

Richard Meyers
City Manager
Cottage Grove, OR 97424
April 7, 2022

The Home Team



- Distributing **Boxabl** Homes
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) / Tiny Homes
- Affordable
- Set up in 1 hour
- Ship Anywhere

The Home Team 22 @ gmail.com

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Re: Introducing Boxabl and The HOME team

Based on the results of the recent Townhall Meeting regarding the subject of homelessness, we heard the message loud and clear that the City Council is open to suggestions from the citizens of our town.

**Introducing...
The HOME Team.
(We have solutions)**



Russ Dregne

Carrol Crawford

- This team worked as activists in getting ADU laws approved for Lane County which resulted in having legal tiny house villages in Cottage Grove.
- Our team has many years of experience as Distributors for Old Hickory Sheds and Summit Structures since 2015. We managed all aspects of the business resulting in rewards from the Companies and many happy customers.
- Carrol Crawford is a citizen of Cottage Grove.
- We are established Affiliates to the Boxabl Company.

**Introducing...
Boxabl Homes**



Boxabl has created a building system that is compatible with scalable factory mass production. Our Mission is to significantly lower the cost of homeownership for everyone. Obsessively designed to the highest standards of quality, strength, and sustainability to last for generations.

Videos

www.boxabl.com

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7hzEeayhDk>

How are Boxabl homes a solution to homelessness in Cottage Grove?

- It may be possible to skip the temporary housing plan and move directly into permanent housing (depending on timing).
- Promotes affordable home ownership at \$250.00 a month.
- Boxabl homes are delivered directly to the site on highway 99 and can be completely set up and ready for move-in within a matter of hours.
- These homes are classy and beautiful and give owners a sense of pride and dignity.
- Homeowners and the general public can become an investor in the Boxabl company.
- Looking at future possibilities and the big picture, if Boxabl places a factory in Cottage Grove, responsible homeowners may be able to work at the factory and recover from the downward spiral of the homelessness trap.

The HOME Team can use our Affiliate Status to...

- Educate and inform the citizens and City Council of Cottage Grove about Boxabl.
- Be a liaison between Boxabl, the City Council, and the homeowners.
- Coordinate tours to the Boxabl factory in Las Vegas.
- Manage orders and delivery schedules of Boxabl to Cottage Grove.
- Assist in composing a proposal to suggest that Boxabl place a factory in Cottage Grove.

The HOME Team wants to thank you

As a governing body of the City of Cottage Grove, you have brought the issue of homelessness to the front of the line for your priorities. You are open to suggestions from your citizens, and you implement suggestions. For that... we speak for the citizens and thank you for your time and efforts on this critical issue.

Russ Dregne

Carrol Crawford

The HOME Team

Valerie Gifford
valeriegifford@gmail.com

April 5, 2022

City of Cottage Grove
400 E. Main Street
Cottage Grove, Oregon 97424

Dear Cottage Grove City Council,

My husband and I have been tax-paying residents of Cottage Grove for approximately 17 years. We have 4 children and are deeply concerned about the unhoused population of Cottage Grove currently and in the future.

Several months ago our family drove to Portland to pick up our daughter from the airport, then went to various locations around the city. What I considered to once be one of the most beautiful cities in the U.S. had become one of the grimeiest, most unsafe cities. It was truly a sad sight to see so many roads and public spaces littered with tents, inexcusable amounts of garbage, drug needles, graffiti, etc.

I recognize Portland is a big city and Cottage Grove is a small town; but we face a similar dilemma, which is increasingly becoming a challenge for our community. My 10-year-old daughter and I can no longer walk from our home to the library because we don't feel safe walking past all the tents and garbage around the side of the city hall building and next to the footpath along the river's edge. And then, when we get to the library, there are tents surrounding that building as well.

While we—as community members, as Christians, or whatever we consider ourselves to be—should diligently do what we can to love, help, and serve those who are struggling, there must also be guidelines and limits in place so as not to compromise the beauty, safety, and economy of our community.

According to a local children's textbook, city governments are primarily responsible for serving the needs of their citizens, encouraging local business growth, providing basic utilities, and maintaining public safety.

