

Council Business Meeting

November 21, 2017

Title: Staff Report on Last Season's Winter Shelters
From: John Karns Interim City Administrator
John.karns@ashland.or.us

Summary:

At the Business Meeting on September 19, 2017, Council requested that staff present a report on the winter shelter activities of last season. This report was originally scheduled for presentation to Council at the [May 15, 2017](#), Study Session but was postponed due to time constraints. This report contains basically the same information that was on the May 15th agenda but also includes response reports to Pioneer Hall from APD and AF&R.

The operation of the winter shelter at Pioneer Hall, while successful, has produced some challenges as outlined in the comments from staff (see May 15 agenda packet). These include damage to the facility, inappropriate behavior by some shelter guests and unsuitable interactions between the public and shelter guests.

Actions, Options, or Potential Motions:

This item is for information only.

Staff Recommendation:

N/A

Resource Requirements:

The City pays roughly \$400 per month for general liability insurance for using a city facility as a winter shelter. Money is not specifically budgeted for this purpose in the biennial budget and the cost is currently absorbed by the Insurance Fund.

Policies, Plans and Goals Supported:

5. Seek opportunities to enable all citizens to meet basic needs

Background and Additional Information:

Current the City provides Pioneer Hall for scheduled winter shelters on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday nights staffed by volunteers from the Rogue Valley Unitarian Fellowship, Temple Emek Shalom, the First Congregational United Church of Christ, and the South Mountain Friends Meeting. Additionally, a shelter is provided at the First Presbyterian Church on Mondays and at Trinity Episcopal Church on Wednesdays. There is no regularly scheduled shelter on Friday or Saturday nights.

Attachments:

- Response report to Pioneer Hall from APD

- Response report to Pioneer Hall from AF&R
- [May 15, 2017 Council packet](#)

APD Response Report to Pioneer Hall 73 Winburn Way

	11/01/16 - 04/01/17	11/01/15 - 04/01/16
CASES PULLED		
DOC	2	0
Detox	0	0
Drug	0	1
Found Property	1	0
Harassment	0	1
Hit and Run	0	1
Mental Hold	1	0
Open Container	0	1
Theft	1	2
Scattering Rubbish	0	1
Suspicious	0	0
Warrant	1	0
Total	6	7
CALL SUMMARY		
Assault	1	0
Assist Medical	9	2
Assist Public	3	3
DOC	9	5
Domestic	0	1
Drug	0	1
Expat	1	0
Follow Up	1	0
Foot Patrol	4	0
Found Property	2	0
Hit and Run	0	1
Liq. Law	0	1
Miscellaneous	1	0
Theft	0	2
Traffic	1	0
Trespass	3	3
Suspicious	1	1
Suicide/Threats	0	2
Warrant	2	0
Well Check	2	1
Total	40	23

AF&R Medical Responses to Pioneer Hall – 73 Winburn Way

11/01/15 - 04/01/16 (3 Total Calls)

Nature of Call	Patient Transported?
Poisoning	Yes
Leg Pain	Yes
General Illness	No

11/01/16 - 04/01/17 (9 Total Calls)

Nature of Call	Patient Transported?
Nausea & Vomiting	Yes
Diabetic	Yes
Diabetic	No
Breathing Problems	Yes
Leg Pain	Yes
Psych	No
Altered Level of Consciousness	No (arrested by APD)
General Illness	Yes
Hip Pain	Yes

Council Study Session

May 15, 2017

Title:	Discussion Regarding Winter and Emergency Shelters	
Item Type:	Discussion	
Requested by Council?	Yes – Mayor Stromberg	
From:	John Karns	Interim City Administrator
	John.karns@ashland.or.us	

Discussion Questions:

Mayor Stromberg requested that the winter and emergency shelter at Pioneer Hall be discussed during a Council study session. Some discussion questions may be:

- What is the efficacy of using Pioneer Hall as a winter and emergency shelter?
- Is there a better location for a winter and emergency shelter that would serve shelter guests better?
- How should the challenge of identifying volunteers to staff the shelters be addressed?
- How should the damage to Pioneer Hall caused by the facility being used as a shelter be addressed?
- How should the behavioral issues of the shelter guests be addressed?
- Does the City want to renew the emergency shelter contract with OHRA?

