerous. Also - Ashland being a tourist town that thrives from OSF attendance and from the people who shop and eat here, I find it appalling that guests should have to endure this kind of behavior. Do we want to lose visitors because they have an unpleasant experience? Should I be

insulted as I walk down my little town street? Should I be afraid to walk alone? While vagrants are human and should be treated humanely, I urge you find a way to prevent townspeople and visitors from being harassed. Thank you.

David Heckley

heckley@yahoo.com

Homeless/Travelers

I am writing out of disgust for the current homeless/travelers problem. As a resident for decades this problem has been getting worse each year. This weekend there was vomit and who know what other bodily fluids on Main St. I am in a wheelchair and could not escape this mess on wheels etc. Also clothing was strewn about. The night before there was a group smoking marijuana on the street. Our town and especially the merchants that have to clean up these vile acts are being undermined. Please help with a significant police presence so we can eliminate this growing problem.

James P Kennedy

JKen2012@live.com

Homeless

I have spent most of my life in Ashland. I avoid the Plaza area now because of the aggressive beggars.

I realize this is a difficult problem , faced by many communities. However Ashland lives on tourism and the beggars target the tourists.

Edith Montgomery

feiffel@mind.net

Street people

My suggestion for curbing the problem of aggressive behavior of some of the street people is to have street patrol walking from the Plaza to the Library (up one side of E. Main and then down the other) every day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and also have one person at E Main and Pioneer during the summer when the theaters let out. This person would not be confronting the street people but would be a presence to encourage good behavior and also would give easy access for visitors who might feel intimidated. We already have a parking patrol. Why not have police patrol also?

Lloyd M. Haines

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"travelers issues"

Unfortunately, I am unable to attend the planning session on Wednesday and thus I am sending this note. Please consider the input.

I own and manage numerous commercial properties in Downtown Ashland. I have personal knowledge of and have received many complaints from my tenants relating to the issues surrounding the "travelers" population. The problems range from abusive language/actions, blockage of sidewalks, noise, animals and clutter. I also have received input from friends and visitors about their reluctance to return to Ashland given the current state affairs.

I have a few suggestions for your consideration and hope you will pursue additional legal research to determine if any of the following proposed solutions will pass legal muster.

1. Make the C-1-D corridor a non-panhandle zone. We have special rules for the corridor (such as no parking required). Since it is an historic corridor and have specific design and signage criteria, possibly special rules of conduct may apply as well.
2. Make any sale of goods or playing of music on the the streets subject to procuring a business/performance licence/permit. This could specify time, place and type of activity permitted.
3. Limit panhandling, music or congregation of large numbers of people to a specific dedicated area, say the field which is the entrance to the park. So, in that area all these activities are

permitted. It probably wouldn't be too dissimilar to the artisan market being limited of Guanajato Way.

4. Consider a loitering/vagrancy ordinance in which there is a limitation of time that can be spent in a certain locale (people have to move on and not camp in one place for the afternoon/day).

I believe as a City we have the responsibility to help the homeless. Whether we provide shelter, food and showers at locations NOT in the downtown is the right and morale thing to do. That said, "Travelers" are consciously intending to come, dwell, panhandle and conduct business in town and hang in prominent places. If we can regulate conduct by the creek and require business licences for other people, certainly we can find a way to address this issue.

Thanks for your consideration of these ideas. Best regards,

Lloyd M. Haines

Edward Broyles

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Homeless "travelers" in downtown Ashland

We need a commitment to community policing in this town. While my casual interactions with Ashland PD members has been positive, the fact that they spend all their time in their cars and little walking around is a problem. I suggest they spend a lot less time giving "gravity" tickets on Mountain and more time walking around downtown. Just their presence would help a lot.

Thank you.

It has been said that doing the same things over and over and expect a different result is the definition of insanity.

In reviewing news articles online dating back more than five years, this issue of abusive and ubiquitous vagrants – call them what you will – vagabonds, transients, homeless wayfarers, hobos, bums – no matter what these people are called, are nonproductive, abusive and social

interlopers who have found this town inviting and comfortable.....the problem was here and is still here and it is now worse than before.

OK, elected officials:

Who does Ashland's leadership wish to represent?

It's business owners? OSF? SOU? The property tax payers? Or the-do-nothings--the takers--the despoilers who give back detritus and profanity?

How long is Ashland "leadership" going to provide succor to vagrants and vagabonds at the expense of Ashland's charm, tourism and commercial venues?

At what point does Ashland's law enforcement enforce existing laws and park ordinances that distinctly forbid overnight camping, smoking, dogs, etc.?

When does the Chamber of Commerce become a relevant force and solution bound organization whose actions fulfill their responsibility to their name as promoters of commercial business in our community?

Can Ashland not take heed from poor policies from other cities like Portland, San Francisco, and Santa Monica (aka The Home of the Homeless) – who have seen the fallout from the unintended consequences of these policies?

PS Today, in front of the jewelry store Fx, three men and a dog were splayed out on the corner, smoking marijuana and hassling people as they walked by.....I went into the store, owned by businessman and jeweler, Chuck Troutman.....inside the store there was a lot of head shaking.....they felt that customers were being driven away by the intimidating and unkempt presence of these loiterers. The stench of cigarette and marijuana smoke was fouling the air inside their shop. They felt a lack of support from their own town.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Axelrod

Ashland, OR

Nancy Zaremski

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Meeting tonight October 28th. regarding "people passing through"

Mayor Stromberg and City Council members,

I am not able to attend tonight's meeting about the transient situation in Ashland. I would like to submit the following letter:

I have lived in Ashland for over twenty five years, the last sixteen as a tax paying homeowner. I work downtown at the Oregon Shake speare Festival and my work space is located above Martolli's restaurant. In the past five years I have noticed and experienced an increased level of hostile and aggressive behaviors from people gathering in downtown Ashland. Some of the problematic, threatening, intimidating and dangerous behaviors I have experienced and witnessed just in the last five months during my work hours are:

- Public urination in the Chautauqua walkway
- Drug deals and drug use
- Cruel behavior towards dogs
- Public drinking and intoxication
- Fighting
- Verbal intimidation and physical intimidation to myself and to others
- Harassment over not responding to a request for money
- Young women being spoken to in a rude and intimidating way

My work space looks out over Main Street and I frequently watch vehicles pull up and groups of people unload with their packs and signs. I have also watched people unload from vans and cars on Pioneer Street. People are coming into Ashland with the express purpose of panhandling and hanging out and it is my opinion that Ashland is now a "target" city for groups to spend the summer. I have watched people/visitors to our community cross the street, walk in the street and stop and turn around in order to avoid having to walk through a large group of loud, aggressive people. At one point this summer there were 17-20 people camped out in front of the City building on Main Street for several weeks. It was difficult for people to pass through the gauntlet of camped out people and for some it was quite intimidating. The animal feces, urine, sidewalk drawings and garbage left behind is very disturbing.

I understand that people have a right to gather downtown. I agree that they have a right to be homeless by choice, that they have a right to ask people for money. But, as a member of this community I also have rights. I have a right to feel safe walking to and from my work. I have a right to walk downtown without being harassed for money. I have a right to walk downtown and not have someone yell or say rude things to me. I have a right to not have to walk through a group of people yelling obscenities.

I lived and worked in downtown Portland for ten years. While there is a large homeless

population in Portland, I never felt harassed or threatened by people living on the street. I never once felt the need to call the police because a situation was getting out of hand. I have had to talk the Ashland police several times this summer because of threatening situations created by people hanging out in our downtown area.

I would like to suggest that the downtown area of Ashland from the Plaza to the Library be a designated “no panhandling” area. I believe that this will allow the “people passing through” Ashland to continue to have their rights honored as well as allowing the people who visit and work in the downtown area to feel like they are in a safe environment.

My paycheck is impacted by the tourist industry in this town. I work very hard, contribute to the community, pay taxes, support local business and have done various kinds of volunteer work for local organizations. I hope that the City Council and the Mayor will make a decision to support my rights as a citizen of Ashland as well as honoring the rights of the “people passing through”.

Thank you,
Nancy Zaremski
Ashland,OR

Mike Morrison

mike.mo222@centurylink.com

Transient / Homeless problem Downtown

We moved to Ashland in 1978. I graduated from SOC. My daughter was born there. Lived in Denver the last 17 years and just moved back to Medford.

We cannot believe that the City of Ashland would allow the purposely unemployed, dirty, vulgar, harassing, aggressive, "travelers" to take over the downtown area at the expense e of the taxpaying residents and tourists!

I have watched these folks harass tourists for money or their restaurant left overs, make vulgar comments at female pedestrians, sing at the top of their lungs songs containing many obscene words, and create an atmosphere like skid row in L.A.

I was assaulted by one of them as I sat in the park reading a book and he walked by and hit me on top of the head and started yelling "we can kill this guy you know" "we should kill them all". A police report was filed and they cited him.

We used to come over to Ashland once a week to eat dinner but decided a couple months ago it

wasn't worth dealing with or and dodging all the dirty, aggressive street transients that the city seems to want to line the streets of downtown. We WILL NOT come back to Ashland to spend any money while they are allowed to run the downtown!

This is your stewardship of a State Gem. I think you should be ashamed for allowing this to continue. We can't believe this is what has become of Ashland.

Alison Axland

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A letter regarding "The People Passing Through"

To the Ashland City Council,

I am writing to add my perspective to your Listening Meeting regarding "The People Passing Through". I have worked in downtown Ashland for eight years and I am frequently required to be at my job past midnight.

I am very torn about this subject. On one hand, as a woman working and walking in downtown, I am constantly afraid for my safety. Walking to my car alone after dark is particularly scary. I could be assaulted by any man, homeless, home-free or otherwise, at almost any location, any time after dark. In addition to the concern about being physically assaulted walking to my car at 1:00 AM, there is the frequent harassment from the men who appear to be homeless or home-free or panhandling. I am subjected to near constant verbal confrontation. It can range from 'Can I have your change/leftovers?' to comments about my body, sexual invitations and threats, and nonsensical yelling and chasing me. I can't walk through my community without feeling like I have to be mentally armored against this constant barrage. I watched a group of young men ask a female co-worker in a red coat if she was Little Red Riding Hood. She politely responded that she was not. One of them told her that he was the Big Bad Wolf and then proceeded to follow her more than half a block and across a street howling at her. I have seen a man screaming at another young woman who appeared to be homeless as well. She was in tears, cowering, and not speaking as he screamed at the top of his lungs for her to shut up. I was afraid that he was about to become physically violent with her. I have no idea what I would have done if he had.

I don't like tarring a group of people with the deeds of a few. I think that there are people who are genuinely homeless through mental illness or unfortunate circumstances. Those are the ones that I see when it turns truly cold, and I have never been harassed by them beyond asking for change. I think that these are not bad guys. I think that there are a lot of disaffected or angry young people who come here in the warmer seasons that bring with them a whole host of other problems. Drugs and alcohol abuse can make anyone into a violent danger. Perhaps there are

some among them that would genuinely welcome the opportunity to earn money weeding the city planters or some similar job that doesn't require training or a long time commitment. I would also recommend some program to assess the condition of the women living in these communities. Are they there just there because they don't know how to get out? Can we support them with something as simple as a bag with toiletries and tampons? I just know how it feels to be disempowered by the men who are part of that community and I would like us to give some special consideration to the women with them.

I would like the issue to be as simple as banning them all from downtown, but I don't think that's fair. I don't want to treat them as though they have to be just like me to have rights and dignity. However, if I'm in terrified tears because I had to park 5 blocks from work and know I will have to get to my car alone after dark, then my rights and dignity have been compromised too. I strongly believe that this is a Women's Rights issue and I urge the City Council to look at it through that lens when making decisions.

Thank you for your time,
Alison Axland

Carolyn Brooks

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transient population

I have to say, as the parent of a pre-teen daughter, I am nervous about the number of transients in the downtown area these days. I want to be compassionate and understanding of different lifestyle choices, but I also want to feel like she is safe walking around. I don't like having to teach her how to recognize if someone is drunk or on drugs, and I don't like the dogs leaving waste on the sidewalks. I don't like people calling out to me asking for money or food. Even when it is done in a polite way, it is disturbing to me. I don't know what the solution is, but I am disturbed.

Doreen O'Skea

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Travelers in the city

Dear Members of the Ashland City Council,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to share our concerns about the rising population of travelers in our city and the increase in aggressive tactics they are employing to gain money.

In the past week I have called vulgar and upsetting names as I waled from the parking garage to Starbuck s and walking down the street in front Three Penny Mercantile. In the past year I have been asked for money on a daily basis, shouted at for money, spit at on two occasions and this morning my car was surrounded by a group of young men who beat on the car and demanded that I open the doors and give them my money. I know that there is no single solution for any of these problems. However, I do think that they need to be addressed sooner, rather than later. I feel unsafe walking the streets of town in the early morning hours and in the evening after dusk. Thank you for listening.

Beth Bardossi

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meeting about transients tonight

I sent this letter to Mayor Stromberg yesterday and am sending it on to you because I can't attend the meeting tonight about the people passing through.

What behaviors have you found problematic, threatening, intimidating, dangerous, etc.?:

- Aggressive, confrontational behavior towards locals/tourists
- Sidewalks that are completely blocked and street corners that have become encampments, leading to changes in pedestrian traffic: People who don't want to encounter large groups in front of Paddington Station sometimes cross Main Street in the middle of the block, putting themselves and drivers at risk.
- Large groups loitering in front of the Swan, the Plaza and other public places at night. Makes me concerned for the people who visit, work late and live downtown.
- Sexual harassment and the menacing of women/young girls, subjecting them to sexually explicit and demeaning commentary that creates a threatening environment
- Obnoxious public behavior: One traveller "musician" I heard spent an afternoon in front of Wells Fargo singing a song whose lyrics consisted almost entirely of "f**k."
- Frequent demands for money, food etc. and abuse of those who refuse
- People passed out on the sidewalk

- Camping, urinating g, defecating and vomiting in the alleyway behind Paddington Station
- Using resources we need for our local homeless, mentally ill and destitute.

What can you tell us about the people causing these problems?

They seem to be young, transitory, and physically able and to have no interest in changing the way they live. I hope some of them are using our local resources to find a way up and out but I don't know if this is so.

What suggestions do you have for how to cope with the situation?

- an ordinance that bans panhandling
- an ordinance that bans obstructing sidewalks
- Strategically placed "No loitering" signs, especially in alleyways, and enforcement of same.
- Make resources for locals and tourists who are confronted by belligerent travelers available, such as phone numbers, how to report an incident, etc.
- Put all the information about shelters, ACCESS and other homeless resources together in one place and make it available online, at the library and on the kiosk in the Plaza. I had suggested to the mayor that we make printed material available but that will only encourage littering, so never mind. Firmly encourage locals and tourists (again) not to give money to panhandlers. Tell them to donate to places and organizations that provide homeless resources.
- Prohibit the belligerent ones from returning to Ashland. We already have a system for this. Expand the definition of what is not acceptable behavior if necessary.
- Be vigilant about enforcing the ordinances we have. Lots of these folks have dogs, cats, etc. Are these animals licensed and vaccinated? Unvaccinated animals are at risk and put other companion animals and wildlife at risk by spreading parvo, rabies, canine/feline distemper, etc. I've also seen people light up cigarettes close to businesses. If they are in violation of the smoking ordinance, they need to be confronted.

I've lived in Ashland since 1978 and support services for our local needy population. It's clear to me though, that this recent influx is different and negatively impacts our local businesses, overall economy and quality of life.

Here is a review of Ashland posted on Trip Advisor. Don't agree with their view of OSF but see the point about the local scene:

"Mediocre Theatre, Disgusting Town"

Reviewed August 16, 2015

My husband and I have visited Ashland many times over the years, frequenting the Shakespeare Festival, Cabaret, and a few restaurants that have become favorite. This used to be our choice

getaway place, now, it is not even close. Over the years there has been a huge influx in the transient population, making the town a filthy place where one can come to be harassed while strolling through downtown, or stopping in a car on any corner. Quite unpleasant. ...Our visit this year will be our last, and we will be moving on to other, cleaner, harassment-free towns for our next vacation spots.