The manner in which the city manages the unhoused population can directly and indirectly affect each of these initiatives. For example:

(1) Serving the Needs of Its Citizens

My husband is a public defender for the city of Eugene and often represents unhoused persons. Through him, I've come to understand that our city government has been placed

in a precarious position as a result of the Martin vs. Boise ruling. In my own words, this ruling held that if a city isn't able provide sufficient accommodations for unhoused persons, they cannot be cited for trespassing when on public property.

Yet this ruling, in effect, poses a problem for the citizens of the community, whose needs the city government must also meet. I am of the opinion that the needs, safety, and well-being of tax-paying citizens should be placed above non-tax paying citizens. We pay into the economy of this community, as well as into its public safety organizations, and should, therefore, have a right to ensure these systems are upheld.

As a compromise, and to maintain the integrity of the community, the city could adopt a model that encourages work and other opportunities for people to turn their lives around and get back on their feet with self respect and dignity.

(2) Public Safety

I understand that while some people are doing their best to get by, others CHOOSE the homeless lifestyle. (This is the group my argument is primarily focused on). Many of these people have mental health issues, drug issues, addiction issues, and some could even be sex offenders. We cannot, therefore, afford to jeopardize the safety of our community members and especially the safety of our children.

(3) Our Town's Economy

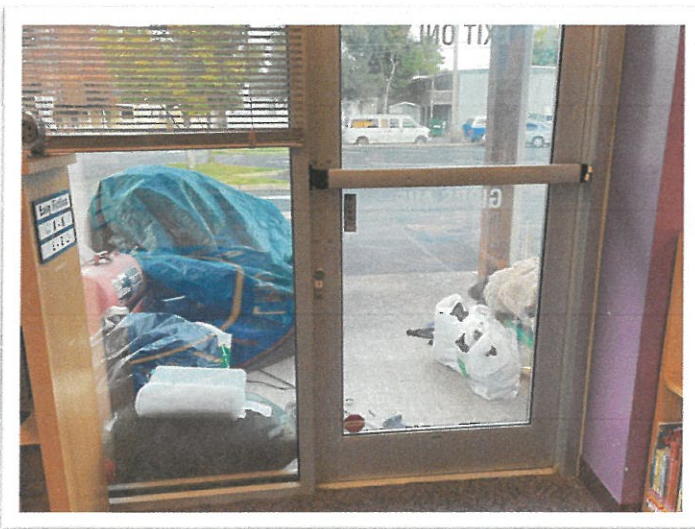
Are we not trying to promote tourism and local shopping in Cottage Grove? A model that allows unhoused persons to overrun public spaces will never attract business, nor will it cultivate an atmosphere of arts, culture, beauty and tourism.

In conclusion, I ask that you please consider a balance of care for the unhoused persons of Cottage Grove so as not to compromise the community's beauty, economy and safety.

Sincerely,

Valerie Gifford

Cottage Grove:



Portland:



Organized, United, and Responsible...benefiting Cottage Grove to the best of O.U.R. ability!

Find us on FB @ O.U.R. Cottage Grove



Town Hall on Homelessness

(South Lane Community Health Center is a separate issue completely and will not be discussed here.

O.U.R. Cottage Grove does not include racist, transphobic, or any hateful ideas.)

- ❖ Vaccination status has no bearing on delivery of mental health services. Improving current services is a good priority in addition to adding to current mental health services for the homeless.
- ❖ Serving undocumented migrants is not the purpose of homeless services. We have a large community of immigrants here, many working in forestry. Their needs are important.
- ❖ The United Way is a nationally recognized non-profit that helps build service capacity in local communities. Their agenda is not corrupt or radical in any way.
- ❖ Awareness of the causes of the current crisis here is needed. Housing First Initiatives and Harm Reduction philosophy are proven best practices for changing behavior and stabilizing the lives of dual diagnosed homeless people.
- ❖ Any shelter option here needs to have crisis, transitional, and long-term program goals to assist in an exit strategy of stable housing.
- ❖ Affordable housing in our community is a priority to achieve the goal of housing homeless people, ultimately ending the homelessness crisis.
- ❖ Community Shelter for the homeless is now legally required for those with no alternative but to occupy public spaces. The people who are already homeless here need services desperately. A HUB of services will help reach people in need, concentrate the efforts of many, and meet the needs of both homeless people and service providers.

