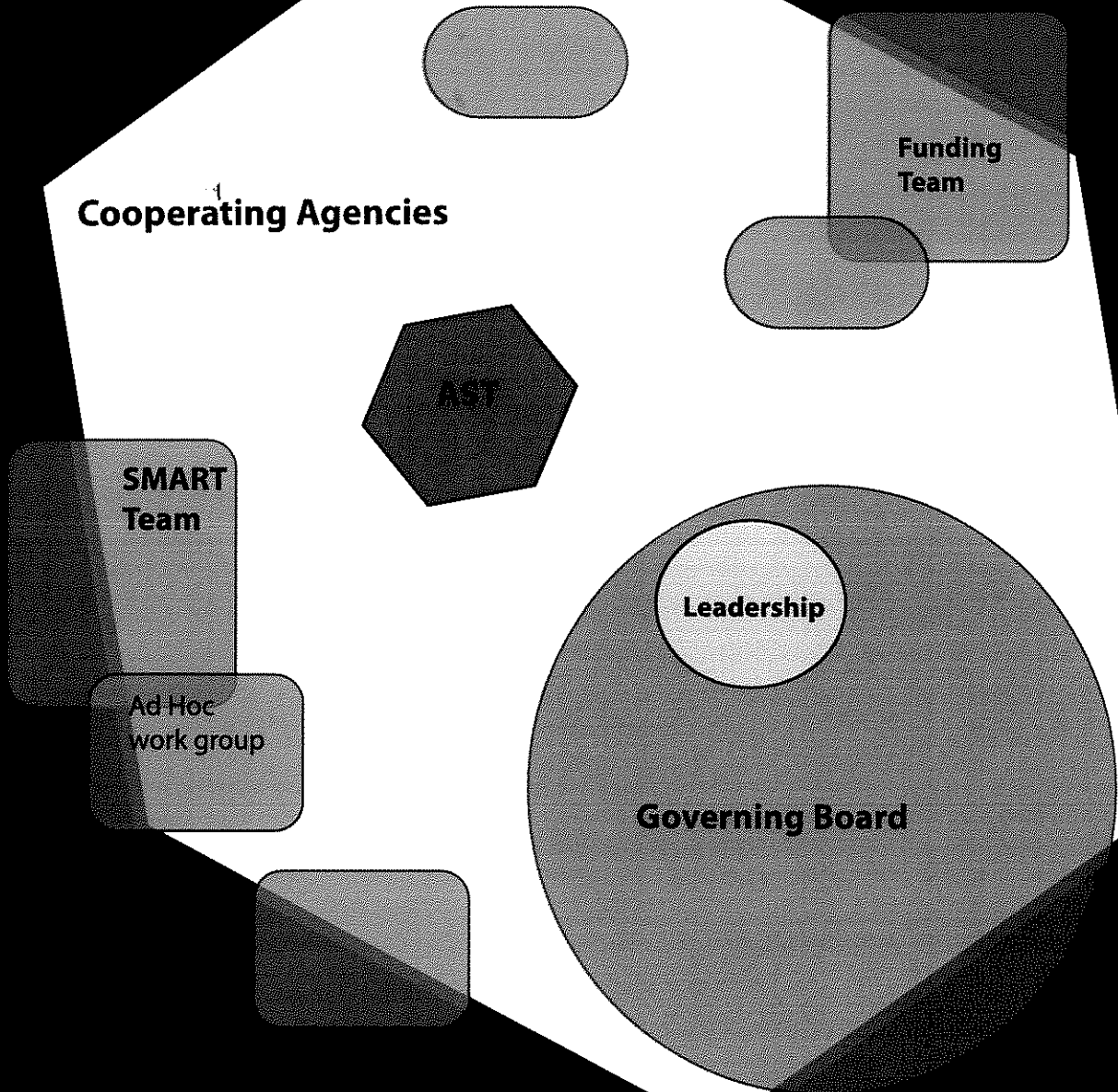


**Housing Opporutnities
Action Council
(all interested parties)**

Cooperating Agencies



HOAC meetings (and discussions) are open to and include all interested parties.
Elected voting members comprise the Governing Board, the decision-making body of HOAC.
The SMART and Funding teams are standing committees to the Governing Board.
The AST is a Coordinated Delivery Team.
Ad Hoc work groups are formed, meet, and sunset as necessary.

Eric <bigwhiteoak76@yahoo.com>

To: mayor@council.corvallisoregon.gov
CC Barbara Ross
BCC Eric Karbowski

Mar 16 at 3:45 PM

to Biff Traber, Mayor
City of Corvallis

from: Matt Gordon, Richard Hervey, Jim Swinyard
Bob Bernhard, Ed Epley, Eric Karbowski and
Barbara Ross

Request:

We would like to request that the city set up a mechanism that would enable us, together with our community partners, to establish a legal camping area to serve homeless persons who have no other housing options. We intend to organize this as a six months pilot project and are not asking for any city funds.

