

COTTAGE GROVE CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION MINUTES
FEBRUARY 7, 2022

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Jeff Gowing called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

ROLL CALL

City Recorder Mindy Roberts called the roll. The following were

PRESENT IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS: Mayor Jeff Gowing and Councilors Kenneth Michael Roberts, Chalice Savage and Mike Fleck

PRESENT VIA GOTOMEETING: Councilors Jon Stinnett, Greg Ervin and Candace Solesbee

COUNCIL ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS: City Manager Richard Meyers, City Recorder Mindy Roberts, and Police Chief Scott Shepherd

STAFF PRESENT VIA GOTOMEETING: Assistant to the City Manager Jake Boone and Public Works & Development Director Faye Stewart

CITY ATTORNEY: Carrie Connelly

MEDIA PRESENT: Cameron Reiten, KNND Radio and Damien Sherwood, The Sentinel

Mayor Gowing announced that Council is gathered to have a Homelessness discussion and that a packet of materials had been provided.

City Manager Richard Meyers said the City Attorney is on her way and will be at the meeting shortly. He mentioned to Councilors attending online that there were additional items at the bottom of the agenda under packet information, with sample ordinances and amendments that will be discussed later.

He said to start he wanted to go over some of the goals and thoughts from the previous meeting when Council talked about Homelessness. He said they are set up so that they can be accomplished in steps and Council can talk about how far to go with those steps.

He said some of the actions that Council had identified to accomplish the goals would be; First, to do whatever we need to do to comply with case law and the statutes. Secondly, to provide opportunities to break down the barriers that prevent members of our community from escaping from the cycles of homelessness. And the third goal was to open up housing opportunities that would stabilize and assist members of the community to develop skills needed to move to more permanent solutions to homelessness, and to seek ways to develop permanent supportive housing opportunities.

He said solving homelessness is not just building shelters and putting people in camps, we have to move them into housing somewhere, and get them into permanent supportive affordable housing.

He said what Council will talk about tonight is what the options are, what is happening in the community now, and where and how we can move from there.

He said Council will not be taking any comments tonight, this is an opportunity for Council to discuss. He said there are many paths that we can deviate down as we talk about homelessness solutions, criteria, and issues, but the idea is to get to the point of a focused discussion and then start taking comments.

He said Council had talked previously about Martin vs. Boise and the City Attorney Carrie Connelly has arrived to be able to answer any questions. He said basically, Martin vs. Boise says that an ordinance cannot violate the 8th Amendment in so far as it imposes criminal sanctions against homeless individuals for sleeping outdoors on public property when no alternative shelter is available. He added if there are places available, then the City can tell people that they cannot camp in the parks, but if those spaces are full and there is no place for them to go, they can camp on public property.

He said the Legislature passed two Bills in the year 2021. House Bill 3115 which basically says, if you have ordinances in place you can be sued even if you are not enforcing them, which means the City must clean up our ordinances as well as comply with Martin vs. Boise. He said House Bill 3124 will not be discussed too much tonight, it says that if you create a campground that has been in place for more than 72 hours, you must give notice if you are closing it.

Richard said he would like to breakdown some of the opportunities that the City may have. He said State Statute has now defined transitional housing, and cities can create such housing in their community. He said transitional housing can be anything inside an Urban Growth Boundary including vehicle camping, tents, and structures that is non-permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness. He said he has taken transitional housing and broken it down into two categories; the first being shelters for emergency, immediate sheltering with no barriers and the second being transitional housing with low barriers with responsibilities and developmental opportunities. He said the hope is that people will be able to move out of the traditional housing into permanent supportive housing, or low income affordable housing, and that the shelters or emergency, immediate facilities is to get people in and get them stabilized.

Richard shared an example from a few weeks ago, when a gentleman passed away in the campground at the Community Center from unstable housing and lack of attention to his diabetes and other health conditions. He said the Housing First model gets people stabilized in housing so that they can concentrate on things that need addressed like medical conditions, mental conditions, jobs, identification and all the barriers that keep them locked into a homeless situation.