Welcome to *O.U.R.* Cottage Grove, organized around *O.U.R.* united values of community responsibility. Joining the spiritual, racial, political, ideological, and socio-economic lines of this beautiful place, we find common ground in caring for and creating a strong and healthy community, *O.U.R.* community.

Council Members, I am providing this statement in order to share with you some of my experience on being without a home, and some of those I met during my years of what most people would call poverty. As someone who has been homeless, and lived long periods of housing insecurity, I believe my perspective can be illuminating.

On more than one occasion I was unhoused by choice or by circumstance. For fifteen years after that I lived with some level of housing insecurity, I used to buy vans because you can build a bed in the back even after I had purchased my first home. I sold my last van in 2007 after moving out west in 1989- that is 17 years and some months of being ready to live in my car.

People end up in bad housing situations for any number of reasons, but the most common is that the place they are living is so untenable that a car, a tent or even a bench is preferable.

Sometimes they have no other choices. A man I knew who I will call Bruce, was sexually abused in foster care as a child and buried his pain with the only medications he knew- the ones you get on the street. The last time I saw Bruce he looked tired and said he was "going home". He put a rock through a police car to go back to prison where he had spent more than half his life because that was the one place he knew he could sober up. While there was a bed waiting for Bruce as a convict immediately, he was on a nine-month waiting list for a rehab bed that day.

My own reasons for choosing homelessness are probably less severe than some, more than others. Suffice it to say that I found living in a van by the river preferable to my other options. I had the good fortune to be well-educated and white, which allowed me to talk my way out of situations where things might have ended differently, and I am a large and rather frightening looking man which dissuaded more than one potential assailant. Even so I was unbelievably lucky- and I am aware that the basis of my life is not skill or hard work, although I have some skills and have worked my entire life, but the fortune of my birth and circumstance. Every person without a place to live is working hard- we simply make them work to eat, to shower, to sleep. On top of that we tell them to get a job when being without a house is a full time job on it's own.

People make the best choices they have with the tools they possess. Sometimes that tool is a van, sometimes it is a rock. If we start by assuming that everyone is using the best tools they have, the path to helping them is not to punish them for the tools they use, but to give them better tools.

The thing that people who have never faced housing insecurity don't understand is the stress. We all feel stress- I feel stressed standing here now. We have work stress, kid stress, relationship stress. When you are unhoused it never ends- where to go to the bathroom is stress, your next meal is stress, the possibility that you can come "home" and the police have taken every tool you have to live with is stress. There is no relief because you can be roused in your sleep, cast out by authorities, possibly assaulted physically or sexually. Stress is like water filling a bucket- without an outlet it will eventually overflow and spill out.

Over time this overflow can express itself in different ways. Sometimes this is uncomfortable, hard to watch and maybe frightening. But is the result of a system which has for a generation criminalized poverty, homelessness, mental illness and drug dependence. It is the result of our choices as a community. Recently we have allowed people a safer place to sleep and we are seeing the result of the trauma and stress we have created up close instead of being played out in remote campsites. In the last meeting one comment was that "respect goes both ways". I would counter that by merely legalizing the existence of the unhoused we have not shown them "respect", merely done the bare minimum required by law. You cannot take the boot off a person's neck and expect gratitude.

That being said, the bare minimum is a step in the right direction, and now that many are seeing how hard and stressful being without a house really is, and would prefer to look away. I would encourage you to take a different approach- to lean into this challenge. I recommend that we utilize every resource we have- including the ARPA money to provide better tools to people who could use them, to reduce stress and harm for the vulnerable.

Will it end homelessness? No, this is a positive second step. The answer to homelessness is more affordable housing. The current system is obviously failing in this regard. The rents in "those cities to the north" that so many like to cast in shade are even higher. As long as the cost of housing is above the median income those on the margins will suffer. The lack of transitional housing- the weekly rentals and "European Hotels" that have been erased by zoning and gentrification have made the barrier between living in a tent and renting a house with the required First/Last/Deposit even steeper. We need to create an achievable pathway to housing for everyone. In the interim providing services that reduce the stress of be without a home are warranted. Providing bathrooms, garbage service and non-emergency medical care is far less expensive than providing waiting for problems to require emergency medical solutions, police intervention or hospital beds. Nothing we can do today will resolve the issues we

face entirely, but it is imperative we keep moving forward and find ways to act in compassion instead of fear.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my perspective on this issue.