Background:

For several years there has been discussion of having a city approved area for homeless persons to camp when the cold weather shelter closes. There were numerous objections to the idea. Who would take responsibility for operating the camp? How would security be maintained? How would expenses be covered. If it was on city property, what about liability? What about objections from the neighborhood? Would this just encourage homeless persons to move in from other communities? What about the city regulations that prohibit camping inside the city? Would the concept of self governance really work? For these and other reasons the city council was understandably reluctant to organize and supervise a camp designed to serve homeless individuals. The concept never got beyond the discussion stage.

Portland's Experiment: Hazelnut Grove

For several years Portland has had two substantial outdoor places for homeless persons to live: Dignity Village and Right 2 Dream 2. Dignity Village is close to the Airport. Right 2 Dream 2 has been down town but the city has purchased property from ODOT and is being moved to the east side of the river. These are governed by the residents but continue to work cooperatively with the city. In spite of the city's efforts to open many more shelter beds the city still has several hundred adults sleeping outside, setting up tents on city and private property. A few months back when a group of homeless campers set up tents on city property close to highways but separated from single family dwellings, the city made a decision to try to work with them instead of simply telling them to move to another location. Called Hazelnut Grove, the camp now has chemical toilets, garbage service and is surrounded by a fence, all paid for by the city. The city has brought in an old box car and installed lockers so residents have a secure place to store some items. The storage area is open for one and a half hours in the morning and the same in the evening. The number of residents in the camp is limited to 30. They live in tents or small very simple plywood structures covered with blue tarps.

The residents developed a code of conduct to guide behavior inside the camp: The city is

working on a more detailed "agreement to use city right away" document. If this camp works out the city may approve several others on city property scattered around town. While no one sees this as ideal, city staff believes this is better than having informal unsafe camps where behavior is unsupervised. In the mean time the city together with the business community is working hard to increase the number of shelter beds available.

Hazelnut Grove Code of Conduct

1. Respect yourself and others
2. No violence
3. No open alcohol or drug use. No needle or meth use at Hazelnut Grove.
No alcohol or drug use related garbage is so be left around.
4. No stealing.
5. Accept other people's differences. No abusing or discriminatory language or behavior toward anyone on the basis of race, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, gender expression, ability or mental status.\

To be present at Hazelnut Grove you must abide by this code. Violators of the code may be asked to leave by the community. Violence, theft, needle or meth use will result in an immediate expulsion from the camp.

A "First Camp" for Corvallis

Corvallis is completely different than Portland. While their operation can stimulate ideas, If Corvallis is to have a camp to give homeless persons a place to live it needs to fit our community. A group of homeless and formerly homeless persons has met several times to exchange ideas and talk about how it might be organized in Corvallis. They have chosen to call the project "First Camp". They have drafted their own a code of conduct and an outline of how the day to day life of the camp would be structured. The attached draft is a summary of their conclusions to date.

The Community Support Team

A small group of citizens that we are calling our community support team has also been meeting and working on practical problems.

The members include Matt Gordon, Richard Hervey, Eric Karbowski, Jim Swinyard, Bob Barnhard, Ed Epley, Bart Bolger, and Barbara Ross

They are seeking the answers to the following questions.

1. What would be the expenses?
2. Who would be responsible for accepting donations and paying bills?
3. Where would the camp be located? City, county land, or private property?
4. What groups or individuals would help cover the costs?
5. What community support would they need?

While these discussions are ongoing there is general agreement on several issues. We would like to have a 6 months pilot to see if the project could be successful. The costs of this trial period should be covered by private groups and individual donations. This would include chemical toilets, garbage service, a fence, liability insurance and possible improvements to make the site usable. The city would not be asked to participate in the costs. The residents would be expected to take care of day to day operation of the camp. Community support would be focused on helping individual campers meet their personal needs such as equipment, health care, job training, positive leisure activities, and what ever assistance would help them move toward a healthy and self sufficient life style. Finding a suitable site is a major issue. It should be an area that is not too close to single family homes, and have access to a bus route or other transportation. It would be essential to communicate effectively with nearby property owners and neighbors. They need to be assured that the camp would not have a negative impact on the safety and livability of their area.

Several sites have been considered and some already rejected for a variety of reasons. While we

have some sites that show promise, we have not yet contacted nearby property owners. What cost would be involved in preparing the site for use by campers is another unanswered question. This is a work in progress.

