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To: [Chris Hoy](#); [Vanessa Nordyke](#); [Virginia Stapleton](#); [Linda Nishioka](#); [Trevor Phillips](#); [Deanna Gwyn](#); [Jose Gonzalez](#); [Julie Hoy](#); [Micki Varney](#); [Gretchen Bennett](#); [CityRecorder](#)
Subject: Public comment on Ordinance 9-23
Date: Monday, May 8, 2023 7:11:50 PM

Dear Mayor Hoy and City Councilors

I'm writing about Ordinance 9-23. I support repeal of sit-lie, the camping ban, property timeframes, and the requirement for a 36" path so public space is usable by all.

I'm grateful for all your work, decisions, and tireless advocacy for creating more affordable housing and emergency and transitional shelter beds. Thank you so much for that. Yet we still have more people who are unsheltered than we have places for them to be. So I wish for consideration of more places people CAN camp - in tents **or their cars**, and beyond a few places that are not safe suitable for human habitation, I wish for safety and health to be codified as the main basis for evictions or sweeps. The Safe Parking program has a long wait list, yet why is it illegal to car camp on public streets?

A tidy tent in a neighborhood has no negative impact unless behavior, health, or safety issues come up. Living in a car in itself has no negative impacts, unless trash or behavior become an issue. When all someone has left is their car, how and why did we ever decide to criminalize living in the only shelter you have left? Many years ago, I was that person living in my car. I was tidy and respectful. Now I see people who are in a similar situation, and we say they can't live in the only shelter they have left. Why?

Narratives about Ordinance 92-3 convey the reality that with

so much homelessness, current bans are unenforceable, so action happens mostly when behavior, health, or safety issues come up. If we codify behavior and safety as the main parameters for evicting a person or doing a sweep, we still have flexibility and we align with enforcement decisions anyway.

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People who camp are often people falling through the cracks for shelter.

Some people won't choose shelter. People often interpret that sort of response as someone being 'service resistant', often characterizing the person as someone who's anti-authoritarian, unwilling to follow rules, a rebel who prioritizes autonomy above shelter that could save their lives. They're making their own bed by their poor choices.

I don't see it that way. This work teaches things we might never want to know, and yet we can't do the work and people justice unless we're willing to let people we serve teach us those things. When we're willing to be colored and changed by what we see and learn, slivers of ephemeral understanding sometimes happen. It's rarely that service-resistance is happening. More likely, it's so much more.

There might be paranoia, claustrophobia, or triggers from harm that happened at indoor space, where there was nowhere to run away. Street-sleeping isn't safe, yet it enables more space to run and more freedom to choose who you will be next to.

What if pacing, or walking, or sweeping sidewalks, or having a

cigarette calms your nerves, but shelters have curfews, and your anxiety might kick in after curfew? There are so many, many valid reasons that make it hard for some people to choose shelter. How do you balance the safety that sleeping inside can offer, if your mind might not survive the night in any ways that let you sleep?

On the flip side, many people seek shelter beds and yet it isn't tenable for them to stay. Some people have higher care needs than any shelter can accommodate, especially as we see more people aging and needing shelter.

Some guests talk to people I can't see and there might be streams of loud profanity. Some people experience delusions that have them fearful and suspicious of others and they might threaten staff or shelter guests. Even if they don't act on their threats, they do not enable other guests to feel safe. The sweetest person we can't have back at SafeSleep was a guest who was tucking in ladies as they slept. We were not able to get her to understand why her sweet intention was not a viable thing to do in a shelter.

Whether people seek shelter and are not viable for shelter, or people don't seek shelter for many valid reasons, these are people we often see camping. I wish for more flexibility for where people CAN be - in tents or their cars, with safety and health codified as the basis for evictions or sweeps.

Thank you for your consideration.

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