Resource Requirements:

The City pays roughly \$400 per month for general liability insurance for using a city facility as a winter shelter. Money is not specifically budgeted for this purpose in the biennial budget and the cost is currently absorbed by the Insurance Fund.

On December 20, 2016, the Council approved a contract to OHRA in the amount of \$3850 to staff an emergency shelter on nights that met the criteria for such. The contract provided for up to five nights of emergency shelter activation.

There are as yet undetermined costs for maintenance and repairs to Pioneer Hall.

Suggested Next Steps:

Council should determine where the winter and emergency shelter should be located, what community organizations should contribute, and how to manage the shelter operations next season.

Policies, Plans and Goals Supported:

5. *Seek opportunities to enable all citizens to meet basic needs*

Background and Additional Information:

For the past five years, the City has made Pioneer Hall available for a winter shelter for the homeless, staffed by volunteers from The Rogue Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

(RVUUF) and Temple Emek Shalom (Temple). In 2016, Mayor Stromberg was contacted by Bob Morse representing the Ashland First Congregational United Church of Christ (UCC) and the South Mountain Friends Meeting (SMFM) who requested an additional night of shelter to be staffed by volunteers from their two churches and on December 20, 2016, Council agreed to the additional night.

Also on December 20, 2016, Council approved a contract with OHRA to hire staff to coordinate the running of an emergency shelter on nights when the weather met the emergency shelter criteria.

Attachments:

- 2016-17 Ashland Winter Shelter Summary from Heidi Parker
- Report on Sunday Night Winter Shelter at Pioneer Hall from Vanessa Houk
- Spreadsheet of issues submitted to Parks and City staff
- Photos related to issues submitted to staff

Additional Links:

[December 20, 2016 Minutes](#)

2016-17 ASHLAND WINTER HOMELESS SHELTER SUMMARY

The 2016-17 Winter Overnight Homeless Shelter season officially ended April 16th 2017. This was our biggest year yet of providing a legal, warm, safe place for the unhoused in our community to get a much-needed night of rest.

This was a massive under-taking! In total, our all-volunteer shelter program provided 112 nights of shelter (8 of those Emergency or Special Shelters) for 35-52 people each night from mid-November to mid-April, utilizing more than 120 volunteers, with at least 2 volunteers spending each night. An additional 119 volunteers (averaging 3 volunteers/night) helped prepare and serve food, welcome and sign-in guests, or helped launder blankets or clean up.

In January of this year we began offering a 5th night of weekly shelter (Sunday-Thursday) co-sponsored by the South Mountain Friends Meeting (Quakers), and the Congregational Church, in partnership with the City of Ashland to provide the Pioneer Hall Sunday Night Shelter location.

Additional shelters were offered at the following locations each week:

- Monday nights at the Presbyterian Church
- Tuesday nights at Pioneer Hall, co-sponsored by Temple Emek Shalom, Unitarian Universalists, & the City of Ashland
- Wednesday nights at Trinity Episcopal Church
- Thursday nights at Pioneer Hall, sponsored by Temple Emek Shalom, Unitarians & the City of Ashland.

We could not have done all this without our amazing network of volunteers who selflessly contributed their time and energy in service to the most needy in our community. Some volunteers spent the night, while others brought in food or helped serve, clean up, or simply sat with our guests to quietly listen and share a warm beverage.

Additionally we would like to express our gratitude to all the sponsoring agencies, churches, synagogues, and the City of Ashland, including: Trinity Episcopal, Temple Emek Shalom, the Congregational Church, First Presbyterian Church, Quakers, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Food Angels, The Ashland Food Bank, City of Ashland Police, The City of Ashland Parks & Rec. Dept., Jackson Co. Health & Mental Health for help training our volunteers, and all the community volunteers who donated food, clothes, or their precious time in the service of other community members.

