

**COTTAGE GROVE CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION MINUTES
JUNE 6, 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

Assistant to the City Manager Jake Boone called the roll. The following were

PRESENT IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS: Mayor Jeff Gowing and Councilors Candice Solesbee, Chalice Savage, Jon Stinnett, Mike Fleck, Greg Ervin and Kenneth Michael Roberts

PRESENT VIA GOTOMEETING:

COUNCIL ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS: City Manager Richard Meyers, Assistant to the City Manager Jake Boone, Public Works & Development Director Faye Stewart, and Police Chief Scott Shepherd

STAFF PRESENT VIA GOTOMEETING: City Recorder Mindy Roberts

CITY ATTORNEY: Carrie Connelly

MEDIA PRESENT: Cameron Reiten, KNND

Councilor Roberts apologized to fellow Councilors, Staff and the City Manager for not handling the matters of homelessness in a professional manner and the mistakes he has made in addressing the issue.

Councilor Fleck declared a Potential Conflict of Interest.

City Manager Richard Meyers recapped key points in reference to Martin v. Boise, Blake v. Grants Pass and House Bill 3115. He explained how those cases and additional information from a variety of sources influenced Staff's recommendations to Council. He described the formation of the Community Stakeholders group, those who attended and the various topics they addressed.

City Manager outlined the various options previously presented and discussed over the past several Council meetings, Work Sessions, Community Stakeholders meetings and the Town Hall to address homelessness in Cottage Grove.

Councilor Solesbee said staff needs to be very honest about what the law is and stop putting Councilors under pressure that they have to do a homeless shelter.

City Manager responded by saying that Council does not have to create a homeless shelter and if Council decides not to, the restrictions on the use of Public Spaces will be considerably different than if they do.

Councilor Solesbee indicated that she has read the law and although she has not received a definitive answer from the City Attorney, her understanding is that the City can indicate which Parks homeless cannot camp in. She said she does not want to be rushed into making a decision.

City Manager clarified by saying if there is alternative shelter that meets the requirements of the court cases then the City could prohibit camping in the parks.

Councilor Solesbee stated that is not what happened in Grants Pass and they won their case.

City Manager said that the City of Grants Pass lost their court case and he proceeded by reading the Conclusion from the case.

Councilor Ervin asked for the definition of an alternative shelter.

Mayor Gowing said his interpretation is that we can restrict certain parks and still be within the law.

Councilor Solesbee said that Grants Pass went too far and cannot be compared to us.

City Manager responded by saying that we are not comparing to Grants Pass but the Grants Pass court case provided additional things to look at as we are deciding what to do.

Councilor Solesbee said that the Work Session is to look at different models to address homelessness, discover what it best for our community. She said she feels that Council has not been involved in that aspect. She indicated that she is not trying to delay the process or keep it from happening and she feels villainized in the process. She added that she repeatedly asked what Low Barrier means and still has not been given an answer.

Councilor Roberts stated that he wants to something different and bold that fits our community and added that he quit his job so that he can volunteer.

City Manager replied that Staff researched and prepared a proposal that would work specifically for our community with a managed shelter site that offers training, counseling and opportunities for community service. He said Staff has put together a plan in addition to providing other

alternatives. He reiterated the definition of Low Barrier and reminded Council that it does not mean No Barrier.

Councilor Roberts said Low Barrier allows drugs and drinking.

City Manager replied that Low Barrier does not allow alcohol or drugs and the RFP states that that it cannot be brought to or used on site.

Councilor Solesbee asked if drug overdoses had occurred at the Warming Shelter.

City Manager replied no.

Councilor Solesbee responded that there was and asked if there was also a drug overdose at the Community Center.

City Manager explained that an individual not part of Community Center shelter site, came over to the location and experienced a drug overdose.

Councilor Solesbee asked if drug paraphernalia has ever been found at the Warming Shelter.

City Manager said yes it was discovered, confiscated and the individual was kicked out of the facility.

Councilor Fleck explained to Council that Community Sharing ran the Warming Shelter the last few years as a Low Barrier site as defined by Lane County. He expanded by saying that Low Barrier means you take people as they are, drugs are not allowed and they did not experience any overdoses.

Councilor Solesbee asked how you determine if there are drugs if there is no drug testing.

Councilor Fleck explained that no drug testing takes place in a Low Barrier shelter. He added that bags were checked when people came in and they did their best to make sure people were behaving.

Councilor Roberts added that Community Sharing did a good job at monitoring the Warming Shelter site.

City Manager said that in a Low Barrier setting, pets, couples and family members are allowed.

Councilor Solesbee said she wants to get people to a place so that they are not in the same position 5-10 years from now.

City Manager said that is the purpose behind a Low Barrier facility.

Councilor Roberts asked what will happen when someone gets caught doing something that is not allowed in the Pallet Shelters.

City Manager said it will likely depend on what they were doing.

City Manager reminded Council that their role is to deal with Policy and not the day to day administrative functions.

