



CITY OF SALEM

585 Liberty St SE
Salem, OR 97301

Staff Report

File #: 21-212

Date: 5/10/2021

Version: 1

Item #: 6. I.

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Steve Powers, City Manager

SUBJECT:

Sheltering at Cascades Gateway and Wallace Marine Parks

Ward(s): Wards 1 and 2

Councilor(s): Councilors(s) Stapleton and Andersen

Neighborhood(s): West Salem Neighborhood Association and Southeast Mill Creek Association (SEMCA)

Result Area(s): Natural Environment Stewardship; Welcoming and Livable Community.

ISSUE:

Sheltering at Cascades Gateway Park and Wallace Marine Park

RECOMMENDATION:

Information Only

SUMMARY:

Salem is planning to end the sanctioned sheltering at Cascades Gateway and Wallace Marine Parks beginning June 1. With our partners, the City is already working with an estimated 200 campers in these areas to encourage moving into managed shelter settings where available.

The goal for unwinding is to:

1. Restore park use and environmental compliance at Cascades Gateway and Wallace Marine Parks.
2. Help unsheltered residents' transition to alternative shelter (outreach has been ongoing, with stepped up efforts as of April 29, 2021.) and prepare more sheltering options.
3. Return Cascades Gateway and Wallace Marine Parks to safe and active use for our community.
4. Support the creation of as much low-barrier and managed emergency shelter options as feasible.

The work involved in carefully concluding park camping will be ongoing and difficult. There are not enough shelter options for everyone living un-sheltered in our community. Some persons may be unwilling to move into a managed shelter setting or may need substantial services to be appropriate for a shelter.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

At an upcoming City Council work session, staff will have an update on sheltering efforts and the sheltering emergency in Salem. The information will include ordinance options that would give the City more flexibility in designating areas of our community for emergency sheltering like managed pallet housing or car camping. The work session will also be an opportunity for City Council questions regarding the City's operational approach to sheltering and the parks.

According to Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance, there are an estimated 1,188 people sleeping outdoors or at temporary shelter sites in our region. The number of chronic homeless residents in Salem is higher than state average. The Salem area does not have enough shelter capacity for unhoused residents. Some homeless residents are afflicted with behavioral health illness, drug and alcohol addiction, and other barriers to services and housing. The City and service providers have limited ability to compel individuals to follow City code and state law.

Outreach from service providers and Salem Housing Authority staff will occur before Police and Code Enforcement provide notice to individual of the need to move. Areas will be cleaned up immediately following a camp being abandoned. Communications will be with those sheltering in the parks, non-profit agencies, and the public. The City has added contractor resources for cleaning the park areas (and other areas throughout the city).

BACKGROUND:

Parks and sidewalks are not safe, healthy, or welcoming locations for people to shelter. The work of the City, Salem Housing Authority, and non-profits has been, and will continue to be, connecting individuals with services, appropriate shelter, and, for some, housing. While this work continues, there will be unsanctioned sheltering throughout the community.

The City and Salem Housing Authority's work with non-profit organizations, volunteers, churches, regional organizations, and the state to shelter, serve, and house our residents will continue. A few recent and specific examples are the Safe Park program, Housing Rental Assistance Program, the SHA navigators, Redwood Crossings, and the Portland Road pallet shelter. Learn more about ongoing efforts <https://www.cityofsalem.net/housing>.

Attachments:

1. Parks Camping Letter
2. Wallace Marine Park Approved Camping Locations graphic

3. Cascades Gateway Park Approved Camping Location graphic