Visited August 2015

http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g29998-d102983-r300068994-Oregon_Shakespeare_Festival-Ashland_Oregon.html#

One final thought: On a recent visit, my nephew's wife observed that panhandlers here were much more aggressive than on the East Coast. She lives in Manhattan and walks through Times Square every day.

Thanks for listening.

Dawn Elsbree

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Comments to Daughter

Hello,

I just wanted to relay some of the kinds of comments made to my 16 year old daughter as she walks through downtown on her way to and from Ashland High. She texted them to me a few weeks ago - she was taking it with a sense of humor, but it seemed inappropriate to me. These are some samples:

"Can you spare some change for a hooker and some crack?"

"If you gave me a beautiful smile I would sing a song for you."

I understand peoples' right to gather but would like to know my daughter could walk to school without being heckled. Thank you for looking into this issue - Dawn Elsbree

To Mayor Stromberg and the Ashland City Council:

My name is Paul Schmeling and I am a bartender in Ashland. Here is my opinion on the issue of the Homeless and the Travelers.

I've read both the Medford Mail Tribune article and City Council member's Facebook post. So first, let me state that I appreciate Greg Lemhouse's Facebook post in that it differentiates between the Ashland Homeless and the Travelers. I have to admit that I didn't know there was a difference.

What I do know is there is a problem. There are more Homeless/Travelers and they are more aggressive.

I know this because I deal with the Homeless/Travelers directly and on a regular basis. It is my job to keep the environment where I work safe and clean. This means asking Homeless/Travelers to leave.

While doing this (and I start out being polite, but I will match any attitude I receive) I mostly get slow-moving compliance, but I have also been told to f*** off, insulted in other ways, and have been threatened to be killed. Yes, as in, "I'll kill you." (This happened about 2 years ago.)

More recently, (this Summer, in fact) I called the police to report two Homeless/Travelers, a male and female, having an argument across the street, being very loud and profane, so our outside diners could hear every word. During their argument, one or both of them threw some of their belongings into the street and disrupted traffic. When the police arrived, the female fled on foot and had to be chased down.

I tell this story to impress a point - the store owners of Ashland should unite and be aggressive with our policies in order to counteract the aggressive Homeless/Travelers.

There is a three strikes and you are out of the downtown area policy. As I understand it, if a Homeless/Traveler gets written up three times for being a problem, they cannot be within two miles of the downtown area. If the sidewalk is being blocked in front a business, the owners of that businesses should call the police and when they arrive they can take names and information - and if the people involved are three time offenders, they can be moved.

I feel there is a shame-on-you, anti-PC, point of view that has been created to make people who don't want the Homeless/Travelers in the downtown area. It has been effective, but I don't think it represents the opinion of the majority. This is one reason Eric Navikas is no longer on the City Council. It is also one of the reasons why Carol Voisin nearly lost her seat in the last election.

Most people (including Mr. Navikas and Ms. Voisin) have very little direct contact with the Homeless/Travelers. And when they do, it is not to ask them to leave the premises or not block the sidewalk in front of a business.

A Bed and Breakfast owner whom I know well told me a story which happened last week. Some guests who were staying at her Inn parallel parked on Lithia Way across the street from the convenience store at the corner of Pioneer and Lithia Way and walked from there to see a play at OSF. When they walked past the store, the Homeless/Travelers asked them for money, to which they politely declined. One of the Homeless/Travelers said he would watch their car if they paid them, to which they politely declined. When the guests returned to their car it egged and had new scratches on it.

This is the problem in a microcosm. These guests are paying hundreds dollars for tickets at the OSF, the financial hub of Ashland. They are also paying hundreds of dollars for rooms, not to mention potential restaurant and other spending. And they are being punished and essentially coerced by the Homeless/Travelers.

These guests may not return next year, thus costing the local tourist economy (our city's main source of income) money.

The business community needs to unite. Every time a Homeless/Traveler warrants a call to the police, the police need to be called.

Ashland should not be a stop for Travelers. It is hurting our local economy.

By the way, I would be at [tonight's](#) meeting, but I work on [Wednesday](#) nights.

Thank you for your time,

Paul Schmeling

Trina Sanford

TrinaCobbSanford@gmail.com

HOMELESS

My name is Trina Sanford. I was born in Ashland 42 yrs ago. I live on Green Meadows Way in Ashland with my husband Nate and 5 children. In addition, I have commercial property with my family, the Brombacher's, AS YOU KNOW, along Tolman Creek Road starting from the DMV building up to the railroad tracks across from the Goodwill.

Getting to the point, I want you to know that my family and I could go on and on with encounters we've had with the homeless.

In dealing with the homeless, my family and I have had to pick up human feces – YES! HUMAN FECES! ... trash etc from our property. We've had to use OUR time and OUR money

to repair damages they've caused to our property. We've been put in dangerous situations where we've had no one else to rely on but ourselves to protect us and our children from the physical & verbal threats, the unlawful drug use, inappropriate behaviors, vandalism etc.

**About 2 weeks ago I waited with my young children for about an hour for a police officer to arrive to our business property so they could remove 2 homeless men who had set up a tent on our property. While we waited we watched as the homeless drank their beers, threw trash onto our property & urinated on our landscape. The next day it was me who had to clean up their mess.

*I've had a homeless man chase me while I walked out of Rite Aid . He jumped on the side of my car, held onto my mirror while hitting my window & screaming at me. An employee of Rite Aid pulled the man off my car so I could drive away. YOU invited this person into my community with your resource center and lack of laws! YOU put me in this incredibly scary situation!

**Downtown, I am forced to walk into the streets with my children so that we can get around the camps of people littered on our sidewalks. Dining outside my children and I have watched the homeless smoke weed, panhandle for money and get into confrontations with police. We watched as tourists looked at all of this in disgust & probably began planning their next vacation elsewhere.

Again ... I could go on and on with my stories about the homeless. You have no idea the things we've gone through.

As a result, Laws MUST be put into place AND ENFORCED to protect us, our homes, our businesses, parks, streets, mountain sides.. ALL OF IT! .. from the infiltration of the homeless & their negative impact on our community. Our community is now littered with indications that we no longer care. We have to take steps to change this!

In so many ways, our community is falling apart. The true beauty of our community is overshadowed by this problem. We need to get a back bone, resurrect the deep values this town was created & hire more police in the mean time! 3 patrolling officers in our community at any given time is simply not enough.

So many people want to help the homeless – as do I – but right now my primary concern is that of my family and my community. Once I feel my family is safe .. THEN I can move forward. How can anyone really think outside of themselves when what is held so precious and so valuable is being so greatly disrespected? What is currently happening to our community is

shameful. It serves no one. Not us .. not even the homeless. You have put the cart before the horse by setting up a resource center in our community that essentially invites the homeless - people running from the law - to our town all while putting great strain on our community, resources, police & fire departments. We are tapped out! We are not equipped to effectively deal with, or actually even help the homeless in a way that has any real positive impact or great change. What we have is a system that ENABLES - even encourages the homeless to continue living as they do in Ashland. We're in a downward spiral and something has to change! Rather than looking away we need to get real, get authentic and look the problem directly in the eye & BE BIG. We need to dig deep for that sense of pride in our community and let our voices be known. But our voices need to be followed up by real palatable actions. We cannot allow the homeless to continue to defecate on our property or intimidate our children. We need our City Council, our Mayor to do their jobs and put systems in place that protect us. We need to let it be known that such debilitating and destructive behaviors are not welcome. And I know, many will find that by saying this – even thinking this - is cold, pompous, self righteous. Whatever! But even this kind of judgment, this kind of thinking is, in itself, nothing more than stagnant intimidation. It has kept so many Ashland residences silent and as a result nothing has helped us move in a positive direction.

Nov. 3rd of last year a study session was held on this very matter and a year later ... here we are again! Nothing has changed EXCEPT for the fact that the homeless and all the negativity they bring keep coming.

So .. When the next neighborhood burns down (like Oak Knoll), a person is killed, injured or threatened, the next time a child is told they can't ride their bike along the bike path or run too far from their parent in the park or a family diverts their travel plans elsewhere ... all of this will be on YOU Mayor and City Council.

I am insisting that you take action to protect our community. This meeting will mean nothing otherwise. Our community needs laws set in place that are clear, concrete, & enforceable. We need a strong foundation upon which we can transition Ashland back into a community where we are proud to live.

Ashland is dying on the vine and we can no longer afford to enable the homeless.
Enough is Enough!

Lucia Zacha

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panhandling

I was mugged on Pioneer above the park several months ago by two panhandlers. It was 9 pm and very dark. It was a frightening experience but they did not get away with anything. A police report was made but nothing ever came of it. I could still identify the twits.

Joan and Wayne Brown

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Homeless downtown

My husband and I have both experienced harassment by transients downtown. It was distressing and we have stopped many trips downtown because of it. We are both angry that our town seems to have been taken over by transients and we do not feel safe walking downtown anymore. Please, find some way to remedy this out of control situation. If our tourists continue to have similar experiences, it will be the ruin of our once lovely town.

Rachel Parks

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The People Passing Through

It's hard to address this issue without emotion. I work in downtown Ashland, and our downtown area is not set up for optimal safety. Parking is so scant that employees and patrons have to park blocks away. Street illumination is inadequate. And having to walk in the dark, late at night, through groups of people as a single woman is threatening. Many times I can pass unharassed but there are also many instances where I have been verbally accosted and I do not feel safe.

I have witnessed a man screaming at a woman who was shrinking against a wall. I was too scared to help her and I hate that I walked away but I didn't know if he was armed or if he was high, or what I could do. I am not a large person and I know that someone with certain drugs in their system do not feel pain and could easily overpower me. What about this woman? What help

is there for her?

The area in front of the Starbucks on the corner of Main and Pioneer is frequently full of people smoking cigarettes, cigars, and pot. It is a medical issue for me to have to pass through them and I am frequently pummeled with comments as I try to protect my nose and mouth from having to breathe that in as I pass.

I support the idea of some sort of panhandle-free zone in the city. I wish there was a way to get help to those who need it. I have recently read an article about a city that has a van that picks up homeless people who want work and set them to weeding flower beds or other city beautification. They are provided lunch and pay, and taken to a shelter at the end of the day. We could not do this without city funding. There is more the city could be doing to help those truly in need.

I don't think this is an easy issue to resolve but there is more we could try.

Caroline Dignes

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Listening Session: "The People passing Through."

Dear Mayor Stromberg,

I am writing regarding this evening's Listening Session: "The People passing Through."

I work downtown on the plaza, where I have been employed for the last four years. My experience with 'travelers' is a daily occurrence; the stoop outside my office is a common resting point for buskers, panhandlers, and travelers. As a young woman my experience has not necessarily been pleasant. I have never been physically harassed. My experience ranges from the average "can I have your leftovers?" to comments about my body and my clothing. I have never felt physically unsafe, however I do not like that there is no escape from the constant barrage of harassment and commentary as I go to and from my place of work. There is no other entrance to the office, and after one such verbal harassment I asked myself "Am I just supposed to tolerate this? This traveler thinks that this is an appropriate way to treat a woman, and I am supposed to silently withstand the barrage of commentary about my body and my sexuality?" No, I don't think so.

There are several kinds of 'travelers.' Some are buskers, and I receive little to no attention or

requests from them. They play music, or offer some kind of ‘service’ in the form of performance in exchange for tips. I appreciate the vibe and festival atmosphere these buskers contribute to Ashland, particularly in the summer. As a city that relies heavily on tourism, they contribute rather than pressure passersby. Another kind are the truly homeless. These people I see year round in Ashland, and am neither harassed nor threatened by this population. I understand that many do not choose homelessness, and may not have access to the same resources or physical/mental ability that I have.

The third kind I see are the kind that are the most verbal – truly ‘travelers’ passing through Ashland on their way up/down the I-5. Many I have spoken with say they take on temporary work in the cities they travel through. I recognize this group as having the same physical/mental ability as myself, but have simply made different life choices than myself. I do not begrudge them for their choices, and feel all individuals deserve the same respect regardless of ability and choices. However, from this group of individuals I feel I am not afforded the same respect. These are the ones who I find outside my office door attempting to urinate on the stoop as I leave work. These are the ones that collect in large groups in front of the Black Swan theatre, with several dogs, and I look down and walk fast as I try to get by. These are the ones that ask loudly for my leftovers, and I think to myself, “these aren’t leftovers, this is my lunch for today that I haven’t opened yet.” These are the ones that have the audacity to talk back to me when I say “no,” or “I’m sorry, I can’t.” These are the ones who talk about my body if I don’t engage with them, or if I engage and ask them to stop.

I heard of an initiative a couple of years ago, for buskers to apply for a ‘busking permit.’ Might this idea be revisited? Perhaps this in combination with a panhandling ban, or even a group size limit on the plaza will provide a respite. I believe Ashland is a friendly place, and its citizens want to help those in need.

Clarkie Clark

clarkie@realskate.com

Listening Session on Transient Problems

As long as you have council members who have a side investment in the homeless industry who keep pushing for funding to build homeless services, you will have this problem. The last I kept track was at \$150K given to set up services for them. Then came showers. The latest services put Ashland on the map for the best services along the west coast. Santa Cruz, my home town, has

the same thing going. It's had a 30 year history (and now current Mayor) who have lived off the salaries and perks of the homeless services center. Up until the town got out of control, polluted watershed, dirtiest beach in all of California, and crime topping Oakland and Compton percapita, did the citizens demand defunding. I see the same pattern in Ashland and you will be so sorry. I'm sure you have noticed these travelers aren't the happy go lucky fake hippies they used to be. Criminals are being released and guess where they are going. I think if the council members would realize what they are brewing and discontinue pressing for more homeless services you will see a reversal. I hope so, before it is too late. Sincerely, Clarkie

Jacqueline Leighton

jaybruce@mind.net

Affect of Transients on our lives

Dear Mayor Stromberg,

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns regarding the presents of transients on our Ashland streets, sidewalks and parks. I recognize that we have several men that I would call the regulars. I do not know their names, but, they are seen quietly living their alternative lives on our streets. I identify them as: 'Catman', 'the tall fellow with the bad teeth,' 'the hobbit with the dirty clothes,' 'the fire starter'. My following thoughts are not directed at them. I am writing specifically about the groups which arrive on Friday and leave on Monday. Urchins that take advantage of the opportunities and do not call Ashland home.

I work downtown next to the Chautauqua Walkway for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Nearly every day I have some contact with individuals that sit, stand, lounge, doing "business" and soliciting pedestrians as I pass to and from my workplace.

It is my understanding that the police have very little leeway to address the behavior of this group of people because the danger to Ashland visitors and residences is not physicalized. I have had a few occasions where individuals blocked my passage and have verbally hackled me, but only once have I been personally violated.

Earlier this year, in late spring, I parked my car in front of the City Hall building at the Plaza in order to move clothing from my car to the costume shop. Five or six people, both men and women, with their dogs, were sitting at the wide part of the sidewalk selling beads, smoking, talking loudly and pan handling. One of the men had his pants down below this pubic bone. After his unkind response to my saying no to the request for money I suggested he pull up his

pants and find something else to do. On return to my car, I found it had been entered and items removed. I silently cursed the man and the fact that I could no longer leave my car locked for my five minute walk upstairs. I did not report the theft because it could not be confirmed. It is exemplified the frustration of having to deal with transients on in our town.

Dog fights, marihuana smoke, spitting, urine, vomit, and the screaming of obscenities do not belong on our streets and park. I once hear a man proudly boast how he lived under the Shakespeare Festival Green Show dance floor.

As you have hear repeatedly, the presents of the transients on our streets affect the quality of our town: as a destination tourist experience, as a place to live and a place to work. Women should not feel unsafe to walk on our streets during the day (or night), parents should need to pull their children into their arms, elderly freeze with lack of confidence to proceed towards a group of dogs and hacklers. Our tourist students and adults, from around the country and the world should not have to experience the fear of being accosted nor the humiliation of the physical behavior of the transients.

I know this is a difficult social problem to overcome. It feels as if Ashland is a destination for transients because the behavior is accepted. Legally the freedom to assemble is one of my treasured rights and I wouldn't want to change anyone's ability to assemble. But socially questionable behavior is not a right.