Councilor Solesbee said Council is deciding on what type of model to use and they need to contrast them. She added that she supports getting churches and the community involved.

Councilor Roberts asked how many of the Stakeholders will be able to help.

City Manager replied that a couple of them are interested in assisting at some level. He said we want the community to be involved in helping and we need an experienced third party to run it.

Councilor Roberts said that we need someone with experience.

Councilor Fleck said that often networking and referrals are required in the RFP.

City Manager explained that Housing First means that the top priority is getting people ready to be housed and that it will also take the community to make things work.

Councilor Solesbee said she likes the separation of camps in the Community Strong model. She suggested that we consider putting one to three pallet shelters on church parking lots and have the community rally around helping smaller groups of people.

City Manager explained that it was part of the original proposal, to amend the code authorizing camping on private property such as churches, residences, and businesses.

Councilor Roberts said the homeless that he has talked to will not go to the Hwy 99 site.

City Manager said if you have shelter available and they do not go, they can be cited.

Councilor Ervin asked for clarity regarding having shelters on church property.

City Attorney Carrie Connelly said the objectionable element of the religious aspect isn't that the location is on church owned property, but whether or not they would have to be a part of church services or recite prayers before they could access services such as food, sanitation or shelter.

Councilor Ervin asked if the City owned Pallet Shelters could be distributed to organizations and allow them to be set up and managed on their own property. He said the City would then serve as a resource provider and it would not affect the budget or the ARPA funds. He said that he wants to lean on the community first and also change the code to prevent legal hazards.

Councilor Roberts asked Councilor Ervin if he is suggesting that the City handout pallet shelters to the Community Stakeholders and let them run them.

Councilor Ervin said he wants to give the community a chance to fill the societal role before the City steps in.

City Manager said that members of the ministerial group have indicated that they do not have the resources or wherewithal within their congregation. He said they can address things like making curtains, flowerboxes and preparing meals.

Councilor Ervin said he feels that we have not reached a large part of the population.

Mayor Gowing asked Councilor Ervin how services could be provided if the shelters were dispersed out.

Councilor Ervin said he does not have a perfect answer, but he would rely on things such as reader boards, flyers and networking. He suggested providing infrastructure that everyone could use like lockable storage containers and additional restrooms.

Mayor Gowing said spreading out the shelters would make it harder on the service providers such as counselors to reach everyone.

Councilor Stinnett said it would be impossible to get uniformity across various groups. He said he believes in Housing First as it directly solves homelessness. He said we can address the root causes after we fix the immediate crisis which is the lack of shelter.

Councilor Solesbee said there is no housing, so we have to work on the MUPTE's and LUPTE's and just putting the homeless in a shelter does not mean they will get into permanent housing.

Councilor Solesbee said people are not homeless simply because lack of housing and she does not want to get stuck in just one way of looking at the issue. She said that she wants to hear from community groups and allow them to present their ideas and options.

Councilor Fleck said he supports all of the proposed mechanisms and that there will not be just one silver bullet answer. He said the drug problem is a symptom of hopelessness and the Housing First Model gets people stable and safe.

Councilor Roberts said the churches don't have the money to do it.

City Manager said they can contribute at some level but do not have the capacity to do so on a daily basis.

Councilor Solesbee asked why the City gave 72 hour notice to the homeless at City Hall and in the area in front of the Water Treatment Plant.

City Manager said the homeless at City Hall were asked to move so that electrical issues and vermin problems could be addressed. He said the area at the Water Treatment Plant is a parking lot and the 72 hour parking limit applies.

Councilor Solesbee asked what changed.

City Manager replied that nothing changed. He said notifying them may have been missed due to limitations on the officers.

Councilor Solesbee said she has personally been blamed for them being given a 72 hour notice and she did not know it was going to happen.

City Manager reminded Council that the 72 hour notice has been discussed in various presentations and it also applies to the rolling homeless. He said Staff does not see a need to change that law, as it helps prevent public parking areas from becoming a camp for RV's.

Councilor Ervin asked what service providers are available in the area.

City Manager said St. Vincent De Paul, Carry It Forward, Square One Villages and Shelter Care provide shelter care services. He said most of them are nonprofits and work in partnership with governmental agencies. He added that Looking Glass also provides services predominantly for youth up to age 21.

Councilor Ervin said he understands that there is a list of providers that do certain things and he wants to know the efficacy of the organizations. He said Council is trying to create policy and needs to know the expected outcomes.

City Manager said that type information is not given ahead of time. He said the organization can provide what other places are doing, which may not apply to what Council wants done in Cottage Grove.

Councilor Ervin said there will be requirements that each one of them would operate under.

Councilor Fleck said the organization would have projected outcomes.

City Manager said the RFP has projected outcomes and the organization would be evaluated on those outcomes.

Councilor Ervin said he is not talking about the RFP. He said the information he is asking for would proceed an inquiry to even know what type of policy to set. He said Staff is drawing the wrong conclusion that the proposed provider offers the model that would be the best for Cottage Grove.