We are having a Volunteer Appreciation Pot Luck dinner on Wednesday, May 17 at 6:30 p.m. at the Trinity Episcopal Church. All are welcome to attend.

Heidi Parker, Winter Shelter Volunteer Coordinator
Phone: 541-482-1520 /email: parkershames@gmail.com

Report on Sunday night winter shelter in Pioneer Hall

Submitted by Vanessa Houk

Dear City Councilors,

We started the Sunday night shelter on January 1st of this year with a partnership between two faith based congregations, the UCC church (First Congregational United Church of Christ) and the Quaker Friends. That gave us a strong pool of volunteers to draw from and during the shelter season we averaged between 20 to 35 guests per night who stayed over, as well as another 10-20 who came inside to eat. Aside from the core group of overnight volunteers, we had approximately 15 more who brought in food and provided other forms of support as needed. For example, one of the things I saw as a need was clean, dry socks after stormy weather and a number of times volunteers stepped forward with donations like that. Trying to get some rest with soggy feet was not going to happen on my watch.

The first thing I hope you hear is how grateful people were for the opportunity for shelter. I hope to pass along the deep and sincere gratitude that was often shared with me.

I had a unique outlook since Jason and I also host the community meal on Friday nights (also held in Pioneer Hall), so I spent time with the homeless community just before they were losing shelter for the weekend and then again when they were re-sheltered on Sunday evenings. From that advantage I was able to make some observations that I would like to share with all of you.

One of the things I saw is that on Friday nights people were jovial and there were few, if any behavior issues. There is a family like atmosphere that we all create there and it's known to be a very safe place for everyone. When I saw people again on Sunday evening and compared their emotional and physical state to how they were on Friday, I observed that they came in on Sundays and seemed to decompensate. Often they were cranky with one another from lack of sleep and a large percentage of them would bunk down as soon as possible, too exhausted to eat. While there was a calm atmosphere at the Sunday shelter, it was not a place where families could be sheltered.

When the homeless community was well rested on Friday evenings, they often seemed like different people. Let me give you a concrete example of that. There's a young man who exudes a rough exterior. He's often disheveled looking and if I was wearing my judgiest pants, I might say that on the outside he looks kind of scary. I've gotten to know him from the Peace Meal and I've watched his behavior soften considerably over the past year. On many Fridays I've seen him correct his own behaviors so that he's acting in a kinder manner. When I saw him on Sundays, he was more likely to be back to those old behaviors. What I also observed was how the rest of the community has changed and now works together to address and correct negative behaviors. For example, if he was quick tempered, aside from having to face me or one of my volunteers, there would be several houseless people who would speak to him, problem

solve and quickly set him straight again. This is still happening when other people are around him today. It carried over and I am seeing how the community uses what they observed in the shelters to keep the peace out on the streets.

Besides creating a space for people to rest and stabilize, the shelter program is providing safe space for our most vulnerable communities. We provide safety by addressing aggressive behavior and banning violent and predatory offenders. We are able to influence behavior by providing positive reinforcement and models for better relationships between guests, volunteers and our community.

The availability of meals at shelters have proven to be critical for managing guests with diabetes, preventing costly emergency room visits. Alternatively, volunteers at the shelters has been able to offer support to disabled and injured guests, relying on emergency services when necessary.

Since the shelter has ended, I've also observed the impact of the lack of shelter has on the community. The bare bones shelter, held in different locations throughout the week (Pioneer (Sunday) First Presbyterian Church (Monday), Pioneer (Tuesday), Trinity Episcopal (Wednesday) and Pioneer (Thursday)), provided a sense of stability beyond basic shelter. I know of several people who found and held down jobs because they were sheltered this winter. I know of some who used the shelter as a way to stabilize so they could apply to SOU and know of at least one young man who has a great shot at rebuilding his life with that continued education. I saw how having a place where they can check in with other people helped their mental states and for those exhibiting mental illness, this was particularly true and over the course of the sheltered nights I could see improvements because they were getting some of their other basic needs met.