Richard said our current situation in Cottage Grove is that we have the shelter at the Community Center which would be considered no barrier. He said there are only eight spaces available and they are all full. He said the people staying there appreciate the improvements that have been made, specifically that they can secure their belongings when they leave including going to the Warming Shelter when it opens up. He added that we also have a few people staying at City Hall along the side of the building.

Richard said the Warming Shelter operated by Community Sharing is considered low barrier transitional housing but only operates on nights when the temperature hits the threshold. He said there is information in the packet regarding the number of people who have been using the Warming Shelters, and that there are 17 buildings with the potential of housing two individuals, which is only done if it is a family or a couple. He said the number of stays does not represent the number of people coming to the community, all of the people except for one night are people who are in the community.

City Councilor Mike Fleck added that there was one night that three people were turned away because the Warming Shelter exceeded capacity.

Richard said that the City has an order with Lane County for 15 more shelters bringing us to 32 total, which would come close to hitting our Point in Time count of needing 30 to 40 for our community.

He said we also have rolling homeless which are people living in vehicles throughout the community. He said the City has not been enforcing the Code that says you cannot lodge in your vehicle, but they do have to follow the parking regulations and they cannot park in one spot for more than 72 hours.

Councilor Ervin asked if it could count as the City providing alternative housing locations by opening up to allow camping in private individuals backyards.

Richard said it helps in a way, by keeping those people from occupying City facilities and frees up space for others.

Councilor Ervin asked if there could be a contract with private homeowners to open up their property with no expense to the City and if that concept has been explored.

Richard said technically under the State's definition of transitional housing, those on private property would count and be considered transitional housing, although if one of those sites were vacant, the City could not direct people there and force an individual onto someone else's property.

Mayor Gowing asked if a nonprofit could run a shelter and would it satisfy the Martin vs. Boise.

Richard replied yes.

Mayor Gowing clarified that it does not have to be the City doing it.

Richard said if you have a nonprofit organization, church, or business open up their property to campsites and they have vacancies we could take people there. He said the Ordinance has two types of Transitional Housing opportunities. One being for larger groups and organizations and the second being for individuals who want to open up their own piece of property with no more than two sites. He said the larger groups would be counted and if we needed them that is where people would go instead of a park, which would satisfy Martin vs. Boise, but he does not think the individual sites count because they would have a right to refuse who stays there.

Councilor Solesbee asked the City Attorney for clarification regarding Martin vs. Boise. She said if the City is going to do something like this because we are being told we have to, and it is going to be done at the expense of our tax paying citizens, we need some clarification as to what is being told to us. She then read an article which argued that local governments are not powerless to do anything about homeless encampments unless there is an adequate shelter space or public housing available for all people living unhoused in a jurisdiction. She continued by reading from the article, that multiple courts upheld that Martin vs. Boise does not preclude a local government from clearing encampments, so long as no arrests are made. She said she wants to know exactly about this, because it sounds different than what she is hearing.

City Attorney Carrie Connelly said Martin vs. Boise imposes that as a City you can do nothing and let people be in parks and public spaces or if you are going to try and enforce time limits, and no sleeping violations as part of your code you are subjecting people to penalties. She said you don't just ask people to leave the park, the officers are asking compliance and are citing individuals for failure to comply with City code. She said by enforcing your code you are imposing them to cruel and unusual punishment and if you are going to enforce your code you need to have reasonable alternative locations for them to go.

City Manager Richard Meyers said one of the problems with the article that was read is that the City cannot clear a camp without having a reason. He said some of the arguments in the article may be missing pieces of information, if they are saying that you can clear camps and it is not a violation as long as you don't cite them, but then you have no right to clear them if they are not breaking any law.

He said we can do nothing, but we have to fix City ordinances under House Bill 3115, and if the City does nothing then they can be wherever they want to be. He added that we can create some areas where camping is not allowed, but if the other areas are full or there is some reason that they cannot be there, then they can go into the places where you said they cannot.