My workmates and I often experience individuals sitting at the bottom of the Walkway playing music/ instruments and smoking. We have had some success in asking them to move after a few hours of playing. Sometimes we are verbally abused. The only ploy I have thought might help is an intervention when a mass of people join the transients, peacefully, obviously and make them feel unwelcome. I have never tried this action. But would join in if others would employ this form of civil disobedience.

I wish also express the need to clean up our town. The streetscape is dull, dirty and in disrepair. Cracked dirty sidewalk, unpainted store fronts, shabby awnings, lack luster plantings do not help inspire the feeling that tourism is important. Combined with panhandlers and riff raff we are setting ourselves up for a hard economic fall.

I wish you luck in finding creative solutions. Ashland is a unique community, warm and welcoming, and maybe our own worst enemy.

Jay Leighton
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Christine Ferriter

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Feedback for The People Passing Through Listening Session

I am a fairly recent transplant to Ashland, having moved here almost a year and a half ago and since that time I have been nothing but disheartened by Ashland's and OSF's outright discrimination against the transient population here. I had thought I was moving to a much different place, a town where people were open and accepting of all ideas and other people; where counter-culture, alternative lifestyles, and new age thinking were even celebrated, definitely not criminalized. Boy was I wrong. I was under the impression that Ashland was practically founded on serving the needs of the weary traveler, from outfitting the gold rush pioneers (and now to PCT backpackers,) to providing rest & rejuvenation to those crossing the Siskiyou Pass at the mineral springs, to celebrating with the travelling entertainers of the Chautauqua circuit. What happened to that generous spirit of inclusivity?

I personally enjoy the "cast of characters" that roll through town each year, transients, students, OSF cast & crew, and tourists alike, it is exactly that which gives Ashland it's reputation as a place where people from all walks of life can come together to experience this beautiful valley and it's theatrical offerings.

I was struck the other night by how lovely and lively it was to be on the plaza, listening to the buskers and seeing all kinds of people milling about. And then I was struck but how much nicer it could have been if the City hadn't been pushed to alter our public spaces; I recently learned that the plaza used to be covered in grass not concrete, and that anyone could walk their dog or play Frisbee in the park. These things along with the alterations in front of the Black Swan and suggestions of ripping out trees in the parking lot or adding further defensive architectural elements to the town only do a disservice to ourselves! It's these physical changes to our community that are unsightly to me not the people hanging out on the street.

I am curious to know if anyone from the transient community was invited to be heard along with the community at this evening's listening session? Has anyone looking for "solutions" to this "issue" ever engaged with the people they have such preconceived notions about? They are, after all, human beings with constitutional rights just like the rest of us, and like the rest of us probably don't want to be treated rudely or with aggressive tactics day in and day out either. I can honestly say I have never experienced any aggression from anyone on the street in the past year and a half, (yet I have certainly witnessed such behavior towards the transients from the local community.) I've been asked for food or money, sure, but even when I don't have anything to offer I've only received a "Thanks, have a nice day" in return. I do not believe someone asking for help or sitting quietly with a cardboard sign can be considered aggressive, even if you

don't like seeing them there.

Additionally, I cannot support these proposed ordinances that blatantly and directly discriminate against this targeted population, it is clear that the City of Ashland is just skirting around the spirit of the constitutional anti-discrimination laws currently in place. How many people who don't look like transients will be stopped in the ELEA and asked for their dogs credentials? I can only imagine none. I can only imagine that these ordinances are designed and will only be used to target people that some deem "unwelcome." I do not want to live in a community that supports and actively engages this kind of discriminatory thinking.

I also cannot support any reduction in services to the homeless here in Ashland. I understand this forum is geared towards transients, but there is a year-round homeless and low-income population in Ashland that desperately needs the support of the community and any reduction in those services in the hopes of decreasing the transient population is abhorrent.

My suggestion for dealing with this issue is to look inward; are we actually encountering threatening, intimidating, and violent behavior or do we just perceive these things automatically because this community lives differently than us? We "see" what we look for, and we "see" with an inherent predefined cultural lens that tells us that anyone different from the "norm" is to be feared. I would like to challenge that. Let's choose to put on the lens of collective humanity instead and look to each other with compassion.

Vanessa Houk

sunriver@gmail.com

Homeless response

Dear city council members,

I'm going to preface this with the statement that I don't condone negative behavior. I value peace and kindness.

You've asked the public to come forward and share stories about negative experiences with travelers. I have a few to share.

I want to tell you about the man who screamed at me because I didn't have shoes to share with

him. That was an uncomfortable few minutes for me.

Another elderly man yelled at me for offering to share some food. I quickly apologized for bothering him and moved on. He appeared to be in his 70's and was the most aggressive experience I've had with a local homeless person.

But here's the thing: in both situations I recognized that these men had mental health and/or drug addiction issues.

Mental illness shows itself in bad behavior. People with schizophrenia or manic depression can act out. It's the disease that's being noisy, not the person. It's the disease that's screaming about shoes or not wanting food, or whatever the case may be. The illness, not the person.

So really when we talk about creating rules that exclude homeless people, we're talking about excluding mental illness and drug addiction from the city.

I want to tell you about one more homeless person, one that will hopefully illustrate the danger of this "traveling homeless" mentality, that is to say who lives here and who doesn't. Us vs them.

A young woman, in her 20's has a three year old son. They are homeless and living in an old tent that broke last week. This young mother reached out through social media, asking for a good, usable tent. The Ashland community responded quickly and the young woman and her child's needs were met. That was the right thing to do.

However this young woman lives, or wants to live in Gold Hill. She's an example of someone who would be considered an outsider by these new definitions of homeless that our city councilors have been creating. She is not giving anything to Ashland directly, other than an opportunity to help someone who needs it.

But I ask you to think about that 3 year old boy as you are lying in your warm bed tonight. I ask you to consider what is right.

We want to live in a community that reflects kindness. That starts with how we act and what each of us do, as much as anything else.

Kindly,
Vanessa Houk

Roxana Ramseur

Roxana.ramseur@gmail.com

Mail theft and other recent crimes & encounters

I live in Ashland at 653 Park St. We have experienced theft of our outgoing mail and have found a neighbor's stolen delivered mail left on our lawn. The stolen outgoing mail was taken between 9-11am on September 29th and included our rent check. Our neighbors outgoing rent check was also stolen. The theft was discovered because the property owner of the Happy Vet in Ashland Street discovered a mess of opened mail on his property. He kindly collected ours and returned it to us. There was a handout from the Department of Health & Human Services mixed in with our returned mail that did not belong to us, which may be a clue as to the situation of the person who committed this crime.

Other recent incidents include:

This summer two different vehicles were parked within our block long-term with people residing in them. One vehicle's residents were verbally abusive and aggressive to my neighbor. The other vehicle's resident is kind and respectful from what I can tell.

A moped, likely stolen, was deposited in front of our unit in late August. It remained there for over a month & the police were ultimately notified. The police, I assume, removed it.

Unfriendly "Travelers" watered their pit bull at a spigot on private property in our complex.

A bike was stolen from neighbors in our complex, but was found a week later unlocked outside of ShopNKart.

Earlier in the summer, I witnessed an unknown person lurking around the mailboxes. When I asked if he needed assistance, he left.

Traveling Pedestrians were unsafely stranded in a median on Ashland street at exit 14. One aggressively yelled at me when I stopped to let them cross & refused to cross, while another traveler 20 yards down the road did cross. The whole situation was unsafe: the verbal abuse, the jaywalking, my mid-road stop, the confusion.

Anything that can be done to stop the mail theft and other petty crimes would be appreciated. More patrolling would be great. Thank you.

Jeremy Johnson

newsbody@gmail.com

Panhandlers

The homeless/itinerant presence in downtown Ashland has greatly increased in recent years. I object to panhandling and harassment, of course. In addition, the growing number of people who seem to take up residence, and leave their belongings strewn across the sidewalks outside the Black Swan, in front of City Hall, and in the Plaza results in a huge eyesore for residents AND our many visitors who hope to enjoy Ashland's beauty, only to find clothes, garbage bags, cardboard, PETS and food, clogging the walkways. Perhaps we can create rules governing personal belongings on the sidewalk.

I would like to voice my concern for the transient problem we have in Ashland. I grew up in Ashland and have always loved our community and think it has been a great place to raise children in the past. I am becoming increasingly concerned with the influx of transients in the area that seems to get worse every day. There are many new faces over the last couple of years of all different ages that seem to have setup a organization of beggars. They are very aggressive and the worst part is there is no accountability of these people. It is obvious they consider Ashland to be an easy place to do there begging because there is no control or anything to hinder their efforts. They say whatever they want rude hostile it doesn't matter because currently there is no reason to sway them from being this way. The people of Ashland who work and make a living have everything to lose while these people who are begging and causing disruption have nothing to lose. So as a citizen I am 2nd class to these transients and they rule the streets. So I ask you what has happened to this wonderful place called Ashland that every day goes downhill. It's not safe for my family and my little 3 year old daughter. Something needs to be done now to fix this problem and bring Ashland back to a place where it has a strong community where people feel safe and want to go downtown because they are not going to be harassed.

I work with people who visit our community looking to relocate here because of Shakespeare and the beautiful outdoors but too often now I get feedback from my clients that there are too many panhandlers in downtown Ashland... they say who is letting this happen it is ruining your community and they don't want to live here because it feels unsafe.

I feel the need to help tourists who are getting harassed by these street people but I can't because the law protects these transients so if I tell them to leave them alone they will cuss at me and threaten me and I can't do anything about it. We need the police to have the rights to arrest these people and send them out of Ashland. It should not be a right for them to harass the people of Ashland or our visitors and if they are not contributing to our community in a positive manner then they should move on.

Something needs to be done and now because it has already reached the point of being out of control and is really changing the face of Ashland for the worse.

Jesse Donovan

October 28, 2015

Dear City Council,

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to voice my concerns.

I want to share some of my personal experiences.

1. My husband and I often take walks in Lithia Park in the early morning. Despite city ordinance (ORD. 1068-210) posted clearly at the entrance of the park (“No Animals, No Liquors, No Overnight Sleeping, No Bicycles), we encountered the following last week during one morning walk in the park:

- a. A person was bundled in a sleeping bag and asleep near one of the park buildings.
- b. A woman was walking in Lithia Park with a dog. My husband confronted her and said, no dog allowed in the park. She said the dog is a service dog but that she forgot to put on the covering that identifies the dog as a service dog. Are service dogs excused? She could have walked in the outer circle of the park where dogs are allowed.
- c. A car trailer is parked in the last parking lot on Granite Street where a new bath room was installed. There are people living in the trailer and it has been parked there for many days.
- d. A young man was wrapped in a sleeping bag, walking out from the park.

2. In the past year, our visiting family members have been verbally assailed with profanity as they were walking near the Lithia Park entrance and in our city center.
3. We live above Granite Street and this summer we often see people carrying backpacks and large jugs of water walking towards the reservoir in the late afternoon hours. We assume they are spending the night.
4. This summer, our daughter and son-in-law with their 1 year old toddler walked to the reservoir and swimming hole above Granite Street only to find that the place was overtaken by young people swimming in the nude and generally rude and loud. They quickly left and told us that they did not feel comfortable and did not feel it was a healthy environment to expose to their daughter. When we moved here 4 years ago, our grown children liked to walk to the reservoir because it was serene and beautiful.
5. We live above the Ashland Creek subdivision. One of our neighbors in the houses below was visited by a shirtless man who came uninvited to sit on their lounge chair in their private back yard. Our neighbor politely asked him to leave and told him they did not feel comfortable for him to hang out in their back yard. The man left, our neighbors voiced concern about being safe in their own home and on their private property.
6. I have heard that the people on the street say they have just as much right to be here. I am a tax payer and I contribute to the welfare of the town. I obey the city ordinances, and I don't make the others feel unwelcomed. Whether a person is visiting or a resident in town, everyone should obey our city ordinances, and no one has the right to make anyone else feel uncomfortable being here.
7. I almost never see police patrolling in the park.
8. The action of the city needs to be consistent with its policy. I observe a great deal of inconsistencies.

Suggested Solutions:

1. More police foot patrol presence in the park.
2. Enforcement of existing ordinances.
3. Public acknowledgement from the police that there are issues such as vandalism and harassing behavior in our town and these are behaviors that are not acceptable from anyone. When the hat shop that was in downtown Ashland was broken into, the police was quoted in the paper as saying, you just have to expect things that that to happen when you have a business in town. That kind of comment is not conducive to supporting business and good citizenship.

4. Ask all city council members to identify how they stand on the issue that we are facing in our town and what they propose to do. The citizens need to know how they are being represented. There are members of the city council that were not present at the hearing on October 28th yet a few of them are the most vociferous in support of those who are disturbing the peace in our town. Why weren't they there to listen to the town's people?
5. The city needs to make a decision regarding the vagrants. Based on the decision, the city action should be consistent with that decision. If yes, we want to welcome the vagrants, then by all means provide the vagrants with shelter, food, health care, and showers, and bathrooms. If not, do not provide porta potties, night shelters, free food and health care. Post signs in city to discourage people from giving to pan handlers.
6. Do not contribute to panhandlers' signs should be placed everywhere. People need to be educated that giving to pan handlers does not solve poverty and hunger. It only encourages more panhandling. The city could do more to actively discourage people from giving money to pan handlers.
7. I am strongly opposed to having a charity box. Those boxes have gotten vandalized and the monies have been given to the church to provide services as they see fit. I don't agree with how the church is providing the services with no contingencies. How the church is providing the services are compounding the problem.
8. We need separate solution for the truly homeless and those with mental health issues.
9. Some of the vagrants are willfully defying our city ordinances and our moral values and ethics. Some have argued that it is not their choice to be homeless. However, I would argue that it is very much their choice to shout profanities at the passerby, to engage in aggressive panhandling, to sexually harass women, to disobey city ordinances. If we encourage such behavior by providing a welcome mat in the form of free services (food, shelter, healthcare, porta potties) and an environment tolerant of harassment and profanity, the problem will only increase. It is really not hard to understand if you think of it as cause and effect. If you reward a behavior, it increases.

Sincerely submitted,

Judy Shih

Ashland, OR

ddiane Newell Meyer

EmailAddress: meyer.dn42@gmail.com
Phone: 541-488-2646

Message:

I am seeing an increase in numbers of these "travelers" in Wendy's within the last few days, where I come to use the WIFI, (not having internet at home.) Last night they were hustling rides, etc. I saw a policeman come in last evening, and would like to request that the police "drop in" occasionally. I was concerned about a homeless man with two carts full of his stuff, who came in and yelled obscenities, but he was not dangerous. These people are in groups, know each other, have phones.

Deborah Miller

hmiller@jeffnet.org

transient problem

Dear Mayor and Council :

I regret I could not attend last night's listening session about the transient dilemma here, but I commend you all for allowing citizens to speak up and present some possible solutions. I would like to both relate some unpleasant experiences, and then propose some concrete solutions.

The Presbyterian Church is most generous in supporting the Food Bank, providing benevolence to those in need, and cooking a community dinner once monthly; we have hosted a weekly shelter during the winter for several years. Yet, basic respect from some of the homeless is so lacking that some members are becoming less interested in providing that assistance. Transients sleep under the porches, annoy residents of the condos east of the property by staying under a large tree (whose lower branches were cut away to expose the area), and the preschool headmistress, who leases the lower floor of Calvin hall (building nearest Walker Street) constantly complains to my husband, who is chair of Buildings and Grounds committee, about the mess she must clean up most mornings before the children arrive. The NO TRESPASSING signs we have put up around the buildings are torn down in a few days, and motion sensor lights are inactivated. I realize the church is not in the downtown area, which is the subject of the current discussion, but the Council needs to know that other parts of the city are suffering.

I would ask that the following ideas at least be considered as partial solutions to this serious problem.

--A sign in each room of inns, motels and other lodging asking guests to NOT give money or material goods to panhandlers. I would also have at least two copies of a fact sheet available at

each facility explaining the goal of the city to not enable such rude and disrespectful behavior by not rewarding it. A suggestion to give money to St. Vincent de Paul, the Salvation Army, or the Medford Gospel Mission, all of whom provide shelter and social services to those in need, would be a much better use of charitable giving. (Perhaps large envelopes could be placed at the registration desks).