Our winter shelter program provides safety, structure, socialization and improved decision making skills and that's carried back out on the streets with positive results.

Thank you for your part in making that happen.

DATE	ISSUE
3/16/2015	<p>We've been finding many things outside of both the Community Center and Pioneer Hall that are either unsafe or inappropriate for young children. There are often cigarette butts and miscellaneous trash around the buildings and on two different occasions children have found glass pipes on the ground. Is it possible to have parks personnel do an early morning check on the days that Pioneer Hall is used as a homeless shelter? -John Muir</p>
1/18/2017	<p>"Just a reminder that before exiting the building completely, we need a better effort to in cleaning up the cigarette butts on the front and side patios at Pioneer Hall as well as in front of the community center. We obviously know it is happening but please make a bigger effort for cleanup of the butts. We have groups coming in and out of those facilities often and not enough staff time to continuously clean up the mess. We are looking into some better signage, but that may be awhile" -Email from Parks to Sharon and John</p>
1/31/2017	<p>I have had several citizens approach and express concerns for Pioneer Hall. The fragile historic nature of the building was cited in reference to the concerns. Concern -The use of the building as a homeless shelter is creating various nuisance problems and worries for potential damage to the new brick work on the exterior patio area as well as concerns for a fire of the building itself and the adjacent Community Center. * See attached photos. I did not include a lot of pictures but can provide more if needed. The nice lady I spoke with most recently was concerned that the building could be burned down due to the number of smokers in the group allowed to stay there overnight. She also mentioned the marijuana smoking in addition to tobacco. My observations is that there is a large number of cigarette butts left on the property and on the sidewalk and street after this group uses the facility. There was what appears to be a butt can left behind. This area is a no smoking area. I am copying the police chief in this e-mail due to the violations of the city ordinances mentioned above(marijuana and no smoking in downtown area). Rachel this is being sent to you because of your awesome work with the Calle and my belief you would know how to best address this. It appears that the actual use of the building itself housing groups of travelers is the primary cause of the problem. Pioneer falls under Parks if I remember correctly? It is my intent to advise you of the reoccurring problem so that the use itself can be assessed and reviewed by your department. I remember in the past that if a group using Pioneer Hall was not following rules or causing damage to the property there may be a refusal to allow future use of the facility to the same group. For instance if a group was playing music on Friday nights and leaving the facility as shown in the pictures Parks Department has in the past declined to make the hall available a second time. <u>Solution</u> - recommend an alternative site for this type of use. Due to the historic nature of the Pioneer Hall and its fragile condition (is susceptible to fire -a wooden log cabin) perhaps an alternative location could be identified and a better solution to assist these travelers</p>
3/21/2017	<p>Renter informed us that there were still people sleeping outside of Pioneer Hall when she arrived at her reservation time of 9:30 am this morning. The renter also stated that someone had dropped off a quantitiy of food in front of the building, evidently as a donation for the hungry.</p>
3/28/2017	<p>"You asked me to look into the impact of losing a long-time renter. Tina Clark has rented the community center for her ballet program since 2007. She recently spoke with me and has found her own studio to rent and operate her pilates program as well as her ballet program (which has been the goal all along). She has appreciated working with APRC. She spoke about the problems that have occurred around the Community Center and Pioneer Hall with the transients "hanging out" daily in and around those facilities. She said she has seen it get worse within the last 2 years and has had lots of parents of her students complain to her regarding feeling unsafe. She has been in situations (as we all have) where transients are loitering on the sidewalk right outside of her program, smoking etc. and has even had to call the police on multiple occasions. If APRC is going to continue to manage these two facilities (Community Center and Pioneer Hall) on behalf of the City of Ashland, rent them out to the public I don't think it mixes well to have a homeless shelter next to an ice rink and a community center that we are trying to make available to general public. The revenue impact is about \$3500 per year for losing Tina Clark as a renter." - Email from Rachel Dials to Michael Black</p>