City Attorney Carrie Connelly added that would be considered cruel and unusual punishment.

Councilor Solesbee said none of this is going to be a solution. She said we have seen this in Eugene, Portland, Seattle and they have missions, and places to put them. She said her reservation is that we keep pushing it further and not creating a solution and she is very reluctant to go down this road. She said we are twenty minutes from Eugene that has homeless shelters, missions, and a lot available and we should get South Lane Wheels to facilitate this and pay for it that way so it is not such a burden on our citizens. She said she struggles putting in enclosures to protect peoples stuff so that they can leave and she feels like we are going to grow this and it is going to become bigger. She added that she is concerned about the neighbors near the Community Center and she has been sent messages that some of them are afraid to take a vacation and leave their home unattended. She said we need to represent them too not just the homeless. She asked Richard to explain how we know for sure these people are residents of Cottage Grove and if they are actually from here.

Richard said all of them are people that the Police Department has interacted with in the past and are people that have been around. He reminded Council of the homeless individual that Mayor Gowing acknowledged as Hope in his State of the City address who has been homeless in the community for eight years. He said most of them don't want people to know that they are homeless, so they hide it. He added that some of the homeless have taken the opportunity to break barriers and get out of their situation like Hope did.

Councilor Solesbee said that is different and not what she is talking about. She said what she is talking about is she doesn't want to be like Eugene.

Richard said he would like to continue the discussion so he could show that we are not going to create camps, but instead create housing, counseling, interviewing and other things that fill in the services to help break down barriers so that they can get identification, and get back to work and move into housing.

Councilor Fleck said there will not be any one answer that meets the needs of all the different types of people that are experiencing homelessness, as an example it will not help the two people that he trespassed last week from the Warming Shelter for bad behavior. He said there was no way that his staff could care for them and they needed to be in some sort of hospital situation and in his opinion the State has abandoned the City in that area. He added that there is not enough housing or shelters in Eugene and there are only a fraction of the beds necessary for all the people in Lane County and shipping people to Eugene is not the answer. He said the City needs to look at reasonable first steps, and it will be a work in progress. He said we need to do it in a way that makes sense for our community that does not break our budget, partner with the County for funding, and when we all come together we can come up with some solutions that will address the bulk of our concerns.

Richard said in the sample ordinances there are provisions that will exclude people who break the rules or violate the law. He said that we have sent people to other locations when we learn that they have family members that are interested in helping, but we cannot pass everyone off to Eugene, it does not work.

City Attorney Carrie Connelly said the City is in the position of weighing the costs of doing nothing and having to clean up and having citizens scared to use their public places vs. affirmative actions of trying to find places and spending resources on reasonable alternatives.

Richard said staff provided information as to how much time had been spent cleaning up parks, camps, and abandoned sites and that the City has spent approximately \$737.00 per week cleaning up facilities, not including the larger projects such as cleaning out under the bridge or a zombie house. He added that the Police Department has spent approximately \$2600.00 over the past year and that some of the costs associated with homeless will be reduced as we put systems into place.

Councilor Greg Ervin asked for clarification on the amount of money being spent on clean up.

Richard said that it was approximately \$38,000 per year.

Greg Ervin said the first proposal was going to be around \$60,000 in administrative costs for transitional housing not including capital outlay and building maintenance. He asked if the City had an assessment for the draft ordinances.

Richard said there would not be a financial impact of the ordinances, but there is a proposal from Carry It Forward to run a dawn to dawn, 24 hour facility for up to 40 people, for \$170,000 per year. He said the City would build it, Carry It Forward would operate it, provide the counseling, interviewing, the processing and the wrap around services to get people out of a homeless situation and into more permanent housing.

Councilor Roberts inquired as to how many people.

Richard replied up to 40 people.

Councilor Solesbee asked if the City built it and Carry if Forward managed it, would the City pay them to do so.

Richard replied yes, and the City would partner with Lane County, Peace Health, and Coordinated Care Organizations.

Councilor Fleck added that the CCO's have been helping fund CAHOOT's and other models in the Eugene-Springfield area.

