



DRAFT MINUTES CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Monday, March 2, 2020

Council Chambers, 1175 E. Main Street

Mayor Stromberg called the Study Session to order at 5:30 p.m.

Councilors' Slattery, Graham, Akins and Seffinger were present. Councilor Jensen and Rosenthal were absent.

Mayor Stromberg gave an overview of the meeting.

Seffinger spoke that she would like to add coronavirus information to the Agenda.

Akins thanked Council and the City for putting this meeting together. She gave a brief overview on what will be discussed tonight.

City Attorney David Lohman spoke regarding legal issues for the Boise Case. He spoke regarding Ordinances that make unpermitted camping on public property a crime which is not what Ashlands Ordinances do. He spoke that this is not the time to discuss a legal debate but rather a policy discussion about feasible and effective services for the homeless.

1. Public Input (15 minutes, maximum)

Diane Werich– Ashland – Spoke regarding using the possibility of taking the Marijuana money out of affordable housing trust fund and suggested to not do so. She spoke that defunding this would be a giant step backwards.

Bill Zentner – Ashland – Spoke that he works at a church helping with community meals. He spoke that currently there are 3 nights that food is not available for the homeless. He spoke to the shrinking overnight parking situation in Ashland. He spoke regarding the percentages of Ashland residents he works with. He explained that homelessness can happen to anyone spoke to the importance of this issue.

Katherine Foster – Ashland – Spoke that she volunteers in a number of capacities for the homeless community. She spoke that the City needs to do more regarding this issue. She spoke that Eugene and Medford have created tiny houses and suggested Ashland do the same. She spoke that Ashland is letting individuals, churches and non-profits carry the responsibility alone that the City needs to share. She spoke that volunteers and churches will burn out. She spoke that extreme weather shelters need to come affect when the weather is 30 degrees not 20 degrees. She spoke that the City needs a Pioneer Hall that is available more than one lunchtime a week.

Tom Marr - Ashland – Thanked Council and Staff for having the meeting. He spoke that he was at a meeting about homeless situation 10 years ago at SOU and one of the speakers spoke saying the first thing in solving this problem recognizing that this is a part of our community. He spoke regarding constitutional gray areas. He spoke regarding the right way to treat people. He explained that homelessness is a growing issue Country wide. He spoke in hopes that we can work together and support each other.

Amy Stewart – Ashland – She spoke that she operates a food program to offer food for kids on

weekends. She spoke regarding the severity of hunger issues. She spoke that many schools have approached her to start a similar program. Walker started a program and some classes started making soup in class specifically so kids could eat. She spoke regarding homelessness and the importance of working on this issue.

2. Homeless Services Presentation

Chad McComas – Rogue Retreat

Mr. McComas spoke regarding what needs to be done in this Community. He explained that there is a housing crisis in Oregon and the West Coast. He spoke that we are approximately 5000 affordable housing units short in Jackson County. He spoke that there we need to find creative ways to fix this issue. He spoke regarding the Kelly Shelter in Medford. He spoke that it is a full-time 24/7 shelter which has come about by Community efforts. He spoke that the people filling the beds also are given programs to help get their lives back together.

He spoke regarding the Tiny House Village in Medford.

He spoke that keeping people off the street is more expensive than getting people in a house. He discussed ways to start a plan and explained that it takes a lot of organizations working together to create something.

Vanessa Houk – Peace Meals

Thanked Staff and Council for holding this meeting. She spoke to the importance of creating solutions. She spoke regarding mental illness and shelter rules.

She spoke regarding the importance of the Emergency Weather Shelter. She spoke regarding Peace Meals. She spoke regarding hunger issues. She spoke to the importance of getting basic needs met to break the cycle of abuse and torture. She spoke to getting people in recovery programs.

She spoke that there are now 3 days a week where the homeless cannot get a free meal in Ashland and the struggles Peace Meals has had. She spoke to the importance of finding solutions to the issue.

Michelle Arellano - Options for Helping Residents of Ashland (OHRA)

Director of OHRA Michelle Arellano thanked Council and others for their work in the Community. She gave a background of OHRA

Ms. Arellano presented Council with a PowerPoint Presentation (*see attached*).

Items discussed were:

- Resource Center.
- Laundry Shower Trailer.
- Low Barrier Shelter.
- Behavioral & Occupancy Standards
- Year-Round case management.
- Operation from November to April.
- Housing.

- Benefits.
- Employment Program.
- Statistics of services provided.

OHRA Director Cass Sinclair – Spoke regarding the Resource Center.

Items discussed were:

- Resource center hours.
- Location.
- Statistics on how many appointments made.
- Statistics on how many services provided.

Diane De Ryss of OHRA spoke regarding the services provided.

Items discussed were:

- Laundry & Shower Trailer Statistics.
- Case Management Staff.
- What more can OHRA do.
- Volunteers.
- Funding.

Sam Engle – All Care

Mr. Engle thanked Council for opportunity to talk and people in audience for their passion.

He spoke that there is a long going on in Ashland. He gave a brief background of All-Care's point of view. He spoke to health and housing issues. He spoke regarding homelessness. He spoke regarding the Ashland poverty rate being higher than the Statewide average.

He spoke regarding having more shelters and more affordable housing. He spoke regarding Winter Shelter best practice.

He spoke regarding transitional housing.

Questions:

Council discussed food programs.

Council discussed shelter options, permitting, and locations.

Housing and Human Commission Chair Rich Rohde went over the Medford Homeless Action Plan.

Council discussed the 24/7 Shelter in Medford and how it is funded.

Seffinger spoke regarding planning for the homeless population during this time with the Coronavirus. She suggested having portable handwashing stations. She spoke in concern for the situation.

Council discussed the next steps on working on a plan to help the homeless.

The Study Session was adjourned at 7:01 PM

Respectfully Submitted by:

City Recorder Melissa Huhtala

Attest:

Mayor Stromberg

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