DATE	ISSUE
4/9/2017	<p>Renter reserved CC but needed to access an item that is stored in Pioneer Hall. She had rented CC from 6:30-10pm for an Eagle Scout ceremony. She went over to PH to get a flag and there was a large group of homeless men smoking marijuana outside Pioneer Hall. They are not meant to arrive before 7:30pm but were congregated there, and they are not allowed to smoke within 10' of the door but they were doing that too. She had a few young Scouts with her and felt very uncomfortable and unsafe. One of the men asked her if he could take a few minutes of her time and she had to let him know she did not want to talk. As a result of her discomfort, she didn't immediately put the key back into the lock box as they were watching her, and she planned to have her husband put the key back after they were done in the Community Center. The shelter volunteers therefore arrived and did not see the key. Everything was resolved but there was tension on both sides. This renter also said that it doesn't feel safe and she wouldn't want women, especially young women, in that area.</p>
4/12/2017	<p>APRC staff found a sharps container with about 6 needles in it at Pioneer Hall after the Shelter cleared out this morning (4/12/17). Staff is concerned that items like this are being left in the building and the reason they are being left in the building. Rachel sent an email to Sharon and John.</p>
4/13/2017	<p>"Had some camping on the bricks this morning Pioneer Hall, woman came in and complained. We get calls or walk-ins most mornings after the hall is used as a shelter in regards to marijuana use, alcohol, littering, dogs running loose, parking violations, abandoned property etc. Some citizens just want to come in and complain about the use of the Pioneer Hall as a shelter, some of these nuisance calls get reported to police." --Reported by Kevin Flynn.</p>
4/18/2017	<p>"This morning, 7:00 a.m., I found a group of individuals camping (which occurs on a daily basis) in the courtyard of Pioneer Hall. They used the bike rack as a temporary shelter along with the outside entry way carpets. We will remove the bike rack today, which is portable, and find a better place for it to be used. Also, found the new breaker box was broken into and possibly damaged, I'm sure it was to find an outlet. Several individuals this morning had the sump pump to the building unplugged and were using it to charge their cell phones. I asked them to replace the plug and move on to a different location. We will have Mike Cook install a locking outlet cover in that location and repair any damage to the breaker panel. Frustration builds when I see the new landscape and new equipment on the building being damaged or abused. Over 30 new plants have not survived due to dogs and individuals walking in the planter beds, along with large amounts of dog feces. Parks maintenance crews will continue to be professional and courteous while cleaning the courtyard and we are planning to clean that area on a more aggressive schedule due to the damage to the plants and landscape, including the new rock retaining wall. We have placed signs asking to stay out of the shrub beds and keep dogs out, also." --Email to Kaylea Kathol from Bill Miller; cc Jeff McFarland; Mike Cook; Thomas McBartlett III; Joe Hyde</p>
4/18/2017	<p>"I'm writing to start documenting the deteriorating situation with the winter shelter at Pioneer Hall. I expect you may have heard about the vandalism and harassment of City employees that has been going on at Pioneer Hall courtyard. Lately we've seen the destruction intensify as more and more shelter users spend entire mornings and afternoons in the courtyard. In the email below, Bill details the damages done last night/this morning (see above). It appears their destruction has escalated from vandalism of landscaping to structural and electrical components of the courtyard and the building. Damaging the stone seat wall and breaking into an energized panel is especially problematic. I called the APD Dispatch this morning to have them removed as recommended to me by Warren Hensman, and will continue to do so every day this continues. Please know that my intent in this email is to raise awareness and establish documentation of the problem, as I realize that there may be little you can do in this situation." --Email to Michael Black from Kaylea Kathol; cc John Karns, Mike Faught, Rachel Dials</p>

1/31/2017 – Email from Code Compliance to Parks



Here are a couple of photos where they've been taking mortar and stones out of the new seat wall. I don't have any photos of the recent landscape damage.