Richard encouraged everyone to complete the survey from Lane County, he said they are seeking input as to how to spend the remaining 15 million dollars of ARP money and suggested that direct rural assistance for homelessness and mental health assistance would be beneficial.

Councilor Roberts asked if that was American Rescue Plan money.

Richard replied yes.

Councilor Solesbee asked if leaving garbage and debris for citizens to have to pay for and take care of is against the law.

Richard replied yes, if you see them do it.

Councilor Solesbee said the Police know who they are.

Richard replied that you have to see it happen.

Councilor Solesbee said she realizes that there are people who are down on their luck, families that are out of work, and teenagers who are couch surfing, but what concerns her is the same people will come night after night and the people who could use the help would not be able to. She said she would like to see something put into place that would not be taken advantage of, and if this grows the problem she would like this to be just a trial program.

Councilor Roberts said that he understands Councilor Solesbee's concerns and reiterated the benefits of the program that he went through when he was unhoused. He said in the program he went through he was fed, housed, evaluated, and had a list of responsibilities that he had to accomplish and added that he would like to see the City do a similar program. He said the City owned Hwy 99 site would be a great site for such a program, run by a nonprofit, where we could help change lives for the better. He said he would like to see the City do something bold and different and lead the way in the State of Oregon.

Richard said there has been some successes for people located at the Community Center, improving their lives, getting jobs and breaking some of the barriers, but we are doing that on an 8:00 am to 5:00 pm basis with no supervision at night and weekends and we are unable to provide wrap around services. He added that the provided information from Carry It Forward outlines the wrap around services that they offer to provide counseling, interviewing, classes and training. He said it will not work for everyone and there will be people who are not ready, they have other problems, and people who need things that are more structured and restricted.

Councilor Greg Ervin asked where in the City Code it says the City is in violation of House Bill 3115.

Richard said Chapter 12, City Parks and Public Playgrounds, Section 020, Subsection I, is a violation of Martin vs. Boise, and Subsection K also repeats some of the same language. He said the City has some proposed amendments and added some controls of reasonable time, place and manner features for Community, Neighborhood and Mini parks and any riparian or wetland areas from 10:00 pm and 5:00 am.

He added that he did not want to list the parks that can be camped in, but there are parks that do not fit the definitions and have available space if the facilities that have been made available are full or they could not be used.

Ervin said that he understands striking Subsection I but does not follow why the City couldn't say that it is unlawful to remain in time, place, and manner at the major parks. He asked what the distinguishing factor is and added that he would argue that all parks are within our community.

Richard said they are definitions that are in the Waters to Woods report and specify parks that are identified as Community, Neighborhood and Mini parks and those categories do not include all of the parks.

Ervin asked what part of the Boise decision says that you cannot put time restriction on being in parks.

City Attorney Carrie Connelly said we are addressing Boise and also House Bill 3115 which says that you are allowed to enforce a time, place, and manner restrictions but it has to be objectively reasonable with regards to persons experiencing homelessness. She said that we cannot take everything off the table, so what staff is proposing is policy balancing as to which parks we want to protect as much as we can, and which are those that we want to leave open in the event that our alternative accommodations are unavailable. She said it is a tiered approach to having locations with warmth, shelter and services and if those are somehow not available or otherwise unacceptable, then we also have public lands that are not restricted with the time restrictions, and lastly we have neighborhood parks, mini parks etcetera.

Councilor Ervin asked if objectively reasonable was the issue.

Carrie Connelly said not just objectively reasonable but as to people experiencing homelessness.

Councilor Ervin asked if there was any definition of that or case law.

Carrie Connelly said it is a brand new law and will be in effect in the year 2023 and the City will need to be in compliance with it.

Councilor Ervin said that this proposal is just trying to play it safe, and could be challenged.

Carrie Connelly said that the penalties are high for getting it wrong and attorney fees are being imposed on municipalities.

Councilor Savage asked who defines what is reasonable. She said if a camp is allowed to be in a certain space and time, but they have to do an hours' worth of chores, is that considered reasonable.

