

WALLA WALLA CITY COUNCIL
Special Work Session Minutes
November 7, 2016

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pomraning called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. in the Fulton Community Room, 54 East Moore Street, Walla Walla.

Present: Councilmembers Jim Barrow, Barbara Clark, Jerry Cummins, Steve Moss, Tom Scribner, and Mayor Allen Pomraning.

Absent: Councilmember Dick Morgan.

City staff in attendance: City Manager Nabel Shawa, City Attorney Tim Donaldson, Public Works Director Ki Bealey, Finance Director Jean Teasdale, Police Chief Scott Bieber, Human Resources Director Pam Taylor, Technology Services Director Chris Owen, Parks Maintenance Supervisor Andy Coleman, Deputy Fire Chief Brad Morris, Public Works Operations Manager Mori Struve, Communications Manager David Brauhn, CDBG Coordinator Jennifer Beckmeyer, and City Clerk Kammy Hill.

2. ACTIVE AGENDA

A. City of Walla Walla Homeless Report.

City Manager Shawa reported:

- City of Walla Walla staff members are not experts on homelessness. Staff has been researching ways the City can impact homelessness.
- Homelessness is increasing throughout the region.
- Homeless funding is a statewide conflict topic between cities and counties.
- City and County perspectives:
 - Counties have statutory direction on social services provisions, but it is the cities where homeless citizens tend to congregate.
 - When homeless issues and conflicts arise in our City neighborhoods and businesses, City Hall and police are called to resolve it.
 - The City and County need to work together to respond to homeless challenges.
- How and why the Walla Walla homeless camp started and associated costs.
- Calls for emergency service associated with the camp.

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- Observations by Walla Walla County Homeless Coordinator Sierra Knutson.
- Tent city challenges and benefits.
- Observations by the Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless.
- Downtown Work Group, led by Councilmember Steve Moss, recommendations (not in any particular order):
 - Increase police presence in downtown area.
 - Expand downtown ambassador program.
 - Add anti-camping and no public sleeping/loitering ordinances to Municipal Code.
 - Lease Crawford Park to Valley Transit.
 - Create a downtown day center.
 - Conduct community education outreach efforts.
 - Establish a committee to continue evaluating and addressing issues.
- City leadership team review:
 - Homelessness is a chronic issue that will likely exist at some level.
 - Realistic goals include: supporting the County and Housing Authority in increasing supply of barrier free housing; work to minimize the number of people and duration experiencing homelessness; work to minimize the impact to businesses and neighborhoods.
- City leadership team recommendations (in priority order):
 - Support barrier free housing.
 - Support Walla Walla County's homeless and affordable housing efforts including ballot proposition for additional public funding.
 - Enact an ordinance restricting camping on public property except at specified sites for specified hours of operation. Current camp will remain until Council gives policy direction. Selection criteria for allowing camping at a specific site during restricted hours should include:
 - Minimizing impacts to neighborhoods and businesses.
 - City owned property.
 - Zoning/Comprehensive Plan compliance.
 - Access by public safety.
 - Proximity to social services.
 - Proximity to public transportation.
 - Existing natural or manmade containment to limit unauthorized expansion.

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- Staff's top four sites are eastern side of Fort Walla Walla Park; undeveloped property at the Mountain View Cemetery; existing camp site; or public parking lot at 5th and Sumach.
- Partner with a social service agency/non-profit organization for a day shelter during hours that camping is unavailable.
- Implement, through a social service agency/non-profit organization a work program similar to the Albuquerque, New Mexico model.
- Increase downtown police presence and engagement and continue ambassador program.
- Enact a sit/lie ordinance.
- Provide education and information for local resources and donor information.
- Seek ways to facilitate and increase affordable housing, including through the comprehensive plan update.

Staff is not suggesting that the Council take action immediately. These proposals will be refined over the next 60 to 90 days if Council is interested in pursuing them further. Staff is seeking Council direction by their February, 2017 Work Session.

There was discussion on:

- Limited duration camping and responsibilities for cleaning up the site.
- Implication on union contracts if the City implements a transient work program. City Manager Shawa indicated this program would be done through a social service agency.
- There have not been any preliminary costs developed for a day center. Council suggested a day center be combined with a temporary camp site. City Manager Shawa outlined the benefits of a limited duration camp area with the implementation of an anti-camping ordinance.
- One of the recommendations from the downtown working group is also the establishment of a committee to continue evaluating and addressing issues.
- Concerns with making the campsite temporary and expecting people to pack up tents and their possessions each morning.
- The 2016 point in time count of homeless is people that do not have shelter.

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- Identifying the services needed by people in the homeless camp to get them into housing; and identifying agencies able to operate a day center and associated costs.
- Proposed plan manages homelessness rather than reducing the underlying causes of homelessness and whether the City should be embarking on social services.
- The homeless plan focuses on barrier-free housing instead of providing people with a safe place to sleep at night.
- Whether there are adequate beds available for temporary shelter. Staff believes beds are available but are not accessed because of conditions that may be placed by the agency operating the facility.
- A number one priority should be additional funding for housing and services. Communities are experiencing these issues with homelessness because funding and programs have been closed or eliminated.

Mayor Pomraning invited public input. The following offered comments on homelessness and potential difficulties regarding the recommendation for restricting hours of camping:

- Amy David, homeless.
- Dorothy Knutson, 250 Rancho Villa.
- Debbie Dumont, Walla Walla County Community Health.
- Patricia Divine-Wilder, Alliance for the Homeless volunteer.
- Dan Clark, Alliance for the Homeless.
- Chuck Hindman, Alliance for the Homeless.
- Dennis Green, President of the Triple Creek homeowner's association.
- Annett Bovent, Hope Heals.
- Rebecca Robertson, homeless.
- Beth Call, 102 Otis Street.
- Annette Valaer-Craig, 1873 Rustic Place.

There were additional comments by Council on the recommendations. It was the consensus of a majority of Council to maintain the current status quo of the temporary homeless camp until further policy direction from the City Council is provided.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was discussed.

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4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:48 p.m.