--Consistent and rigid enforcement of the laws and ordinances that can be used to curtail obnoxious behavior. If police presence causes these people to complain, perhaps that means the law enforcement is doing its job! Included in that would be really strict adherence to the leash and vaccination laws--rabies is in the area (we get the weekly reports); this is a public health issue.

--A city-wide emphasis on supporting the above- named agencies who will help those who seek assistance to getting off the streets and into a shelter and transitional housing.

--An acceptance that some people, due to mental illness or rebelliousness, do not want a home. That does not mean that the rest of us need to support their decision, just as none of them is helping us maintain our way of life!

--An intense lobbying effort at the state and federal level to provide more services to treat the mentally ill. Just as we would not leave a person choking or prone with a broken leg lying in the street, we should be able to seek help for those whose illness is as real, but centered in the mind, not the body.

I really think that if the 'welcome mat' were not out downtown, the transients such as the young woman profiled in the Tidings would move on. Just think: she said that 10 people share a bus; if all go to the Food Bank monthly, that means we are giving them 10 bags of food! That could go a long ways to feeding a family whose parents are working hard but not making ends meet. Those are the folks we should be helping.

I wish the Council the best as it deals w/ this issues. I know the guests at my house speak about it; they are caring people, but do not like to be hassled.

Sincerely,
Debbie Miller

alfred a karger

alfredkarger@gmail.com

travelers-homeless

I believe the city of Ashland needs to establish a homeless park. The ideal location would be near

the north exit in the large field between Burger King and Jackson Well Springs. It should have some trees to sleep under and a restroom similar to the one at the Ashland Dog Park. This will be a step in making Ashland a progressive city solving one of its major problems. It will give the police an alternative in that they can direct loitering and camping to a specific location and offer something to the homeless.

Just a thought, but it would be nice to have a foot patrol that walks the Plaza and up to the Ashland Springs Inn area. That seems to be the major "problem" area and the one that an officer "walking a beat" would have the largest potential impact.

Regards,

Larry J. Steiner, AAMS
Edward Jones
850 Siskiyou Blvd #4
Ashland, OR 97520

Name: Ina dickenson

Email: Inadickenson@gmail.com

Subject: Listening session travelers

Message: Since not everyone could get into the building to express our opinions on the subject could we put it on open city hall. I for one, am tired of paying taxes and still having to deal with all the problems in town . We should feel safe walking in town without being harassed and insulted. We should also find a way to inform tourists that giving money to pan handlers only makes the problem worse. Perhaps information in hotel etc and posted signs. I run a travelers accommodation and guests are starting to ask for best ways to get to festival and avoid stepping over dogs and panhandlers I am afraid the word is getting out that our city encourages this activity and this will hurt business. I also support the no smoking in town ordinance thanks for listening

Name: tom

Email: innkeeper@oakhillbb.com

Subject: travelers (grifters)

Message: I don't feel it is up to Ashland to worry about a legal line that may be crossed while dealing with these people. It is their right to challenge Ashland's statutes after the fact. Shut them up, jail them, throw them out of town. Whatever it takes then let them deal with the problem. They are a blight.

P.S. Legal fees which might be incurred when travelers make a legal claim could be handled by a coalition of towns and cities with similar interests in removing the blight from their streets.

From: Leanne
EmailAddress: leanneheydon@hotmail.com
Phone: 541-482-9325
Subject: Transients
Nature of Suggestion: Comments
I would like an email response: yes

Message:

I have lived in Ashland since 1986. I am just livid after attending the community meeting on the "home free". I will not call them travelers because that is what I consider a euphemism for what they really are. I will support the truly homeless and people that are trying to get back on their feet, but these people DO NOT care about our town, do not respect us, are dangerous and I feel I'm being run out of my own town.

I had to leave early because I was so incensed about the people that spoke about their "rights". Really? The right to harass people, swear at them, to defecate and urinate in public; to damage the tourism that this town depends on? What are other cities doing about this problem?

I resent, and am insulted at the people that insinuated that because we are middle class (and how do they know that?), we are biased or bigoted and cannot, therefore, understand their problems. I grew up in the late '60's, tried a hippy lifestyle, but was never dirty, rude, aggressive or hostile. I have worked my whole life and did not depend on handouts.

I was shocked to hear about the woman that spoke about the dog attack and then the non-existent follow up by the police department. We have a right to assume we can walk in our neighborhoods without being attacked by dogs!

I do not understand why we have let this problem grow to the degree that it has. Why are we so lenient with this offensive and dangerous behavior? Does someone have to get stabbed or do we have to have another neighborhood burned down before we do something?

Suggestions?

- Make sure ALL dogs are licensed & vaccinated. If they thought their dogs would be taken away, I think they might avoid Ashland.
- Make panhandling illegal
- “No loitering” signs and then have it enforced
- Stop as many people as possible from giving money to them. Can we put up signs to the effect that if they want to donate, they can buy vouchers, put money in donation boxes, give to Access, etc. I think that if their money sources dried up, they would not be here.
- I know this would not be popular, but stop the free dinners, showers & accommodations for a while, at least until this problem lessens. Maybe we could do something else for the local residents in need of help, not the transients.

Hi, Ann,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experiences lately,

I find I try not to go downtown unless I have to. I used to go almost daily for any reason I could think of and just stroll and enjoy our lovely downtown.

I used to walk my corgi down E. Main frequently but passing by often unleashed dogs makes me nervous for her safety. The transient owners will say, “he’s friendly” as he’d bare his teeth at us as we passed.

Last weekend I was walking by a group of about 7 transient men on the corner near Paddington Station and I had to go past them or jaywalk. I straightened up my posture to look “all business” and they still called out to me for change, cigarettes, and one asked for grass. I’m 64 years old, I could be their grandmother. As they called out the others laughed, not sure about what.

I subbed for a volunteer at the plaza info booth a couple weeks ago. Two groups of 2-3 people were smoking grass on the plaza. A tourist approached the booth and told us of them. She had 2 children. She said it was ruining her experience of visiting Ashland. I called the police and she spoke them. An officer came by in his patrol car about 30 minutes later and parked on the curb for about 10 minutes. No one was smoking by then. The transients moved on and he remained in the patrol car then drove off.

On another day I was again on the corner of E. Main and Pioneer waiting to cross. A group of transient men by the black swan were yelling at another near me. They were using thee

most foul language I've ever heard. There was a family next to me with 2 young children looking very uncomfortable, the children looked frightened. I crossed Pioneer and called the police. In no time an officer came jogging up from the annex. He spoke to both parties. I overheard the group telling him that they were just sticking up for Ashland, that the single transient was bad mouthing Ashland.

On a recent shoot in the park 2 guys came running around myself and my clients to get under one of the bridges. I wonder if they're camping there. My clients with toddlers were startled because they almost brushed the children in their haste.

These are a few of my first-hand experiences. It saddens me. I love Ashland, and love that people want to come here. I'd like them to be respectful of the others.

judy

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Ashland, OR 97520

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Elizabeth Smith

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transients

The city encourages panhandlers and "travelers" to come here. The OHRA (financed by taxpayers money) and the overnight shelter at Pioneer Hall (financed by taxpayers) may seem like the right thing to do but attracts people who don't live here but have heard about a "good deal" you can get in Ashland. It is beyond the scope of the city of Ashland to provide for and "help" the lost, lonely, confused, grifters, opportunists and all the rest.

eileen wilson

eilwl@netscape.net

Travelers on the Plaza

Dear Mayor and Council Members, I'm a Granite Bay, CA resident and have been coming to Ashland for the festival at least a few times each year for over 10 years.

What I've seen in the last two years when visiting, especially this week (I came here for closing weekend), I have cancelled my plans to bring my elderly father back here in summertime because of intimidation I have felt in and near the plaza by the traveler groups. In addition, I had been planning a "retreat" for some ladies in a philanthropy organization to come here in the spring - also canceling.

I've witnessed homeless men screaming at drivers trying to make their way through the plaza parking area, I've witnessed too many homeless smoking marijuana right on the street to count.

Ashland was once a place that I'd considered retiring to. Today I'm considering getting my "Shakespeare" fix in Sonoma or elsewhere, because the transient population has ruined - and I can't stress this enough - RUINED the experience of enjoying the festival and all the shopping, dining and enjoying the park that I have enjoyed in the past. I hope that the council will stop ignoring the problem before downtown becomes a ghost town. I'm not sure how the businesses will be sustained once non-contributing society members are the only people remaining.

Hello Ann - first off thank you and the other members of the City Council for working on this growing problem in our wonderful city.

I decided to email you after taking my 7 year old downtown today to enjoy lunch, and having him crying and desperately begging me to leave downtown because he was scared of the various groups of transients.

Today we had to listen to a male with tattoo's on his face yelling at a police officer - telling him how he is a nobody and not any better than he was - blah blah blah

I have lived in Ashland all my life - since 1972 - and am saddened by how much this transient issue is negatively effecting Ashland.

We all heard it for over 3 hours last week at the meeting - and can read about it on social media etc

I don't blame the city - the police or anyone. This is a very tough issue with no easy solutions.

I also understand the city has a slippery slope with the legalities involved - and the risk of having some ACLU fanatic come suing the city,

I have been reading a lot about other cities dealing with the same problems - and as you well know Ashland is far from the only city with this problem.

I certainly don't have any magic answers, however wanted to suggest what I feel is the best options to make the growing transient problems better.

And first I will clarify I am speaking of the majority of what we see downtown, which in my opinion is the people that choose the transient lifestyle and are perfectly capable of contributing to the society and taking care of themselves.

The small segment that have mental issues or simply have challenges beyond their control need assistance - and they are not who I am speaking of here.

With that said I feel the city, police and community needs to make the transient lifestyle in Ashland as **uncomfortable as the law will allow.**

To do this I suggest:

- An ordinance of zero panhandling allowed
- An ordinance of not allowing the passing of money from an automobile to a person (I believe Medford has this law?)
- Education to the community on facts that giving money to panhandlers actually makes things worse for everyone
- Same as above with any tourist marketing material Ashland produces
- Constant police and volunteer patrols presence in the "hot spots" around town where they congregate
 - On this point - today I watched the police officer that was getting verbally abused stand there calmly and wait for a long time which I could tell made the group uncomfortable
 - I know we can't have our police babysitting transients - but suggest adding to the volunteer patrol to simply make it very uncomfortable for the groups to sit for hours downtown
- An ordinance for sitting on public sidewalks - specifically if someone is physically blocking the walkway (or their belongings, dogs, instruments etc)

There are more ideas but will leave it at that.

I will also mention that I used to think putting resources into helping the 'homeless' - or temporary housing type ideas was smart, however not anymore.

The reason is that many of what Ashland is dealing with don't live here - and they simply don't care.

They don't want a home - they don't want help - and they choose to rebel against anything either law enforcement, city officials or the average working citizen does.

We need to stop being so politically correct about the issue.

Ashland it is time to get tough and make the volunteer transient lifestyle extremely uncomfortable in our town!!!

Thank you for your time.

Speck Hansen

541-951-6990

shansen@infostructure.biz

Hi Ann!

I hope all's well with you.

I know this is just what you want; another letter! Ha!

I typically just go about my business and let the City conduct theirs, but I felt the need to chime in on this one. I hope this letter is welcomed.

I'd like to think I have a unique perspective in that I have spent my life on the Ashland Plaza. I started working here at age 15 as a dishwasher at the Wizards Den (Munchies / Mix), then prep-cook at Tommy's restaurant (Salame') before entering my career with my families business, Gold&Gems Fine Jewelry. Now 48 years old, I'm one the longest working people downtown, if not the longest. Dang, I just aged myself!

I've seen quite a bit in these years and I've tried to help with an open mind for all. In my adult life, I'm proud to have been involved with positive change for our city. Most notably when I joined a mix of opposing political viewpoints to come together & make healthy change downtown. The late Ralph Temple and I were an unlikely pair of allies when we brought forth sensible changes. You may recall we formed a motley group comprised of level minded business people, ACLU, The Peace House and others. We worked hard, and made change. Most notably, we spearheaded the APD Sub-Station on the plaza and this has been an undeniable asset to the town.

I wasn't able to attend the meeting on Wednesday and I won't be able to be there Thursday as I am home recovering from knee surgery.

The following are my thoughts I would like to share with you and the council.

First, I admit that I have been feverishly busy and have not deeply researched & studied any proposals, yet from what I gather this meeting addresses the growing problems we are having with our transient population.

Let's please start by not labeling this problem as a "homeless issue". The homeless issue is a largely separate, tragic issue that certainly requires assistance from the city and our non-homeless citizens.

In stark contrast, this is a loitering issue, a handout issue, an illicit drug issue, a safety issue and a threat the great city of Ashland's economy issue.

Again, homelessness is a heartbreaking misfortune and we need to address it separately.

The issue I'll address is the proliferation of people that have flocked to Ashland's commerce center asking for and receiving handouts. Why? Because they can. People without pride or a work ethic will naturally get their needs met for free, if allowable. I can't really blame them. Handouts seem harmless on the surface, but if you've heard the threats and language of these people you, too, would lean towards a real reform.

This issue is a dangerous one on at least 2 levels;

1. A physical danger to our residents and visitors.
2. A true economic danger for our city.

My ultimate point to Ashland and the council that we must remember that a city's commerce is the economic heart, in our case it's our downtown - unquestionably. Without commerce, we will end up like every other lifeless city and we all struggle. Ashland is very special and we need to protect it.

No matter what peoples' political viewpoint, they/we will all struggle. All except for the handful of narcissistic extremists that are not interested in the reality of how a business works.

I can't count the number of Shakespeare customers that have told me they are not returning because of, and I'll quote one lady; "The filth that Ashland allows all over this town".

Like it or not, the City of Ashland is a business.

Shakespeare, SOU, Independent Film, ArtWalk, Mt. Ashland, families paying taxes/fees/utilities... and our amazing downtown.

They all have one commonality; they are businesses.

Businesses, in this case; the City of Ashland, Oregon, all make rules for the betterment of their customers. Otherwise they will not survive.

Cities that understand & believe this elementary point, make changes & rules. Tough rules that borderline violating our nation's amendments. We won't please everyone, but this is what needs to happen if we are going to get back to the wonderful destination that we advertise to our visitors. The owners of a business set their own rules based on their belief system and on what is best for the business.

I was at the surgery center this week and there was a sign that says "No Cell Phones".

This is not a great example, but it's one that expresses the rules of that business. Someone could

argue that it violates the Constitution, right?

Welp folks, we need rules. Something like a "No loitering" or "No beggars" or how about "No weed in public" (that is actually a law). Additionally, we could consider awarding "busking permits" for select musicians that add value to our artsy town.

There are laws that disallow commerce on our sidewalks, yet our sidewalks are littered with people selling their wares. My kids were booted for selling lemonade on Ashland's downtown sidewalk, but apparently it's ok to sell things if you are haggard and disheveled??

If this continues, I swear to God I will set up several jewelry cases on sidewalks downtown with a cardboard sign that reads; "Need to feed my family, and send my kids to University. Please buy my jewelry".

This needed "Ashland law/rule solution" will not allow vagrants, beggars, campers, public drinkers and drug users - legal or not, foul mouthed people in our "business" (downtown and select zones). Period. Period. Period.

We can kindly let them know that there are agencies in place if they need help. For the others, there are many miles of areas for them to hang out, but it is against our town's ordinances for loitering in our vibrant commerce district. Period. End of story. Black & white, no gray.

I think this code should apply to select zones in town. For example, the open lots around Shoppin' Kart and the businesses across from Bi-Mart. Many other places of course, but these are places I have seen countless problems with littering, threats, vandalism, etc etc.

The Ashland visitors & residents will return again, the hardworking contributors will survive and the people that really need help will receive needed focus.

Basically, if people are not actively engaged in bettering the valuable machine which is our downtown, you will need to leave. Again, there are miles and miles of expansive land for people...or they can move on to the next town to look for a handout. This will be based on the discretion of our law enforcement agents. This sounds a bit mean, but I don't see another way to solve this real problem.