Carrie Connelly said the courts will ultimately be the arbiter until we have case law interpreting the language.

Richard said if someone has a physical disability who cannot perform the task that would be considered unreasonable for them to have to do.

Carrie Connelly said it will never be a blanket rule because every single time any one individual has issues we will need to determine if the restrictions in these types of parks is objectively reasonable in regards to the homeless individual.

Councilor Solesbee asked the City Attorney if the individual can refuse to leave the park even though there is space available somewhere else.

Carrie Connelly said no, if the officer using objectively reasonable analysis determines that there are many places that would be acceptable, including the individuals' own home they can be cited.

Councilor Solesbee said we are not really doing this because of Martin vs. Boise because we can't fight this. She said if they want to camp in our parks they are going to, but if we want to help people to get back on their feet that is what this is really about. She asked if the only way we would have penalties is if there was an arrest and the person sued.

Carrie Connelly replied no, a plaintiff can sue the City if there is a law on the books and the plaintiff is not seeking to vindicate an interest unique to the plaintiff, but that the City has an unlawful restriction on public places. She said the fact that the City would have a law on the books even though we are not enforcing it, subjects the City to a suit under House Bill 3115 and award attorney fees. She said what is motivating this discussion is the desire to do what is right, but also to be able to enforce what is on the books to protect those public places for the general population.

Councilor Solesbee said but the City cannot really enforce it.

Carrie Connelly said what we are doing is crafting a tier scheme that will allow you to enforce what is on the books.

Councilor Stinnett asked what it means when people say we don't want to be like Eugene, Portland and Seattle. He asked if it is failure of policy, or are there more people there experiencing homelessness and they have had to deal with it sooner, more often, and use more resources. He said he agrees with people who say that we are not going to solve the issues that lead to homelessness because the issues are complicated. He added that the way you solve homelessness is with homes, and that means something different to everyone.

He said the first thing we need to do is provide reasonable shelter for when they have no other option. He said he is very concerned for the homeless in Cottage Grove, and also for the neighbors behind the Community Center. He said we have a good spot of public land that

already has shelters on it and asked if we could just put more there and pay for staffing and coordinate the volunteers.

Mayor Gowing said he would like to get to the root cause analysis as to why people are homeless and then we can figure out what we can do to fix that.

Richard said that is one of the functions of Carry It Forward and is why they have success in the work they are doing and it is also what the City has been doing at the Community Center. He said each person is different and that is one of the successes of Carry It Forward because of their staff and their resources they can address some of those issues.

Richard said we want to eliminate the Community Center shelter facility. He said staff has been doing a great job, but we are not set up to do that type of work and it is not our primary purpose for the Community Center and Library. He added that we cannot close the shelter and say we are not going to help them anymore. He said we have options with the HWY 99 property that has a house on it but there are some things that need to be taken care of before we could use that site. He said we could eliminate the Community Center shelter quickly and move those people to the Warming Shelter location and turn that into a dawn to dawn facility. He added that we also have the Douglas Ave property that would be good to be used as transitional housing similar to the tiny homes with more barriers. Richard said the City has also been working with Homes for Good to help find them property for a low income housing development. He added that building shelters alone will not solve homelessness and we need to be looking at the long range picture to create low income permanent supportive housing in our community.

Councilor Savage said that she would be interested in talking to the unhoused to see what they want and need and maybe it could be as simple as a survey. She asked Richard if he was considering the additional 15 pallet shelters that were ordered to be place on the Douglas Ave property or if it would have stick built structures.

Richard said the Douglas Ave property would be stick built structures a little larger than the pallet shelters with a community center building with a kitchen and restrooms similar to Opportunity Village in Eugene. He said the City has been in touch with people who are running those facilities and they are interested in providing those services to our community. He added that Carry It Forward does meet with the unhoused and decides what services are needed. He said the City could put in the infrastructure and then consult with them to how it should be set up.

Councilor Savage said we do not want to put in the wrong infrastructure and her point is that it would be good to see what people want.

