

Ruth Stellmacher

From: kanita0301@centurylink.net
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 5:26 PM
To: CityRecorder
Cc: Tami Carpenter
Subject: OB-9-23
Attachments: Sidewalk - 2023-05-17_NGNA Ltr re OB 9-23.docx

This is for the work session of May 22nd. Thank you.

Kaethe Mentrum
Secretary/Park Chair
NGNA

May 18, 2023

Mayor Hoy, City Manager &
Salem City Councilors
555 Liberty St. SE, Room 220
Salem, OR 97301
citycouncil@cityofsalem.net

Dear Mayor Hoy, City Manager and Councilors:

We write you regarding Ordinance Bill 9-23, which has been proposed to bring the Salem Revised Code into compliance with House Bill 3115 and the standard established in *Martin v. Boise*. The Northgate Neighborhood Association believes the proposed amendment of SRC 95.720 is misguided. Sidewalk tent camping is unsafe, hazardous, and disruptive for the following reasons:

1. Campers are vulnerable to injury from drunk drivers and other vehicle collisions.
2. Campers in undesignated areas have poor access to water and bathrooms.
3. Campers in undesignated areas accumulate trash and health hazards due to lack of access to garbage services.
4. Campers with worn down or damaged tents may not have adequate protection from rain, snow, heat, cold, and wind.
5. Bicycle riders who choose to ride on the sidewalk to avoid riding in the dangerous streets could have damaging accidents with campers.
6. Public sidewalks were designed with a certain width to meet the needs of pedestrian travel in 2 directions and no camping at all should be allowed on those sidewalks as they were never designed as partial camp sites.

Restrictions on sidewalk tent camping should be considered objectively reasonable under the standard established by HB 3115. Even if you decide to allow sidewalk tent camping, the reality of tent camping is that unsheltered neighbors often require more than space taken up by their tents alone.

Martin v. Boise did not establish a standard that the City must allow camping anywhere on public land. Rather, it restricted several traditional vagrancy and loitering laws, unless there is an alternative of actually available, designated locations for unsheltered residents to lawfully stay without penalty. As you know, Salem still has a desperate shortage of traditional shelter beds, despite considerable efforts to increase availability.

Right now, many of our unsheltered neighbors are camping wherever they can get away with it. Typically, this is on public and private land in unsafe tents, surrounded by hazardous materials that have accumulated due to a lack of access to bathroom facilities and garbage services. These unhoused people are continually being shuffled around through eviction processes at a high cost to property owners, the City, and the man-hours of the already understaffed Compliance and Police Departments.

The City should establish designated camping grounds for unsheltered people, sufficiently far back from busy streets, with bathrooms and showers, carport-style roofs, and garbage services, in order to provide safe camping options. Once established, existing non-profits can more easily provide support services to unsheltered people, just as they do at

conventional shelters. Construction of hygiene facilities and roofing can be done after opening basic camping facilities and likely at a significantly lower cost than traditional shelters or even micro shelters. Governor Kotek and the Legislature have committed to making an unprecedented amount of funds available for homelessness issues and the City should work with them to obtain funds to establish and improve camping grounds, including RV facilities.

There are many reasons why someone is unsheltered and for that reason, it is important to have different types of shelter options. Many are not comfortable in indoor shelters or are discouraged by entry requirements. These are your neighbors who are camping on private property and along roads. They deserve a safe place to stay. Your neighbors,

Northgate Neighborhood Association