The people that are truly in need are not hanging out on our Plaza. They are proud, good people that are in a hard situation. These people need help and I say we focus our humanitarian efforts on helping these people.

This solution will receive criticism from the extremists and from the people that think human rights are to be protected above our city's lifeline.

Finally, rather than just ranting about seeing our town deteriorate, I'd like to offer a case to study. I don't think we should mimic their solution, but if the city is willing to look at it, we

might gain something from their successful solution to the exact same problem.

Temecula, California. A different city, different population, yet they HAD the same problems. They were willing to deal with it, and everyone wins. The truly needy were helped and the people that weren't truly needy...they left town because they weren't getting a free lunch, beer & weed.

<http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2014/05/02/3432472/temecula-homeless/>

<http://www.pe.com/articles/city-693417-temecula-community.html>

<http://www.pe.com/articles/homeless-780089-temecula-people.html>

Thanks for reading this, Ann! I'm always available by email...especially as I nurse my knee back to health.

All my best,

Ron

Ron Hansen, VP

Gold & Gems Fine Jewelry

ph- 541.488.2753

toll free- 877.917.8477

fax- 541.488.2514

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My name is Angie Renick-Hayes and I am grateful to live in the precious city of Ashland. It is my understanding that there are proposed ordinances around the transients in our town and wanted to take the opportunity to share my experience and opinion.

I am a mother of 8 children ranging from 17 to 4 years old~ 5 adopted through the foster care system and 3 biological kids. I have a particular place in my heart for transients as prior to coming home, my 5 children lived on the streets and experienced the full spectrum of this lifestyle.

Though I understand the draw to allow them to be town and "choose to live outside" based on the idea of freedom of choice and supporting those who are "down and out" I do not believe it is a sustainable or healthy dynamic for anyone involved. As the staggeringly growing numbers of homeless and those dependent on the system is a clear indicator that it is perpetuating a cycle that will not slow down.

I see the flavor of the transients has shifted from what used to be upbeat street performers to now aggressive and often drug addicted folks. The entire reason we moved to Ashland was so that my kids could ride bikes to practice and school or the Co-op and live a safe and independent lifestyle and frankly, I am no longer confident to allow my kids to be around town based on several interactions they have had with the transient population the most recent being my 12 year old son being harassed and chased so he would "come sit and smoke" with a group of them downtown.

Furthermore, understanding that to continue to allow and financially support the transient population by giving food or money and not holding them to the same public ordinances that the rest of the community is actually incredibly demoralizing . Though with the best of intention, this takes the legs out from underneath them and reinforces their beliefs that they can not achieve success or be a functioning part of society and community in a way that is sustainable. In short, we are doing them a major disservice because they are not being encouraged to reach out and take advantage of the amazing services provided by our govt. to set these folks up for success through the systems and structures in place that provides sustainable living.

So, this is a matter of building healthy community and I ask that you heavily consider this when voting on these ordinances and hold ALL of us to a level of safety and well being that allows us to enjoy this beautiful town that we have chosen to call home.

Thank you for your time and energies,
Angie Renick-Hayes
Business Owner at WomanWifeMom
Mother of 8
2300 Siskiyou Blvd.

541-261-6745

Dear Ann,
I am the owner of the Bayberry Inn B&B on Main Street and a member of ABBN/Stay Ashland, the Chamber of Commerce & Southern Oregon Hospitality Organization (SOHO).

I want to start by thanking you all for your time and for working with our community to find a solution to the Transient/Home-Less issue. I am a supporter of our Food Bank and providing social services to our families and community members in need, including the homeless within our community. I believe as a business owner, a mother and a member of a community, it is my responsibility to donate my time, efforts, food and shelter to those in need.

It is not without compassion that I write to you and members of our City Counsel and request that it is time we hold every citizen, home-free, banker, doctor, home-less, student up to the same standard of our laws. Anyone breaking our laws must be held responsible for their behavior. This is about BEHAVIOR! It is not ok for anyone to trespass, defecate on private or public property, scream obscenities, intimidate and sexually harass citizens period! I'm sure you agree. Furthermore, it is up to us as a civilized society to not only make laws that protect our citizens, public & private property and businesses, but to make sure our local police department has the power and authority to enforce the laws. We cannot have an unruly few breaking our laws and holding us hostage behind the protection of our Constitution.

The past few months at the Inn, almost all my guests were complaining of aggressive panhandling and threatening behavior. Guests who have been coming to Ashland for many years and love our town were scared and questioning what is being done to secure their safety? Then in one week a month ago, I had two different instances where I had to call the police because of trespassing on my property at work. The first time was when a couple decided to park in front of my guest room in my garden and party. The police were quick to respond, thankfully, but by the time I got to the Inn, I spent an hour cleaning up their empty bottles and garbage. The next morning my guests all complained of the noise and not feeling unsafe. The second instance was two days later when a man was so drunk that he passed out in my driveway! The police were busy and it took them 40 minutes to respond. They said they had picked him up twice already that morning and the shelters, police station in Medford, the ambulance and hospitals would not take him because he was a health risk; his blood alcohol level had dropped below a safe amount and as he detoxed he was a risk. They were reticent to take him again. It was not until I threatened to press charges that they took him away. Again, I had to pick up bottles and listen to my guests tell me he had been screaming obscenities at them and spent the better part of several hours screaming at passerby's. The scary part was had anyone driven through my driveway would have unknowingly run him over.

I know this is a difficult situation for us all and I am grateful that our City Counsel, Mayor, Police Department and Chamber are all taking this seriously and working hard to come up with a solution! Thank You!

Kindest Regards,
Francesca Amery

Bayberry Inn B&B
541-488-1252

Dear Councilors,

My domestic partner owns Sew Creative, a downtown business that sells fabric and quilting supplies. The business is located near the intersection of Main and Pioneer, across the street from the Chamber of Commerce office and the Black Swan Theater. The store is in the site of the former Allison's Kitchenware, next to Paddington Station. Near the store's entrance on the corner is a public bench and planter. This location is a regular gathering spot for the transient-travelers. When the travelers are 'in situ', access along the sidewalk becomes restricted due to loitering bodies, dogs, and backpacks. Even though the bench is not at our immediate storefront, we regularly need to clean the area of trash, food waste, cigarette butts, spit and so forth. On occasion the smell of burning cannabis has permeated the store to the extent that we have had to ask that they stop smoking in front of the store. In all fairness, when we speak to them about trash or blocking our storefront, they politely pick up trash and/or move on. We have found that when there is a group congregating on the bench out front, business drops off significantly. Our business mainly caters to women, many of them tourists. Many of our customers avoid shopping here to avoid "running the Pioneer Street Gauntlet" as they call it.

The Transient-travelers situation is out of control and something needs to be done in order to help facilitate the positive reputation of the quality of life this town has rightfully earned. Local citizens, business owners, tourists, artists and even local homeless all contribute to the eclectic culture that is known as Ashland. However, the dramatic increase in the transient-traveler population and the preponderance of anti-social (non-criminal and disorderly) behavior (blocking sidewalks, loud and offensive language, pedestrian harassment, public urination, uncontrolled dogs, etc.) is on the verge of redefining Ashland's culture to one that repels common decency, decorum, and commerce. The alarm bells of concern are ringing all over town.

As you know, efforts are being made to explore the problem. The Mayor has held public meetings, citizens have expressed concerns, and newspapers have communicated the issues. As a result, I have observed the following:

- Homelessness is not a crime and should not be treated as an illegal act.
- All citizens be they local or 'travelers' have the constitutional right to freedom of speech even when such an expression may be offensive to others. Panhandling is one form of protected speech.
- Many transient-travelers "reject the ideal of material wealth...they don't want your privilege. They want to disrupt your society." (Dozens Speak Out About 'Travelers' issue. Ashland Daily Tidings, page 7, Oct 30, 2015).
- Transient-travelers prefer anonymity (Ashland Sees Spike in Street People. Ashland Daily Tidings, Oct. 25, 2015).

Recommendations:

1. Given the laws protecting free speech, the difficulty of enforcing anti-social behavior, and the preponderance of transient-travelers desiring anonymity, we suggest that the City install surveillance cameras with audio at popular transient gathering spots around town. The presence of cameras will likely reduce the presence of those who abhor observation, provide police with the monitoring system for criminal behavior, and offer law abiding citizens and tourists with the security of knowing street activity is being monitored. Output from these cameras could be ported to a publicly accessed website for monitoring by the public, police and store owners.

2. Establish a public awareness campaign dissuading the public and tourists from encouraging panhandlers by giving them money. It may be the transients' right to panhandle but it is also our right to communicate our displeasure with the behavior. Let's remove the welcome mat.

3. Provide more public restrooms out of the city center. Even the addition of blue-rooms at certain locations will reduce the waste deposit points around town. The doorways and dumpsters along Will Dodge Way are popular location for transients to find relief.

Thank you for your efforts in resolving this situation.

Please feel free to inquire further if you have any more questions.

Patrick Marcus, Ashland resident

Karen Bates, Business Owner, Sew Creative

541-941-2934

To Whom It May Concern:

Following up from the other night's town meeting regarding behavioral issues that our community is experiencing with some of the transient population in our beloved town.

I want to start off with my sincere appreciation to our elected city officials for taking on this serious and delicate situation. This needs to be discussed by all and other night was a good start to what I believe will be a productive movement in the right direction.

I grew up in Ashland during an amazing time, our community was equally as strong back then and the streets and parks were safe to explore. Were we fortunate to experience such an amazing place to grow up in? Absolutely! There is not a day that goes by that I do not count my blessings

for the healthy environment, security, cultural diversity and an overall sense of community that this town has to offer. This is exactly why I wanted to say something the other night and am now following up today to express those thoughts that did not make it out of my mouth due to my lack of comfort when it comes to public speaking.

Ashland is changing, and unfortunately, some aspects are not for the better. It is now time to stand up as a community and make sure that we do everything in our power to ensure that Ashland continues to evolve in a nurturing, and healthy manner for all that choose to live and/or visit this beautiful town. It is my opinion that everyone deserves respect and a chance at experiencing the quality of life a town like Ashland can provide... that is, everyone who is willing to reciprocate in some form or another, this truly can be as simple as just being kind when communicating with others. We are so fortunate to be surrounded by people of all walks of life that donate time, resources and knowledge to those that are in need. The citizens of Ashland step up to the plate in droves when it comes to supporting one another and I am so thankful and proud to be a part of this community. Can more be done? of course, it always can be, and I feel just by starting this conversation it is another opportunity and example of acknowledging that more can be done. With that said, I want to reiterate that it takes everyone, not only those that tend to give, but also that are receiving the benefits of our citizens generosity to bring something to the table, because at the end of the day, the same can be said for everyone... that more can be done.

There is NO reason why the citizens or guests of Ashland should experience anxiety or fear when exploring certain areas of town. People should feel comfortable taking their children and grandchildren downtown, to our local parks or to the grocery store for that matter. All humans have the right to be comfortable and feel safe without the anxiety of having to experience threatening confrontation, assault, vulgar language, explicit sexual remarks, or the potential attack of vicious dogs that are unleashed and not in the control of their owners.

Citizens of Ashland, business owners, property owners, taxpayers and visitors alike should not have to look at and/or have to remove piles of garbage, debris and human feces that are left behind by those that don't care to clean up after themselves. Our town has a lot of pride... everyone should be held accountable to follow certain common laws of respect for people and property.

These issues are really happening in our town, in my opinion, a trend that appears to be getting worse as we as a community tolerate it without resistance. We need to make sure that those that choose and strive to be good law abiding citizens are treated with the respect they deserve. We need to protect our quality of life.

We are lucky to have so many small business owners working hard to create commerce in our small town, be it the restaurants, shops, art galleries, hotels and B&B's etc.... they are able to

make an honest living because our town attracts tourists, the main driving force behind our town's success, being The Shakespeare Theatre... we need to make sure our town stays safe and comfortable for those tourists that come back year after year to watch plays, shop and dine in our local eateries, stay in our hotels and B&B's. We want them to continue to come back for years to come.

We want parents to feel safe sending their kids off to college to SOU... all of this makes our town very special.

My observation and from talking with many others (both locals and visitors) the majority of these acts are being done by small groups of individuals that appear to not have any care in the world, about anyone or anything except for themselves. It has been noticed that these are groups that come through at different times of the year, quite often almost on a rotation, mixed in with a few new ones here and there. They are not a part of the local homeless population but more so, drifters that show up in town and act like they own the place, they take without the willingness to give back. They take advantage of local food banks and homeless facilities, pepper our lands with debris, vandalize property, get in our faces, try to cause havoc and then move on. I heard an interesting comment the other night, a gentleman said, we do not want to criminalize the homeless... I thought about this a lot and the facts are, we are not talking about the homeless who are truly in need and have good hearts, fallen on hard times in life have come here or have become homeless here yet yearn for a better quality of life. There are many wonderful people in our town that fit into that category, these are not the people that our town is in discussion over regarding bad social behavior and criminal activity. There are also many travelers with alternative lifestyles, one term that has been used is "home free" who come to town to visit and may stay for periods of time that gather and play music and appear to be overall harmonious with those they encounter. Those also are not what I believe the current topic of conversation is about. This discussion is about those individuals who come into our city and choose a lifestyle of criminal activity, intimidation, verbal assaults both violent and sexual. It's about the individuals who appear to not care about simple social behavioral skills such as respect towards other human beings, don't care about our lands that we as a community work hard to keep clean and safe for our citizens and guests alike. It appears that they could care less for humanity in general. These are the kind of people that we as a community need to send a message to that they are not welcome here, we will not tolerate it, it is our choice and we choose to help those that want to be helped and not allow those individuals to disrupt what we all work so hard to keep intact.

We need to come together in order to find ways to monitor those individuals who are here to disrupt and partake in criminal activity, those are the people we want to criminalize... the ones acting like criminals!

One suggestion is that our city officials monitor and keep records of who is in our town. If you want to panhandle, loiter or use the facilities then you have to register. It seems to me that

only those who have something to hide would opt out of registering and in turn losing their ability to stay. If they opt out it would also provide a red flag for our local law enforcement to keep an extra good eye on those individuals. We as taxpayers have to register, not sure why a transient in our local town can get away being anonymous and still take advantage of the generosity our citizens provide.

Another suggestion would be to adopt a law that I believe California has, that if an individual (or group) aggressively intimidates or provokes another human being in a threatening manner to the degree that they feel they have to defend themselves, it is to be considered illegal and those individuals are to be reprimanded in some form. Once again I feel this would help keep an eye on those that are causing havoc... this would really send a message that you either behave or leave.

It is my opinion (and having talked to MANY others, there are a lot of people who feel the same way) we need more police presence in downtown (and also make rounds to other areas of consistent concern)... I believe we have the resources to maintain a consistent police presence in these locations... we as taxpayers need to make sure we are projecting our voice of what is important.

This is the time to take the necessary steps in order to protect our beautiful town. I want to thank our local elected officials one more time. I know a lot of people in our town are looking forward to this conversation continuing to a successful outcome for all.

Sincerely,

Justin Donovan

A Concerned Citizen of Ashland Oregon.

Dear Mayor Stromberg:

We have been following the discussion of “travelers” in our town and, in a previous letter to Council Member Steffinger with a copy to you, discussed our encounters with travelers when trying to shop downtown or pay our electric and water bills at the City’s offices and our thoughts on how to deal with the problem.

We have also previously dealt with travelers on a personal basis. Last year, small groups of “travelers” picnicked a couple of times on our front lawn using our hose bibs for water, bushes

for toilets, and trees for knife targets. On one of those occasions I felt personally threatened and called the police.

Last night the problem became personal again. We woke this morning to find a blue and orange tent occupied by two young men set up in our fenced back yard. The two men willingly packed up their belongings after I asked them to leave but the experience raised the question of if this will happen again and whether it will result in a threatening confrontation like those last year. Because our young grandchildren frequently play at our house, I am also concerned about the health issues associated with human waste from people camping in the yard.

We urge you and the Council to address this issue before there is a serious confrontation or public health problem in our community.

Thank you,
Bob and Cheryl Therkelsen

Name: Trina Sanford

Message:

I am at the meeting this evening (Monday Nov 2) and I am begging you to remember this is not just a problem on the plaza! This needs to be addressed as a issue throughout ALL of Ashland! Please remember this when moving forward.