Councilor Fleck said the HMIS system measures outcomes based on data entered regarding the individual.

Councilor Ervin said the providers here in town have issues and he would like more information about the providers that would be used under any scenario.

Councilor Fleck said the High Risk Team comprised of Senior and Disability Services, Community Sharing, Cottage Grove Police Department, South Lane Mental Health and South Lane Fire and Rescue can refer individuals to PeaceHealth Behavioral Health.

Councilor Ervin said the category of people with behavioral issues have the biggest impact on our community and he would like to brainstorm on how to address that issue.

Councilor Fleck said he has witnessed Carry It Forward work through very serious issues with individuals.

Councilor Roberts said he was impressed with Carry It Forward. He said Council has been talking about this for 12 hours if not longer and asked if Council needs to choose a homeless shelter style and then look at an RFP for a service provider.

City Manager said yes, if Council is going to decide on an alternative shelter. He said if not, then Council needs to decide what to do in lieu of that.

Councilor Solesbee said she wants to have the different organization give presentations to Council.

City Manager explained that the RFP provides Council that information and allows them to evaluate each organization.

Councilor Solesbee said she wants to see the different options and she finds it interesting that we cannot get presentations. She said if the City was doing a Water Treatment Plant they would come and tell us the different options.

City Manager said if you were building a Water Treatment Plant the Engineers would design it, the bids would be put out and you would get the bid proposals.

Councilor Solesbee said she gave a poor example.

Councilor Fleck explained the process for Public Contracting.

Councilor Savage asked if it is considered a barrier to require the homeless to be from Cottage Grove.

City Manager said yes to some extent and it is intentional to address those that are residents in Cottage Grove.

Councilor Savage asked if someone was kicked out of Eugene could we say they cannot stay in our park.

City Manager explained that if someone came down from Eugene and did not have record of receiving services here we could point them back in that direction.

Councilor Ervin asked if Council would support making changes to the Code and giving the community an opportunity to step up.

Councilor Fleck said Council needs to decide what to do with sheltering and then address the other components. He said if we are going to be restrictive in the Parks we need to have shelter services.

Mayor Gowing said we should restrict the Parks that we do not want camping in and the parks should not be considered overflow.

Councilor Fleck said there is more latitude to restrict Parks if there are shelter options available.

Councilor Solesbee said that Councilor Ervin suggested we give the community time to step up with a time line.

Mayor Gowing said that he would like to change codes regarding camping and tents on private property.

Councilor Solesbee said that Council has said that for a while.

Councilor Fleck said he supports giving a short window of time to get commitments from nonprofits, service clubs and churches.

Councilor Ervin said they might tell us what they need to make it happen. He said if nothing happens, Council should go for a modified version of the proposal. He said has a gut feeling that the community is going to show up.

Councilor Solesbee said she supports that.

Councilor Stinnett said Council can look, but if someone can provide a shelter site with adequate management that is the first step. He said the community can step up in any number of ways, which would be step two, three, and four. He said the delay is harmful to vulnerable people and he would rather get stuff done. He said Council can sit and discuss how much we care and then never do anything more than that.

Councilor Ervin said some of us are actually housing them and what we are doing is not lack of care.

Councilor Solesbee said Council should take the time to make good decisions even if it ends up being the original decision. She said Council should not make hasty decisions and should do what is right. She said in order to do what is right we need to hear from everyone including the Community Based group that would like to make a presentation.

Councilor Roberts asked if we should have a real Town Hall and use the new clock.

Councilor Fleck said he likes input but believes Council has heard what people want. He said he is more interested in finding solutions rather than listening to complaints. He asked Council what the mechanism would be to garner the community partners that might want to be involved.

Councilor Ervin suggested that Council collectively do a phone tree to encourage people to do a presentation. He noted that since the City approach did not happen right away, he asked that Council give leniency to the Community Based group and the fact that they have not had time to get things up and running.

Mayor Gowing said it is his understanding that the nonprofits and churches have been trying to do this, but he is willing to reach out and see if they are willing to step up.

Councilor Fleck asked Council for a date to have the presentations on the Agenda.

There was open discussion as to what dates and formats would work.

A Work Session date for presentations was set for July 18, 2022 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm.

Mayor Gowing asked if Council could make Code Changes and eliminate camping in some of the parks.

City Manager replied probably not, because that is not creating alternative shelter under the definition.

Mayor Gowing said he thought we could designate two parks for no camping.

City Manager said Staff has taken steps to regulate parks and resources by not allowing camping in any space that could be reserved such as the amphitheater, pavilions and gazebo or sport courts.

Councilor Roberts asked if that includes the structures at Trail Head Park.

City Manager said they are not included.

Councilor Roberts asked if Council should be looking at the RFP and making changes for when we get to that point.

Mayor Gowing said yes.

Mayor Gowing adjourned the Work Session at 7:56 pm



Mindy Roberts, City Recorder



Jeffrey D. Gowing, Mayor