Richard said that is what we would be doing and they would be involved from the ground up based on what they say they need.

Savage said she sees the second step being something similar to what Councilor Roberts described from his past experience where people transition from shelters to transitional housing where they have less conditions and more responsibilities

Councilor Roberts said that it is building self-esteem back and that is important. He asked if the City is getting more COVID money and asked what part of the budget this would come out of.

Richard said everything that is being discussed is an eligible expense under the ARP money. He said the City could use the money specifically to address the homeless situation as well as low income housing, and he has estimated the project cost would be approximately 500 thousand dollars. He said it would be a one-time expense, an investment into the community, and would still leave the City with money to do other things.

Councilor Fleck said he supports doing something and he thinks the Douglas Ave site would be better for the low barrier site as it is closer to town and we would be more likely to see people utilize it and that he has talked to Carry It Forward and they agree.

Richard said the challenge to the Douglas Ave site is that there is no facility and that is a huge expense that we are trying to avoid.

Councilor Fleck said Hwy 99 would work but the location of the Douglas Ave property is better. He suggested that the City identify the parks by name and that it would help people including the Police Department be able to direct people to what locations are available if the other sites are full. He said that he does not ever want to see people camping in the parking strips in residential areas, and that we need to be proactive and be very clear what the options are.

Richard said there is a second proposed amendment to an ordinance that pertains to street right of way in the Roadway Use chapter that addresses camping in a right of way. He said the City considers this proposed amendment reasonable under time, place, and manner because camping, being in the parking strips, in the bike lane, or in the street is unsafe.

Councilor Ervin said he thinks that we do need to change the code that is in violation of House Bill 3115 so that we mitigate the risk of a law suit, and it should be addressed quickly. He said his issue is with the roles and responsibilities of the City and it improperly sets up an incentive structure and an attitude of entitlement grows from the recipient of the resource. He said this will be taking resources from people against their will and it will be a recipe for long term disaster with short term benefits. He said it does not mean that help should not come, but it should come from sources where there is accountability, judgement, reason, and discernment exercise from the source giving the help. He said we need to mitigate risk and change the code, but he does not think the other proposals are the right move.

He added that just because it is free money does not mean it is free and the source matters. He said how we spend has consequences and he is not excited to spend it on things that are not mission number one like infrastructure.

Councilor Solesbee said she is unsure if the community would fully support this and she would like to see it put on a ballot.

Councilor Fleck said that he has watched Carry It Forward help people by working with them towards reducing the barriers that are keeping them from being successful and he is impressed

with how they build rapport and work with them. He said the City should not be the sole organization financing the ongoing expenses, but that we do have an opportunity to put in capital infrastructure and it makes sense for us to do that. He added that the longer people are homeless the more it impacts their mental health.

Councilor Stinnett stated that we are not voting on a decision but instead having a conversation that will lead to public process and he hopes for a robust spirited conversation. He said he does not feel bad if people feel entitled to a shelter at their lowest point. He said this is a conversation about infrastructure and what we must provide with the best use of City resources including land. He said we have facilities that could house people when they need it most and he is not against the outreach that could mitigate the larger problem that bring people to homelessness.

Carrie Connelly said she wants to make it clear that the proposed Chapter 9.30 is not a program as to where to locate a City transitional housing, but it opens the door to allow private individuals and entities to propose transitional housing accommodations and allow overnight camping on public and private property. She said she wants Council to understand that the Parks amendment addresses House Bill 3115, the Transitional Housing and Overnight Camping provides areas for overflow, and then there is a Roadway Use ordinance.

Councilor Savage said she believes we are talking about three different things; people who experience homelessness, affordable housing, and the bridge that connects the two. She said what she hears throughout the community is that Cottage Grove needs affordable housing and that should be part of this conversation not just what are we going to do with the homeless.

Richard said the City does have a trust fund for development fees and building permits for nonprofits, specifically for affordable housing projects and that is why we are working with Homes for Good to see if there is property available that they can use to build.