We did not have a chance to talk at last week's meeting, and we wanted to offer the following.

The link that follows is for a public outreach program to address panhandlers that was started in Seattle, but is now being used by many other communities. Burlington VT, Milford CT, Boise ID, Fort Collins CO, and Ann Arbor MI, are just some of the cities that have adopted this campaign.

Have a Heart Give Smart - "It's OK to say "no" to panhandling, and "yes" to giving."

<http://givesmartseattle.com>

Margaret and Ray Mallette

Ashland

Here's a possible legal way to regulate panhandling. Consider it a business being operated on public sidewalks. If I obtain a supply of picture postcards of Ashland, and stand at the corner of Main and Pioneer with a sign, or speech, that says "Give me a dollar and I'll give you a postcard", the City would properly cite me for operating a business without a license. Why is doing the same thing without the postcards a right? The panhandlers are soliciting money as their means of support. That sounds like a business. What does your attorney think?

John Ames

Jon Lange

Report a Problem: To whomever receives this (Ann?), would you please forward to the mayor and council members? Thank you very much for your work on the issue of misbehavior downtown. Last night at the study session, I saw you all make a thoughtful and thorough "start" on the issue (and it was obvious that much had already been under way). I was also pleased that the mayor said, "We are in this for the long haul," or words to that effect. I do believe it will take a sustained effort, by the entire community, with lots of approaches (as you are looking for), to substantially address these issues. I am glad you all will be leading the community forward on this. Thank you again. Jon Lange

As a 20-year business professional who works on the Plaza, I've noticed a change in the landscape downtown. Since 2008, an increased presence of those suffering the consequences of an economic crisis is apparent both in Ashland and in the rest of the nation. Eighteen percent of Ashland lives at, or below, the poverty level. They are one bad break away from being on the streets. Social factors like war, mental illness, addiction, domestic violence, sexual assault and student loan debt contribute. I know this because I take time to talk with them.

Every Tuesday and Thursday night I volunteer to run the Pioneer Hall homeless shelter. I've acquired a deep understanding of the harsh realities of being on the streets. Living hour to hour, only being able to focus on the primary needs of safety, food, bathrooms and sleep is tough. It's difficult to get traction to move forward when sleep-deprived and malnourished. It's also often difficult to be polite when in this distressed state. I'm not making excuses for bad behavior. I'm only trying to provide an understanding of what it's like.

Yes, there are a few disruptive anarchists who intend to shock you. Those of us old hippies shocked a lot of parents in the '60s and '70s. A wise person recently shared that that every action is either either an act of love or a cry for love. Even disrespectful behavior is a cry for love. So too are the complaints about these people. We need to attempt to understand each other in order to get along with each other. I heard a lot of cries for love on both sides of the forum on the 28th.

Greg Lemhouse's editorial distinction between travelers and local homeless oversimplifies a complex issue of behavior downtown. He states that the travelers are the problem and that the local homeless are not. About 10-15 percent of the travelers exhibit problematic behavior. About 10- 15 percent of the local homeless also cause real problems. I'm not condoning illegal or disrespectful behavior. I've personally invited more than one highly disrespectful young man to leave town. However, it did not compel me to run everyone else who looked like them out of town.

People fear people who are not like them. The mistake I see being made in Ashland is a projection of fear of other humans onto an entire group of individuals. Many of the concerns about kids on the streets have nothing to do with specific behavior. They express an unjustified concern for safety, and a dislike for encountering dirty smelly people.

The common myth that the kids on the streets are able-bodied and living on the streets as a lifestyle choice is also inaccurate. Those of us who interview the homeless with the HUD point in time count know the majority of those surveyed answer yes to the questions pertaining to mental illness, addiction, victim of domestic violence, victim of sexual assault. Many have been persecuted by their families for sexual orientation. They may be on the streets by choice, but that may be a better choice than staying in a violent home where no socially acceptable behavior was ever modeled.

Fear based concerns lack any real solutions. Social cleansing is not the answer. It may help some with their fears, but will do nothing to help people in need. I'm seriously concerned about the targeting of a specific group. Many civilized people have historically gone along with such targeting, whether it's refugees and immigrants, native Americans, black American, gays, Japanese Americans during World War II or Nazi Germany's horrific targeting of the Jewish community.

Targeting the poor and homeless should alert anyone who understands what fear-based oppression leads to. City ordinances targeting the poor result in fines that cannot be paid. Unpaid fines create warrants and debt collection, further oppressing those who are already desperate. Piling on is against even the rules of football. Why is it OK in civilized society?

Ashland is not a gated community. Fear not your fellow human, for fear leads to hatred. Be careful who you fear. You may unknowingly end up uncivilized. Ashland's strong moral compass is at stake.

John Wiczorek

165 Orange

Ashland, OR 97520

Dear Ann and Sandra,

I have been trying to figure out how to word a letter of response to the homeless/transient problem and I think I come up with something. Please see the below and feel free to use this in whatever manner you find helpful.

To Whom It May Concern,

What is my response or opinion on the homeless/transient population in our town? Well my first response is that everyone is a person no matter who you are and what your circumstances are and I agree that we cannot use the blanket term of it being a homeless/transient problem and just putting everyone in the same group. There may be some trying to do this and others I am sure this is not their intention. I would ask that we all take a moment of breath and not assume the worst of our fellow man. I have met some extremely rude, sad, confused, angry and belligerent people from all walks of life so I am not choosing to address this. I am choosing to address the people on the sidewalks asking for money, who have given up and chosen this path. We all choose our paths, regardless of circumstances. To illustrate this I would like to share a story about myself that few people know.

When I was but a teenager freshly graduated from high school on the coast of Oregon and my mother had recently remarried, after our family having been without a husband or father for many years, now having a husband and father presence around the house. It was a difficult time. I am bringing up these facts so you can understand what age I was, 18 to 19, and what point and situation in my life I was at. Similar to many of the young people we see on the streets today. Now having come from a family of seven and being the third oldest I was used to being overlooked, as I am sure many of us felt, and as a result having to deal with changes, feelings and emotions with virtually no guidance. To make a long story short, and to only include the facts needed, I left the house fairly fresh out of high school. Partly because I wanted to and partly because my parents wanted me to. Now this rendered me with no virtually no place to go. Luckily I had been active in the job market here and there since high school and had found a job that I would soon be starting, before being faced with a situation of having no home, so I had a goal. However because I had no money in savings, parents with really no money in savings and virtually uprooted my entire childhood with no immediate connections around me, it was up to me to make do. Again it was enough my choice to leave home that I would choose the means in which I would live in, so armed with a tent, a bike and enough of the essentials to get me by I devised a plan to live on my own and work and make do. For close to a month, maybe more and maybe less, I got up every morning for work, rode my bike down to the campground showers, got ready for work and rode my bike into work. It was a bit of a ride too because I chose to live closer to the outskirts of town where I could set up a tent and be close enough to the campground showers and bathrooms. Rain or shine I would ride my bike into work dressed in a tie and cleaned appropriately for work. It was a tough time for sure, but it was a choice. After that month or so of going to work and saving though I had enough for an actual place of my own with running water and electricity. After that I worked as hard as I could and saved and eventually made a sustainable life for myself. It was tough, but it was my choice. I never once begged for money on the street and rarely ever found myself in town unless it was for work or to get

supplies for my campsite. Because of my choice to work hard and do what I could to change my life and retain some pride in myself and what I could accomplish I was only in that situation for about month.

People are making the case that everyone is human and unique and this is completely true. But my question for you is this. Did you ever think that by giving a beggar something they ask for and not giving them what they really need, you might be robbing them more than you think? You might be taking away their pride, or dignity or ability to pull themselves out of the place they are in and make a better life. I have told this story because maybe it will help. It is not an easy story for me to share, but I guarantee you I never would have shared the story and it would not have any notes of hope if I had not progressed from that low point.

Jesus was said to have kept company with some "unsavory people", according to Pharisees, but He saw past the ask of people and went to their needs. What is the solution? I wish I could provide a good one. A map to a campground? A tent? Tell people they are better than this? Tell people to have some pride in who they are and what they can do? What would Jesus do?

If people have mental needs or an illness resources should be made available for them. If people are suffering from addictions resources should again be made available. If there are these resources available for free or an affordable price and they are not being used, perhaps find an incentive for people to take advantage of these resources. Encouraging people to make a better life and rewarding them when they take steps to do so seems plausible, or at least worth discussion. Maybe ask the churches what ideas they have and get them involved. I find it interesting that we are more apt to jump to punishing people for bad behavior than encouraging and rewarding them for good behavior. I have always found this curious.

Well, hopefully this letter will help spur thoughts to some form of solution and if anything I have mentioned here seems relevant or warranting further discussion, please feel free to get in touch with me.

Happy Holidays!

Peter Wickliffe
Marketing Associate
Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF)
15 S. Pioneer St.
Ashland, OR 97520
(541) 482-2111 Ext. 387 *phone*
(541) 552-2710 *fax*
peterw@osfashland.org

Hello Anne

I was unable to attend the city council meeting and would like to submit some of my experiences with this issue.

I work for RVTD and have had many exchanges with this community one of the main reasons for the continued growing population issue is by standing at locations, especially Shop & Cart they can collect \$35 an hour, plus free dental and medical and now all the pot they want purchasing at all the dispensaries along the route 10

Faye Dorgham

Hello City Council,

As a 40 year resident of Ashland I've watched the problem with the 'homeless' ebb and flow. Currently it's at a high point and besides Thierry, I don't think any of the downtown beggars are local residents (at least I don't recognize them).

I would propose a sign campaign directed at locals and tourists in the downtown area to "Not Pay The Beggars" similar to Mammoth California's signage to keep people from feeding bears. It will be much easier for our guests and locals to change our behavior than to try to get out of town 'homeless' to change. If the money dries up they will leave, or at least their numbers will dwindle. I believe that signs like I propose do not violate free speech laws.

Thank you, Doug Shipley (email dshipley@opendoor.com)

Doug Shipley

Special Education Teacher

Ashland High School

(541) 482 8771 ext 2271

doug.shipley@ashland.k12.or.us

Elizabeth J. Bardossi Van Trump

bethb@osfashland.org

Thank you

Thank you to the City Council for doing what you can to beef up local ordinances pertaining to the people passing through. While they are not the reforms we might like (and unfortunately are currently prohibited by Oregon law), they are important small steps to move us forward.

I am sorry to hear that Councilwoman Sheffinger was threatened. I think Eric Novickas should be held partially accountable for enabling the demonstration on the day she was approached. His inflammatory display and organization of the event no doubt had an influence.

There is one more thing I've observed: I don't see many, if any, of our local downtown transients. I don't think they like the travelers either.

Thanks again.

Gretchen & Norm Wishart

thewisharts@msn.com

homeless in Ashland

We are residents of Ashland, and wish to share with you our experiences of a car trip we took last year.

We drove down the coast, and spent a night in Santa Cruz, CA. Santa Cruz has a terrible problem with homeless young people. They sleep on the beaches, they take up the park benches, and they have an attitude of entitlement toward ordinary people such as ourselves. We stayed at a Hilton in Santa Cruz, and when we went down to our car in the morning, here were homeless people sleeping in sleeping bags right in the parking lot of the Hilton.

Whatever the city of Santa Cruz is doing, it isn't working, as the city is completely overwhelmed by the homeless.

Then, we traveled on down the coast, arriving at the hamlet of Carmel. Another picturesque California beach town, with parks, public beaches, shops, restaurants, and lots of sidewalks for walking around (and spending money!). But Carmel has NO HOMELESS. Not on the beaches, not in the parks, not pestering the tourists, no flea infested dogs, no panhandlers, NO HOMELESS.

Our suggestion is that the City Council look into what does Carmel do that Ashland could adopt. Could this success story have its roots in Clint Eastwood having been mayor? Who knows. But

whatever they are doing, it works.

We highly encourage the Council to investigate further and see what Ashland may learn from another cute tourist town.

Sincerely,

Gretchen and Norm Wishart
545 Dogwood Way
Ashland, OR 97520

Dear Mayor Stromberg,

Thank you very much for genuinely trying to tackle these issues around homelessness by learning more about the community involved! The homeless are a mostly misunderstood group, I hope to help shed light on who you are dealing with in order to find the best solutions for both society at large and the homeless community.

First off, there are a whole variety of reasons why people end up homeless and it makes it difficult to find a single solution that will work for everyone. In fact, I have learned that not everyone can be helped, even realize they are ill, or wants off the streets. However, I do believe we are obliged as a civilized society to at least help those that we can, and not make things worse for those we can't. I'm going to try to simplify for you a very complex issue, please just realize that this is just that, a simplification!

I would say that there are 3 types of high-risk folk that need the most help. That would be veterans, the mentally ill, and street kids. I believe all people on the streets deserve equal attention and help, but as the infrastructure isn't in place to handle everyone, I would recommend focusing resources on what we can do the most for now.

#1 Veterans

For veterans, working with a US Veteran bureau to try to outreach will be your best bet. Veterans end up on the streets these days, not just from PTSD, but from disillusionment with what they had to do, finding out that it wasn't about defending freedom or America, but actually about oppressing other folk for an empire. Therefore, a lot of them really don't want much to do with the system and continue to live in survival mode, which they have been trained to do. However, over time they actually do want a chance to get their lives back together, but unfortunately once you become homeless, it is very difficult to get off the streets on your own. Also, for some reason alcoholism is very prevalent with veterans. In fact, that wino you're judging is probably a guy who would sacrifice his life for you if it came down to it.

There are a handful of veterans living chronically homeless in Ashland. My boyfriend, Greg, has been talking to Derail, who struggles with alcoholism. It turns out, if he had a chance, he would want to get off the streets and get clean. Periodically, he tries. The last time he tried was when his friend threw himself off an overpass over Hwy 5 in front of traffic and died. The thing about most homeless centers around the country is that they do, to some degree, help the homeless to survive with camping gear, coffee, stale food, mail, crisis health care, etc. But very few actually have much success actually getting homeless people off the streets (I last heard the national average is only 2%). In order to heal, a homeless person needs a place of their own. Once stabilized, they can begin to work with social workers to rehabilitate, but for as long as they are in a state of survival, they can't really ever get their feet under them. Derail has been waiting for 3 years applying for SSI. The process of assessing if you are disabled enough for SSI is notoriously long, dragged out and finicky. In the meantime, health deteriorates, both physical and psychological. We need something interim for those who are not being helped yet. Actually, Derail is a special case because he is not technically a vet, since he was in the secret service, which is apparently a different branch of service. Another hard case currently is Lambeth, an ex-marine from the Vietnam war. He is a good guy, but particularly messed up emotionally and needs mental health care, which he is currently not getting. Which lead me to the second group...

#2 Mentally Ill

There are also a handful of homeless mentally ill in Ashland, including myself. I have bipolar disorder, which I manage mainly with counseling at this point. However, finding mental health support has been dismally difficult. The Resource Center has a counselor once or twice a week, but there is no privacy there. The Methodist church on Tuesdays has a crisis counselor who is great, but he is mainly for crisis, not long-time counseling. It took me 2 months to get on OHP, then a month to see my PCP for the first time. She referred me to Jackson County Mental Health all the way in Medford. It would have taken a month to get assessed, but I did a walk-in instead. I was assessed, but then it took 3 months to get assigned a counselor, just a few weeks ago! She is not a match, either, and I will have to find one who understands homelessness and able to work with heavy issues like sexual abuse, not just offer pat advise to get by. Before I got assigned her, I went to the crisis center in the meantime to try to get some things off my chest, which is how I stay stable. I kid you not, the crisis counselor after 30 minutes told me that my problems were not important enough or a crisis and dismissed me! This is the main MO, in what I have dubbed "Jackshit County Mental Health"- if you are not suicidal or homicidal, they don't have the time or resources for you.

This lack of mental health is, unfortunately, a national problem. It took me 7 months to get counseling in Santa Cruz as well. But since mental health is such a cause of homelessness, it is one of the most important places to start when addressing it. This is actually one of the first things I'm going to recommend- social workers to help advocate and identify individual needs for homeless folk, and mental health professionals to start rehabilitating homeless folk.