Request to City

We are asking that the city staff and the city council seriously consider the establishment of a camping area to serve homeless persons. These people are already in our community. They are camping illegally in public areas, under bridges and in the back edges of our parks. They are regularly asked to move by parks staff and law enforcement. They have to move, but where? Rents are high and most homeless persons have very low income, or none at all. We believe that both their lives and the community as a whole would benefit from giving them a legal place to camp. They could then work toward stability in a more productive way instead of moving from black berry bush to black berry bush.

There are two parts to the city leaders' decision. First you need to decide if such a camp would be a desirable part of a continuum of services needed to help Corvallis address the issue of homelessness. Could this camping project help some persons make progress toward self sufficiency? In the long run would it help us reduce the number of homeless persons in our community?

The second part would be determining what process would be needed to change city legal requirements which currently prohibit camping within the city limits. The community support committee would need to understand the steps involved before we have substantial conversations with property owners near potential sites.

Thank you. We want to express our sincere appreciation to the mayor, to city council persons, city staff and property owners who have been very gracious and helpful to us as we began to explore this complex issue. The problems surrounding homelessness are very difficult. We are grateful to our community leaders and city and county elected officials who are seeking to address this community wide concern in a thoughtful and practical way. Thank you for all your dedication and hard work.

First Camp meeting minutes held March 16th 2016.

First Camp Operation outline and code of conduct approval confirmed by First Camp Circle and Leadership Council. There was thoughtful discussion of how Camp residents would work together cooperatively and help one another. They emphasized the need for abiding by the Golden Rule. There was discussion of communication with other helping agencies such as the County Health Department and GED resources.

They wanted approval from the fire marshal to make sure that the camp is safe. After discussion the group voted to approve having a locked gate after 11 o'clock at night. Exceptions will be made for persons working or having another legitimate reason for arriving late. Camp circle talked about wanting to prove to the city that they can run the camp successfully and would be an asset to the community.

Thanks, Eric Karbowski

First Camp Operation Outline

Purpose:

There is discussion in Corvallis of the possibility of establishing a legal camp to accommodate homeless persons. Other cities have approved such camps to give homeless persons a safe and legal place to camp. There is consideration of how such a project could be organized so that it would be an asset to the community, and give some of our homeless neighbors a way to stabilize their lives. This outline of how such a camp might operate was developed by a group of homeless persons who are interested in the concept.

This project is in the very initial stages and there is no certainty that such a camp will be established here. The expectation is that this will be a pilot project lasting 6 months and would be evaluated after that time.

Code of conduct:

1. No criminal activity. No illegal drugs. Follow the law.
2. Take care of yourself and keep your personal space clean.
3. No stealing.
- 4 Respect yourself and other residents. Do not judge other residents.
5. No violence or horseplay.
6. All residents will participate in the tasks laid out in the duty roster.
7. All residents will attend the weekly camp circle and work cooperatively to keep the camp comfortable and safe for everyone.
8. No persons under 18 allowed.

Camp Duty Roster:

1. Security, camp sign an sign out process. residents will rotate shifts supervising the gate. Gate closing time will be 11:00 PM.
2. Camp clean up.
3. Pet and smoking areas,
4. Building and camp improvement projects.
5. Keep common area organized,
6. Neighborhood good will projects
7. Miscellaneous tasks as determined by the camp circle.
8. Volunteer sign up. revolving schedule duty roster

Camp Organization:

A leadership council of 5 persons will be elected by the camp circle. They are responsible for the operation of the camp and assuring that everyone is abiding by the code of conduct. All residents meet weekly in the camp circle. They may bring up any issues that are important to them. Every member has a vote. Most issues can be settled by consensus. If there is disagreement, the matter will be settled by voting. One of the council members will be the lead communicator with outside groups who want to help or have questions.

Possible community supporters: Help(Homeless Employment Launching Program, Love Inc. County health Department, LBCC GED program, Drop in center, Food Bank, etc. The camp would have 2 chemical toilets that would be cleaned twice a week. A dumpster would be located at the camp and emptied weekly, There would be a fence around the camp area with one gate. All dogs would be on leashes. Campers are responsible for cleaning up after their pets. No open fires. Cooking could be done on small propane stoves.

Application Process:

Any adult or couple is welcome to apply for residency. They would discuss expectations with one of the council members and if they want to join the camp they will sign the code of conduct, a tenant agreement, and a liability waiver. Any resident unable to abide by the code of conduct may be asked to leave. This will be decided by a vote of the camp circle depending on the seriousness or repeated nature of the violation. Leaving process: residents will be responsible for removing all personal possessions.

Community support: A small group of community persons are looking into practical problems. Where could the camp be located that could be approved by the city or county? What is the budget? Where would the money come from? What help would they need from the community?

In summary, this concept is in the exploratory stage. It is an idea worth considering, but there is no certainty that it will become a reality.