Councilor Savage said people who want to build affordable housing have to go through a lengthy process and asked if there was a way to help bridge that contract.

Richard said that the Development Trust fund is primarily set up for SDC's and Building Permits which is a sizeable cost that could equal the cost of the land and maybe we need to look at amending the rules, but that could take two to three years and asked what are we going to do in the meantime. He said we cannot just do a shelter then all we are doing is putting people inside something and not doing anything to improve the situation. He said transitional housing is meant to be temporary, whether it is emergency or more advanced traditional, the ultimate purpose is to get them into permanent housing.

Mayor Gowing said based on affordable housing the cost is \$1193 so what we are really meaning is low income.

Richard said another term that has been used is permanent supportive housing which is affordable housing that has wrap around services as part of the housing, so that some of the crisis do not happen again.

Councilor Solesbee asked what is meant when he says transitional housing is temporary.

Richard replied that it is not intended to be permanent it is temporary, although there is not a time limit set there can be one set by the agents that run it.

Councilor Solesbee said some of the transitional housing that she has looked up, the average time spent is five to ten years, and that does not sound transitional. She asked again if there is a way to get this topic on the ballot.

Richard said that anything can go on the ballot.

Solesbee said something this large that will impact the community with ongoing expenses should be on a ballot.

Richard said that the seven members of Council have been elected to make tough decisions and go through the details that typically voters will not. He said this is a democratic republic and sometimes you have to make tough decisions and you don't put it on a ballot. He said when you put items on a ballot you are spending money and time and it doesn't mean anything because Council can do what they want after the ballot vote is over.

Carrie Connelly said that you can have public process by inviting public comments in advance of needing to make a decision.

Richard said a decision will not be made at this meeting and that Council will be involved in the time consuming process with the public and if it is put on the ballot a lot that stops.

Councilor Solesbee said she would like to see a town hall discussion with the full City Council and the Mayor.

Councilor Roberts asked if it is put on the ballot and it is voted down then what do we do.

Councilor Fleck said Richard makes a good point that the future Council could make a different decision. He said he loves the idea of a town hall and would prefer that we take time to make sure we get the outcomes we are hoping for and that we are justified asking if this makes sense fiscally and for the well-being. He said he does not want to waste money and wants partners in the process.

Mayor Gowing said he would like to do a town hall night prior to a Council meeting where people for and against are invited to talk.

Councilor Ervin said when he used the word entitlement earlier, he now realizes it was a charged word. He said he has an underlying frustration and feels that we are being strangled legislatively from real solutions and that everything that could have an effect is being called unreasonable and that our hands are tied.

Mayor Gowing asked if we would like to schedule a town hall prior to another work session.

Richard said there was an announcement that possibly by March 31st masks will not be required and it would be good to do a town hall when there is no masking requirements and use the Armory.

Mayor Gowing says he agrees that the Armory would be a good location.

Councilor Fleck asked if we could explore the ongoing operational funding and if we have partners in this financially before a town hall so that there could be a discussion with all of the information.

Richard said it will give us some time to do those things and Carry It Forward is interested in doing a presentation and talking to Council.

Mayor Gowing said he is worried about spending ARP money and how we would fund it next year.

Richard said a lot of it is capital but the ongoing piece is something we need to think about.

Councilor Roberts asked if we could have Carry It Forward come to a meeting.

Richard replied yes, and he will work with the County to get some more information.

Councilor Stinnett said to Councilor Ervin that he agrees that the word entitlement is a charged word, and he hopes that we are not fostering the thought that I am entitled to housing, but more so when I am at my lowest, I can count on my community for the basics. He added that people who feel secure in that could envision ways to give back when they are able.

Councilor Stinnett said that he loves the idea of a town hall.


Councilor Savage said she would like to see ideas from people who have experienced homelessness on what opportunities would be most beneficial to them and have that information prior to a town hall.

Richard said that we have a list of homeless that are interested in talking to Council.

Mayor Gowing commended Council and thanked them for having a professional discussion.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm


Mindy Roberts, City Recorder


Jeffrey D. Gowing, Mayor