#3 Street Kids

Of all the groups of homeless people, I am most worried about the street kids. They are going downhill at an alarming rate. Part of this is due to rampant gentrification which is making anti-homeless sit-lie-stay laws and all kinds of ways to make their already impossible lives even more impossible, such as taking away places to sit downtown, removing recycling bins from parks, constant police interactions, etc. It is pushing the kids to the extreme edge of society. I went to a Rainbow Gathering this summer. The last one I went to was in the 90's in Shasta. This one was in Willamette Nat'l Forest. It was very disturbing to see the changes in the past couple decades. Upon arriving, we found out that a girl had just committed suicide. The kids were all recklessly on drugs. Gone were the colorful, fun buses and rubber chickens- instead it was a line-up of bleak mini-vans and non-descript, run-down RVs. The alternative lifestyle is being pushed underground and survivalism is getting more extreme. I'm very sorry Council Member Steffinger was confronted with homeless people who said they wanted her dead. That's terrible! But it illustrates that while the friction between regular society and the homeless is a question of quality of life for regular folk, it is literally a question of life and death to the homeless. It is starting to boil down to class warfare at this point. It's like "Grapes of Wrath" all over again. It seems weird that society can never seem to recognize in real time when old patterns are surfacing all over again!

I want to get this idea across, if possible: Whatever laws you make against the homeless, they WILL find the loopholes, or else just break them. They don't have a choice, they HAVE to survive. This is why anti-homeless laws just don't work. Tickets? What are you going to do? Ruin their credit? Throw them in jail where they now have free room and board? All this does is mire them further and further into legal problems, making it less and less likely they will ever get out of their predicament. This is not only not the moral way to go, but it isn't even an effective way to go! They already know all about the runaround, and it's just another reminder that nobody wants them.

Many long-time homeless folk started out as runaways. Derail ran away from home at age 9 because "my parents were going to kill me." He is now 50. My boyfriend, Greg, was born into the prostitution and drug-trafficking circuit and was orphaned at age 6 when his mother went to prison. The foster "care" homes he ended up in were horrific, including forced labor, rape and torture. He is still homeless at 60. Most people end up chronically homeless because they don't

have the safety net of friends or family to help them (and some have the family, but don't trust them). So I think it is important to reach these kids earlier, rather than later. The amount of trauma they've already been through is significant and will take a lot of care to reach them, but many of these kids really do want to be good people. They just need a chance.

What I would love to see for them more than anything is a "Safe Center"- with the short-term goal of stabilizing them and giving them a safe place to recover; and the long-term goal of rehabilitation. I hope Ashland will consider a pilot project of this type. Obviously space will be limited at first, but helping some is better than not helping any! Perhaps it can be done in conjunction with Asante, which Greg was told are considering an out-reach program for the homeless. First and foremost would be rooms which would be each kid's private space where they can leave their things and rest. To know where you're going to sleep and that you will be safe? I cannot tell you how enormous that is! I have developed insomnia and some PTSD just from not having that basic luxury. Many will have animals that are emotional supports and safety blankets that they will want to keep with them. Next, counselors for each kid to begin to unravel the traumas of their experiences. Drug-rehab programs offered, but not required. And finally, I would love to see classes offered to help them learn to ultimately take care of and love themselves. This was the turning point for me and my mental health- I studied diet and lifestyle counseling at the Ayurvedic Institute in Albuquerque, NM for a year. What I was really learning, however, was how to be kind to myself. This is something few of these kids have ever experienced. If you want to change some lives, this is how. I would love to see classes in yoga, cooking, self-care, spiritual guidance- and I would love to offer my own knowledge and help teach them- this is actually my own long-term goal, to reach out and touch street kids.

The logistics of such a project might be a bit daunting. There will have to be rules about conduct- a lot of these kids are not used to boundaries- which makes it very important to have staff that is kind AND firm. Boundaries are OK when given respectfully and with care. Perhaps it can start with 1 month space per kid, up to age 30, per 6 months. I do not recommend forcing them in anyway. They are already scared of authority. I know 72 hour holds are mandatory for kids who express the desire to hurt themselves or others. In such a case, let the kid know that they cannot leave for that time. Afterwards, they are free to leave or free to stay, as they desire. Kids under 18 might be scared to be put back into foster care, and might stay away from the program, unfortunately. Drug addiction is rife on the streets because drugs and alcohol make such a painful life tolerable to some degree (and trust me, I don't do any drugs and only drink once in awhile, but when I drink, I can finally get some sleep and it warms me up and takes the bodily and psychological pains away for awhile, and I have to be careful not to make a habit of it!). I really wish the program could include a safe-injection site (I will post a video of Dr. Gabor Mate's compassionate talk about childhood trauma and addiction), however, it probably isn't allowed in the US.... unless in conjunction with SOU or something? I don't know. These are all very difficult questions to consider while trying to help the homeless. I think Ashland could be the amazing place that tries something different!

On the question of day-to-day homeless issues around town, there are no easy answers, but I have a few suggestions. First off, homeless people need a place to camp at night. Setting aside a piece of land for camping and for parking vehicles to camp is a controversial issue around the country. However, if you give us a place, it will help with a lot of the sanitation problem. With 24 hour bathrooms and access to shower and washing stations, this will make a huge difference in a lot of people's lives. There can be 3 month stay limits, for instance, even \$1/ night fees (must be affordable), and there will have to be security, as long as the security is understanding of homeless issues and uses discretion (otherwise it will build friction)- jobs can even be offered to homeless folk, who understand their own community best (although I will say, there needs to be more oversight in the homeless services, overall, as otherwise corruption and bullying can start to happen). There will still always be homeless people who don't want to be herded into corrals, but for the majority of people it will offer a safe space at night.

I also recommend a specified place downtown where it is legal to sell your hand-made goods- "Hippie Corner," so-to-speak. This gives travelers and others the ability to make an honest living and an alternative to begging. I sold my hand-knitted scarves for 2 months in downtown Ashland until the City administrator called the cops on me, the day before the shoot of "Wild" (the irony really burned me up!). Left to my own devices selling on the streets, I do really well. I made money every day and was able to get by. After I was told I couldn't sell anymore, I tried everything around town to sell my scarves, but had no luck. I tried the Lithia Artisan market, but after "judging" my scarves, they never called me back. Besides the Lithia market having turned into something of a good ole boy's club, it is totally impractical for travelers and the homeless. It costs money they don't have, it has a long waiting list, it's exclusive/ picky and you need a big set-up that is impossible to carry and store if homeless. I also tried selling to stores downtown, but none would buy my scarves. I finally paid \$30 for wall space at the Ashland Artisan Emporium. After a month, I only sold one scarf for \$20, so I lost money on the venture!! Many locally housed folk would come and express to me frustration, as well, at not having a viable outlet to sell their art, not just the homeless. A permit from the city to sell after a couple weeks of selling is fair, as long as it is affordable. And this could add a fun flair to the downtown!

OK, I can say a million more things, but this is the bones of it. Please don't hesitate to ask any questions. My number is 831-212-3162. I recommend that you talk to my boyfriend, Greg Wade, also, who is still in town (I had to head south to Santa Cruz to sell my scarves for the holiday season, since I can't sell in Ashland). Greg has been homeless off and on his whole life, so he understands the homeless community through-and-through, but he has also worked extensively with churches and community in out-reach programs and he is a great brain to pick for ideas, as well as a great candidate to work with. His number is 831-291-2062.

Here are a few sources for you to learn more about the issues you are facing. The first is a talk by Dr. Gabor Mate on trauma and addiction. The second is a letter from Santa Cruz's Mayor Don Lane giving advice to other cities about what has worked and what has not worked here regarding homelessness. Ashland, as a much smaller community, has less resources, but also,

luckily, a lot less of the problems. Unfortunately, I don't have a link, just the full text of the letter (as if this hasn't been long enough- obviously this is a complicated issue!). I will say I have talked personally with Don Lane, and he is often missing the point of view of the homeless, instead hearing more from the Downtown Business Association and regular folk on the issue. I really believe you can't solve these issues without hearing from the homeless themselves, so thank you very much for your attention. I really do feel the will is here in Ashland to do something different and great- let's make it happen!!

Kate Wenzell

http://www.democracynow.org/2011/5/30/dr_gabor_mat_on_the_stress



[Don Lane](#)

[October 26 at 8:19pm](#) · [Edited](#)

An Open Letter to my colleagues in local government and in the Santa Cruz community about the latest challenges in addressing homelessness...as winter approaches....
(Please consider sharing this with others if you think it worth sharing.)

Greetings

As I write this letter, the City Council I belong to is about to take up a variety of measures related to homelessness. Some of these items will be discussed this week. Others will presumably be discussed over the next few months. With winter coming soon and this set of issues once again coming to the top of the Santa Cruz community's agenda, I'd like to outline a framework for looking at these issues and make some specific proposals.

But let me begin with a quick report on some good news and some bad news in the field of homelessness in Santa Cruz.

First, the good news:

-There are several successful program models that are having a positive impact on both the community and the individuals that had been experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz. The permanent supportive housing model, which our county began to put into practice many years ago has demonstrated real success. The 180-2020 Project, which built on the early local success with permanent supportive housing, has (in the last 3 years) housed more than 350 individuals

that had been chronically homeless on the streets of Santa Cruz County for many years. And a City/County partnership (once called the Downtown Accountability Program and now going by the name PACT) to break the cycle of homelessness, nuisance crime and over-utilization of costly emergency services is showing very good results.

-The nationwide "Mayors' Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness" and the high level of federal funding associated with the effort to house every veteran is bearing real fruit both nationally and locally. The lead agencies for this effort in Santa Cruz - the Veterans Resource Center and the federal Department of Veterans Affairs - are well-funded, well-staffed and are housing local homeless veterans every week.

-A public/private/nonprofit partnership worked to create and adopt a forward looking county-wide strategic plan ("All In") to address homelessness. That plan, which continues and strengthens a positive trend toward approaches to reduce and end homelessness rather than the past practice of relying too much on managing it, was adopted unanimously by every local government jurisdiction in our county.

-The County of Santa Cruz recently funded the hiring a high-level staff person to coordinate the countywide homeless services system and to guide implementation of the countywide strategic plan. The County also stepped in with major gap funding to sustain two programs at the Homeless Services Center when HSC experienced a major funding loss. These are part of a very significant trend of County government's larger commitment to taking on the issue of homelessness. There might have been a time when the City of Santa Cruz could have had some justification for claiming that the County was not meeting its responsibility in taking on the challenge of homelessness. That time has now passed.

-The Association of Faith Communities has rebuilt the Interfaith Satellite Shelter Program and it is now serving 15 to 20 individuals per night on a rotating basis at local churches. The program is also doing new work to link participants to a wider range of services and moving more people into long-term housing.

-Lastly (in the good news category) the 2015 Homeless Census and Survey showed that our county (and the city of Santa Cruz) had a significant reduction in homeless population. I don't mind saying that I don't think that this census is a very precise tool for measuring the numerical level of homelessness but it is widely recognized as a good tool for seeing general trends and the trend on the level of homelessness in Santa Cruz is a good one.

Now, the not so good news...

-In contrast to the good news at the county government level, the City of Santa Cruz has reduced its funding commitment for homelessness programs even as the County has increased its funding substantially. This City reduction was not done to single out homeless services for budget reductions-- the cuts came to almost all human services programs. However valid those reasons

for this reduction, it is a real problem that the reduction in City funding for homeless services has been significant.

-The Daytime Essential Services program at the Homeless Services Center has been severely curtailed due to the loss of key state grant funding. This means hundreds of people without homes have lost regular access to breakfast and dinner meals and to sanitation facilities including restrooms and showers. It also means many people who had a somewhat protected place to spend their days are now passing their days in public spaces and neighborhoods all around the community. I know some people might have imagined that, if day services at HSC were severely restricted or eliminated, that the community problems associated with homelessness would diminish and that many people living on the street would go away from Santa Cruz. The verdict on this idea seems to be in -- and homelessness did not go away. (My judgment on this is based on reports from all over the community suggesting that people who appear to be homeless are still present all over town and the burden placed on the community by extensive homelessness has not diminished significantly.)

-The Paul Lee Loft Shelter at HSC also lost substantial funding this year and has adapted to grant funding requirements by changing its role from a short term emergency shelter to a different kind of interim housing program. The Loft Shelter had been the main year-around emergency shelter for adults in the Santa Cruz area and it is no longer a contributor to meeting our short term shelter needs. Despite a fairly widespread misconception, we've never had a lot of emergency shelter for adults in the City of Santa Cruz. And now we have even less. No matter how you slice it, during most of the year, there are literally hundreds of adults without an indoor space to sleep at night.

-It gets even worse. Because HSC has had to cut so much program and so much staffing, without additional funding, it will not be staffed and equipped to be the operator of north Santa Cruz County's Winter Shelter Program (at the National Guard Armory in DeLaveaga Park.) HSC will need tens of thousands of dollars of new funding to operate a Winter Shelter Program.

-Even if our city and county come up with enough funding to sustain the Winter Shelter Program, when the weather turns bad (as in very heavy El Niño rains) the Winter Shelter will not be sufficient. It can serve about 100 adults. There are several hundred unsheltered individuals in the immediate Santa Cruz area.

-It's also important to note here what is probably the worst news of all: rental housing costs are skyrocketing. It's widely agreed that our area is experiencing a housing affordability crisis that is likely worse than any past housing crisis we've seen. People, mainly people with jobs, are being priced out of their rental housing situations every day. This suggests that both a potential increase in homelessness could emerge and that it will be more difficult than ever to move local people off of the streets and into housing.

- Last but not least in the bad news category: we are continuing to experience tremendous litter and waste disposal problems along with environmental damage as a result of careless actions by people camping in our parks and open spaces. The City has sought to manage this problem by increasing ranger and police interventions and through the issuance of citations-- especially camping citations. The number of camping and sleeping citations issued this year has increased tremendously compared to previous years. Yet hundreds of individuals continue to sleep in our parks and open space lands every night. I think we have a failure of policy and practice on multiple levels. a) Our camping enforcement activities are not substantially reducing the number of people sleeping in these public spaces. b) The environmental damage and litter damage persists. c) We have more citations being issued that end up having little deterrent effect while consuming much law enforcement time.

Beyond what I've categorized as good news and bad news, there is another significant piece of news. The federal government has, in a variety of ways, signaled that it will not provide federal homelessness funding to localities that enforce laws against sleeping outside when those who are sleeping outside have no legal alternative. The feds have also started to intervene in court cases that question local laws that prohibit sleeping in public places for people who have no place else to sleep.

The City of Santa Cruz has been able to maneuver through this legal situation in recent years. Several years ago, the City Council worked with the City Attorney to set up a system whereby people who had sought emergency shelter but were turned away for lack of space could have sleeping and camping citations dismissed. This has been less than a perfect system but at least it tried to avoid penalizing people who had made an effort to avoid sleeping outside. Now this model is becoming less functional because there is almost no drop-in emergency shelter in our city. (In the non-winter season -- April to November-- there are something like 15 to 30 unrestricted emergency shelter beds in Santa Cruz) It has become extraordinarily difficult for any homeless adult to find any emergency shelter. If court rulings continue to hold that penalizing people for sleeping outside when they have no alternative is unconstitutional, Santa Cruz (and hundreds of cities around the country) will no longer be able to enforce this kind of ordinance.

A related issue which has surfaced locally, partially in the context of our city council's consideration of RV parking regulations, is the reality that many people without homes sleep in their vehicles. Courts have begun to wade into this issue, too, and the general trend seems to be that cities might not be able to restrict people from sleeping in their vehicle if their vehicle is in every other way compliant with the law. When Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo tried to ban people without homes from sleeping in vehicles, lawsuits ensued and both cities were required to make some allowance for sleeping in vehicles.

So we have quite a tangled web of challenges and circumstances to take on as we wrestle with homelessness.

As I mentioned before, our local governments have adopted a strategic plan that I believe provides an excellent road map for how we can successfully reduce homelessness in our county. It's based on well-tested models that are working elsewhere. These models are now showing success here. But this roadmap was not primarily designed to address some of our most pressing short-term challenges. And, beyond that, the conceptual roadmap is just a plan on our desks unless we take concrete actions and make a real commitment of resources to implement it.

So... I would like to offer for community discussion a set of proposals that I hope will be considered and then acted upon by the City of Santa Cruz and the Santa Cruz City Council in the coming days and months:

1) Commit additional funds in the amount of \$31,000 to ensure that the Winter Shelter Program can operate again this year and provide shelter for up to 100 adults throughout what we expect will be a very wet rainy season. I also suggest we indicate a willingness to contribute a modest amount more if there is a weather-based need and a countywide willingness to extend the Winter Shelter program for extra weeks. (The final decision on this second part would occur in February or March.)

2) In conjunction with a mid-year budget update and budget adjustment in January, consider an additional allocation of funds to sustain the Paul Lee Loft Shelter through the current fiscal year, allowing that program additional time to seek a state Emergency Solutions Grant in 2016 without closing the loft program. (Allowing that program to close prior to the completion of the 2016 ESG funding cycle would virtually ensure that the program would lose eligibility for ESG funds next year.)

3) The County of Santa Cruz has taken steps to create an emergency "warming center" program that will provide the most basic of protections from the rain and cold on nights that are either wet or have near- freezing temperatures. A volunteer organization is working in the Santa Cruz area to implement a similar Warming Center program for this winter season. While I think it is unrealistic for the City to take on providing all of the facilities that might be needed for a "warming center" program, I think we can be one of the partners in this. I propose that the City Council direct our City staff to identify a suitable facility (or facilities) to be used for up to 10 nights of warming center use this winter season at no charge-- contingent on the warming center volunteer project identifying other locations/facilities that will commit to sharing in this effort by providing 30 nights of warming center use. (It's my understanding that the volunteer effort has already identified 20 nights of facility use from private organizations.) Of course, city staff would set reasonable standards for the use of city facilities and the city's offer of use of these facilities would be withdrawn if those standards are not met.

4) Amend the current camping ordinance to remove references to "sleep" and "sleeping" and "covering up with blankets." I realize that some will argue that this will encourage even more camping in our city...and therefore result in even greater improper waste disposal and

environmental damage. This does not have to be the case. Any person that sleeps outside and is also making a mess is committing other violations of city ordinances and this suggested amendment would do nothing to discourage enforcement of those ordinances. In fact, if the city council made it clear that waste problems and environmental damage are a priority for enforcement rather than sleeping, we could actually send the message that we are going to focus on the real impacts of camping rather than on the natural survival activity of sleeping.

5) I propose that the City Council indicate that the City will seek a partner organization with experience working on homelessness to set up a pilot permit program for local residents living in vehicles (limited to 25 vehicles). City cooperation on this pilot program will be conditioned on a rule that the vehicle of each participant be registered at an address with a Santa Cruz zip code (95060-65). It would also be required that permissible parking locations be away from residences and be dispersed throughout the community and that the partner organization provide outreach services to the program participants. I believe this pilot would best be implemented in conjunction with the RV permitting program under development by city staff under previous city council direction.

6) I recommend that the City of Santa Cruz take a neutral and open stance on the question of creating a small, pilot camping area for people unable to access any other form of shelter. Personally, I think this kind of “outdoor shelter” is fraught with likely problems of significant magnitude. Santa Cruz’s earlier attempt at this kind of camping space turned out to provide a place for individuals to prey on the most vulnerable people in need of safe shelter. This does not mean that a genuinely safe and well-managed camping space would not have value—it means that a community organization with proven capacity to manage this kind of project would have to put a complete project plan together (including a legal and workable physical location). I think the City should indicate a willingness to permit such a program but not be partner in operating it.

7) Direct our City Manager to include a proposal for City participation in the funding of the County's Homelessness Coordinator position in the 2016-17 City Budget. (There would not be a formal decision to provide funding in the near future—just a decision to consider this participation in the context of other budget decisions next June.)

8) Engage in a process to determine what would be the city’s “fair share” of homeless services in relation to our county and our region. I believe we need to stop making our decisions on these issues based on the unwillingness of some other communities to take on any significant responsibility on this issue. If every community used that standard, we could pretend that it would be justified to do nothing. In light of the fact that hundreds of individuals living on our streets are “locals” by any standard, I believe we need to decide what we are willing to do for those individuals and build our funding commitments around this. It would also create a starting point for inviting our neighboring jurisdictions to do the same.

9) Participate with other agencies (public and nonprofit) to evaluate and consider the best use of the facilities located at 115 Coral Street. Changes to HSC's funding are having an impact not only on their programs but on the programs run by the County Health Department and the River Street Shelter operated by Encompass Community Services. We cannot afford to let any of those facilities to be underused when the need to address homelessness remains so high. The City and the community would be well-served to work with its partners on rethinking the use of those facilities.

Of course, others in the community have different proposals and suggestions and I will consider those approaches as others consider mine.

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When we address an issue as complex, controversial and persistent as homelessness it's not unusual for there to be some avoidance of one or more elements of the issue—elements that probably fit well under the tag "the elephant in the room."

In Santa Cruz, I believe the biggest "elephant" is the behavior of a handful of high profile homelessness activists. (Note: these are homelessness activists-- the most notable among them are not themselves homeless.) Years of boisterous and offensive behavior have caused me to avoid dealing with some aspects of local homelessness issues. I imagine this is also the experience of some other local elected officials. Anyway, I am not proud of my choice to avoid some of these issues. I have allowed what I see as the poisonous behavior of a very small number of people to keep me from taking on some truly important issues.

With this letter, I am trying to move in a new direction: no longer allowing this behavior by others to interfere with my efforts to address difficult aspects of homelessness as a community issue. I hope others in the community will join me in this new approach.

I also want to be clear here that I don't consider my assertion that some of the activists have behaved badly as a rejection of all of the substantive concerns those individuals have raised about local homelessness policy. Just because some of them behave poorly, does not mean all of their ideas or assertions are incorrect.

I also want to suggest that there may well be a second elephant: the persistent avoidance by local government of the most difficult QUESTIONS related to homelessness. Here are some of the questions that really must no longer be avoided, especially in light of the Grand Jury's recent report on homeless services and the emergency shelter crisis:

- Where is a person who attended Santa Cruz High 15 years ago and who is now broke and troubled and living on the streets supposed to sleep tonight?
- Where will we suggest that each of the several hundred unsheltered individuals in the Santa Cruz area spend the night when it starts raining hard?
- What public purpose is served when an unsheltered, impoverished person gets a citation for

sleeping outside? Is that kind of citation having any positive impact on the homelessness problem we have?

-What is our city's "fair share" of services? How many emergency shelter beds are appropriate for us to have in a city of our size with our level of homelessness?

--And, finally, a couple of specific questions for any official who includes in their response to these kinds of questions: "it is up to some other level of government or some other entity to deal with homelessness." What do we imagine homeless individuals should do while we wait for those other levels of government to step up? If those other entities are not doing their fair share, who should pay the price for that failure? Should it be those entities and their leaders or should it be the individuals who are struggling to survive without a home or a place of shelter?

Lest any reader believe that I am pointing the finger at someone else to deflect from my own responsibility—I will simply say that I am as responsible as anyone in this community for our failure to address our lack of shelter and our over-reliance on law enforcement and the criminal justice system to manage homelessness. I have been a direct participant in many of my City's decisions on homelessness. I have failed to adequately answer many of the questions I am posing. I've come to realize that I am not fulfilling my commitment to compassion and compassionate action if I don't address these issues more thoroughly and engage others to join in that work with me

I encourage others to join me in making a new commitment to address these issues more directly and effectively. I'm looking for new partners in this work. I'm also ready to engage in frank conversations on these issues with people of good will—even if we have disagreements on any particular policy or funding approach. We have so much work left to do.

Don

[P.S. This is the fourteenth draft of this letter. I apologize for its length. I continue to wish I could communicate on this set of issues more clearly and make every point more completely. However, at some point, I have to say it's "good enough" to launch what I hope will be fresh discussion and break out of some of the places we've been stuck.]"

Dear Ann

I would like to pass my comments on to you for the Study Session on Monday. Adam and I were at the meeting on Tuesday and although I did not stand up to speak, I thought that I might send you this email. Adam and I own a Bed and Breakfast in Ashland. We have owned her for just over a year and our B and B is on North Main Street.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

It has been a 19 months since we purchased our Bed and Breakfast on North Main Street in Ashland, Oregon.

We fell in love with Ashland in March 2014 and subsequently relocated from Zimbabwe, Africa for what we considered a better life than the one that we were living. As you may or may not know, the political situation in Zimbabwe has been fraught with turmoil, corruption and much much more. We were living in a home that was surrounded by a six foot wall, alarmed both outside and in. We dare not leave our doors and windows open. We drove with our possessions hidden under the cars seats. If we stopped at traffic lights we were constantly vigilant, worried that a brick may or may not be thrown through our windows or that our vehicle was hijacked. We were constantly harrassed by street vendors and people begging wherever we walked or drove. We dare not stop at our gates late at night and we constantly checked the areas around us. We did not walk anywhere especially after darkness fell. This is a way of life for the people in Zimbabwe. The police are corrupt and we were not able to depend on them unless they were paid a bribe.

Coming to America opened a whole new world up to us. For the first time in my life I felt secure, safe and protected. Freedom and Choice - that is what America has offered us!

Being able to walk into Ashland in the early or late evenings and to feel safe was as amazing feeling for us. We would sit in the Plaza this time last year and watch the sun go down over Lithia Park and peopewatch. Coming back to the B and B that was open to the street with lights glowing and warmth pouring through the windows gave us an incredible feeling of finally being "home". We would sit on our porch in the evenings and watch the world go by with a glass of wine in hand.

Suddenly in the last few months we noticed a gradual change with the increase of travelers coming through Ashland. We found people camping out at our neighbors B and B across the street under her trees. On two occasions at least. We called our neighbor and reported it to her. A third time we were on our porch and travelers came to ask for money. Another time we had to call the police whilst we watched a man across the street fall and was unable to get up. We were concerned for his safety as he was in the driveway of our neighbors B and B. It took more than an hour for the police to arrive and to remove him. We discovered that our water was being used during the evening and we had to remove our hosepipes and lock the faucets. Our water bill dropped \$200 that next month. My husband discovered someone sitting on a porch just the other evening. When asked what he was doing there he ran off. There are people sleeping in the doorway of the Chiropractor and also behind the hedges of the Church.

Sadly as only I can, I have started to think ahead. We need to protect our property and more importantly we need to protect our guests and our business. We have installed more lighting in all public areas, I have planted a hedge on the perimeter of our property as I certainly do not want another wall to surround me and we are now also in the process of installing outside cameras. This is our livelihood - our business and we certainly cannot afford to have it affected by the lack of safety for our guests. Our guests tend to let other people into the house thinking that they are guests and that it is safe to do so. Imagine if it was not! We have therefore taken to asking them not to let anyone into the house if they happen to hear the doorbell.

The saddest part of all of this is that I see a difference in downtown Ashland itself in just the past six months. The streets are more littered and around the Chamber Area the smell is shocking. I can smell cigarette smoke, pot smoke and dog faeces as well as human urine. What on earth are we doing - we are a tourist town! I understand the legal rights of the travelers, but then we, the people that live here, work here, pay taxes, look after our community have rights as well. As I repeatedly heard that it is all about respect and it would appear that we have a large element of travelers that have no respect at all for all that we hold dear. When I hear stories of people picking up after these travelers that have departed I am shocked and disheartened at that total lack of respect that they have for us Ashlanders.

Overall my greatest concern is the loss of our returning visitors to Ashland who may go elsewhere:

What is a Customer - it is an individual who is provided with a service/product for a fee.

How important is a Customer - a customer is NOT dependent on us, we are dependent on him.

Customer Service is not a quick fix. It is a habit, an ongoing commitment to Excellence.

This is what we need to aim for constantly in Ashland to ensure the survival of both our town and our local business.

CUSTOMERS EAT WITH THEIR EYES & NOSE
WHAT THEY SEE DETERMINES
WHETHER OR NOT THEY COME BACK!

Therefore what do we need to do to help protect our future and the future of Ashland? How can we fix this?

Thank you.

Susan Lemon

541 951 7317

Good evening Ashland City Council.

I apologize for not attending tonight's meeting. I recently moved to Portland from Ashland, but I hope you will still consider the words I have written.

As someone who has lived in Ashland for a good deal of my adult life, I have my fair share of "downtown horror stories". Some of the harassment I've been the recipient of has been mildly humorous ("adopt me pretty lady!"), confusing ("Hey, you look like you could star in the Porn Version of 'The Hunger Games'"), gross ("How often do you masturbate? Can I help?"), and downright threatening ([Transient, to me, on phone] "Hey, you talking to your boyfriend? I'm gonna kill him up so you'll fuck me instead.") For ignoring these advances, I've been called a "bitch" more times I can possibly count.

Calling the police does little- they often want the caller to confront the harasser. The burden of finding a solution is not the responsibility of the victim. When I first spoke to this issue at a City Council Meeting a year ago, Councilwoman Voisin recommended victims of street harassment go through training to better personally deal with these confrontations. Not only does this wrongly indicate that it is the behavior of the victim needs to change, but it reinforces the notion that the behavior of the transient community is acceptable. Councilwoman Voisin also suggested that hiring a school bullying counselor to talk to victims. Interestingly, I was a school bullying counselor for over a year in 2010. I travelled all over Oregon performing in a theatrical version of "Three Billy Goats Gruff", wore a goat costume, and thought children from kindergarten to high school about the dangers of bullying. We did good work, and I think we made a lasting impression to the kids. I'm not belittling the message, but simply put that approach does not apply here. These transients are not 5th graders making fun of a classmate for wearing glasses. These are grown individuals who, to be perfectly honest, should know better.

When I lived in Ashland, I was a manager of a downtown store. What's more disturbing than myself being on the receiving end of this abuse is seeing how this behavior affects the young women who worked with me--young women I felt obligated to protect. Seeing them afraid to work at night, choosing to illegally jay-walk instead of use a crosswalk surrounded by transients, and be reduced to tears after being on the receiving end of threatening behavior is sickening. Additionally, the store I work at is a favorite campsite for the transient community. Aside from the obvious concern of trespassing, we have the additional liability of the refuse that is left behind. In the three years we have been at this location, we have found



the mundane (alcohol bottles, graffiti, food containers, clothing and bedrolls), to the bizarre (used sex paraphernalia, designer handbags and stolen items), to the dangerous (drugs, human feces, vomit, and uncontained gasoline). Even with filing reports with the police and the additional police patrol that we have authorized on our property, this issue has not subsided.

Aside from working downtown, I also lived downtown for over a year. My condo was not immune from many of the same issues I described above. Aside from the relatively straightforward problem of litter and refuse, there was a more troubling problem that I couldn't solve with Windex and a trash can. I've already detailed the amount of harassment I received on a daily (hourly, even) basis, so imagine my concern when I realized that the people who spent the day publicly announcing that they wanted to fuck me were camping on public property not 40 feet from my front door. They had easy access to all my windows and my front door. I lived alone, and while I'm not paranoid, I'm also not stupid. When police didn't show up, I actually had to call my father at the dead of night to tell them to leave. When the police showed up, more often than not I was told that the transients "weren't camping, they were just 'hanging out'". Sometimes the police showed up and the campers had hid, leaving their bedrolls and pack behind. In this case, I was told was nothing the officer could do, since there was no perpetrator. While that response is reasonable on its own, when it is spread over the year I lived there, it's pretty meaningless. For legitimate reasons, I didn't feel safe, and for less legitimate reasons, the Ashland Police Department did very little to address the issue.

I don't have a ready solution to this very complex situation. I would simply recommend that it not be down played, it not be ignored, and that it be seen as a problem for all of Ashland, not just the downtown community. Some of the language I've quoted is vulgar and some of the scenes beyond distasteful. Before they are written off as "shock value", imagine them as the motto for our town. Ashland touts itself as being welcoming to tourists, the perfect place to raise a family, and a wonderful place to retire. That doesn't quite ring true when you consider what I've described above. Downtown Ashland is vibrant and full of life, and the city has a responsibility to keep it safe for all the town's residents, transient and non-transient alike.

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