

Council puts off decision on homeless campsite

By Daralyn Trappe
Emerald Associate Editor

The Eugene City Council decided at a Monday work session to postpone for more than two weeks a decision on a proposed temporary campsite for the homeless.

The time is needed for the city manager's office to prepare a report on, among other things, the legal implications for the city for such a site, city manager Mike Gleason told the council.

The Human Rights Commission, which conceived of the campsite plan, gave its formal presentation to the council Monday.

In addition, council members received a letter Monday from the board of directors of the Willamette Science & Technology Center expressing its concern about the proposed campsite.

After considering several other possibilities, the commission settled on an area in the Alton Baker Park parking lot adjacent to WISTEC.

The site would allow for as many as 25 vehicles, for people

who want to camp in their cars, and up to five tents. It is illegal to camp in cars in Eugene, so the campsite would be an exempt area.

The cost is estimated by the commission at between \$10,000 and \$15,000, most of which would go to a camp manager. Portable toilets would be set up, and campers would sign a statement saying they agree to camp rules.

Councilwoman Barbara Keller emphasized that time is of the essence, and at one point seemed to be pushing for an immediate decision.

"I'd hate to see a winter campsite open at Easter," Keller said. "I understand that we need to be thoughtful, but we'll never have all the information about what the repercussions may be."

However, the other councilors were more hesitant. Councilman Bobby Green said the council was not in a position to make a decision Monday.

"Clearly, someone needs to take the lead with this, but if we do so, we must act responsibly," Green said.

Council members addressed concerns to the commission, including questions of who will manage the camp and how to assure that local citizens use the site. The commission meets tonight to hammer out those details and address WISTEC's complaints.

The letter from WISTEC said a homeless camp may prove to be "inconsistent and possibly detrimental to" the center's purpose of providing educational activities for children and families.

"We are dependent on admissions to stay viable," the letter said. "We fear that these admissions will be significantly affected if the public has concerns about the safety of their children around WISTEC."

The board requested, among other things, assurances that WISTEC will not be harmed financially.

The City Council decided that the report and a public hearing are vital. Gleason said the report will be ready by Feb. 5. A public hearing is set for Feb. 8, and the council will discuss the plan and possibly vote at a Feb. 10 meeting.

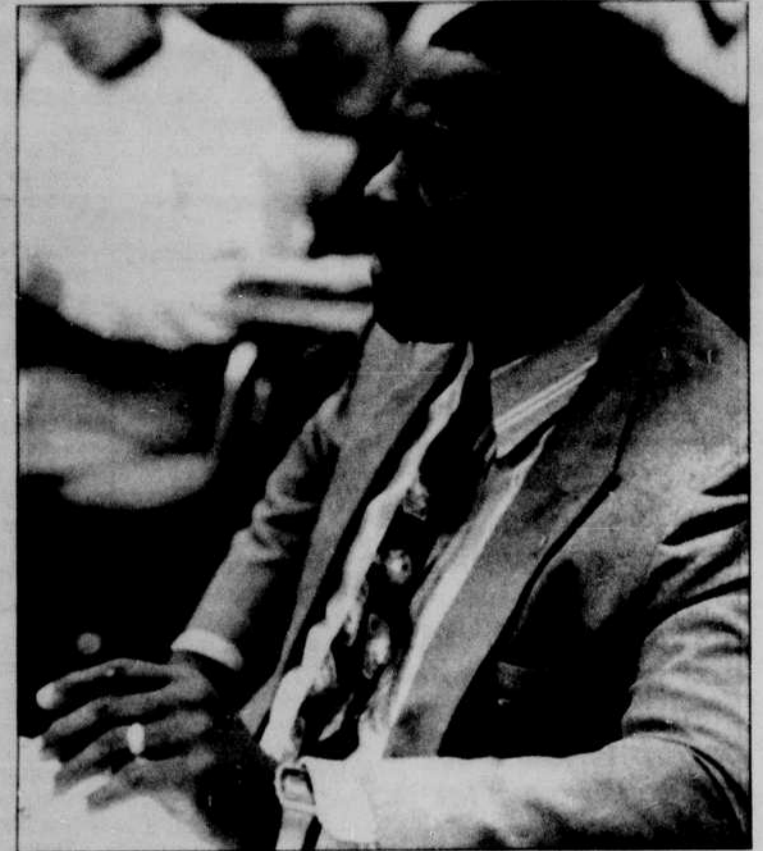


Photo by Brian Hendrickson
Eugene City Councilman Bobby Green listens to homeless campsite proposal.

Hamburger bacteria may spread



SEATTLE (AP) — Some children who fell ill after eating hamburgers at a chain of fast-food restaurants may be unknowingly passing the bacterial infection to others.

Washington state health officials said Monday. At least 200 people, most of them children, are believed to have been sickened by the E. coli outbreak, believed to be one of the nation's worst. One child has died.

Health officials blame the outbreak on a contaminated meat supply and undercooking of hamburgers at Jack in the Box restaurants in Washington and Boise, Idaho.

As of Monday, there were 151 confirmed cases and about 50 suspected cases, said Dr. John Kobayashi, the state's chief epidemiologist.

The state Department of Health urged that young children suffering from illnesses related to the outbreak of E. coli O157:H7 not return to day-care centers until their doctors are certain they are no longer carrying the bacteria.

Although the typical symptoms of bloody diarrhea and severe stomach cramps may vanish after a few days, the bacteria can remain in the body for several weeks, Kobayashi said.

The overwhelming majority of the 117 victims interviewed to date reported they had eaten at a Jack in the Box, Kobayashi said.

A 2-year-old Tacoma boy who ate a tainted cheeseburger Jan. 11 has died and more than a dozen children remained hospitalized Monday, including a 9-year-old girl in critical condition at Children's Hospital and Medical Center in Seattle.

Some children who ate at a Jack in the Box might be passing the bacterium to others from fecal contamination on the hands, officials said.

Younger children in diapers, particularly in crowded settings such as day care centers, are much more likely to do this than children of school age, Kobayashi said.

The Health Department advised parents and day-care workers to wash their hands thoroughly after changing diapers or using the restroom and before handling food.

"If a day-care employee changes (an infected) child's diapers and doesn't wash his hands thoroughly and then touches food, he could pass it on," Health Department spokesman Dean Owen said.

Health officials weren't sure whether there have been such cases of secondary transmission.

Jack in the Box on Monday took out full-page advertisements in Seattle's two daily newspapers expressing its "sadness over this horrible incident." In the ad, Chairman Jack Goodall said the company is confident all the contaminated meat has been tracked and replaced. He said new burgers are being cooked longer and Jack in the Box food is safe to eat.

The Vons Cos. of Arcadia, Calif., which processed raw meat into frozen patties for Jack in the Box, said it got the beef in question from three suppliers: Service Packing of Los Angeles, Orleans International of Detroit and Monfort Beef of Greeley, Colo. Those companies in turn may have gotten the beef from several slaughterhouses.

Investigators with the federal Centers for Disease Control and the U.S. Department of Agriculture were focusing on 13 slaughterhouses or slaughterhouse-processing plants, said Jim Greene, a spokesman for the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Those facilities "more than likely" supplied the meat processed at Vons, Greene said. "We're going to double-check sanitation conditions at those plants."

Greene did not know the names or locations of the facilities.

"It'll take days or weeks to come up with some sound conclusions," he said. "It involves a lot of detective work, starting from Z and working back to A."

ET ALS

MEETINGS

Returning Students Association will meet today at 5 p.m. in EMU Room 27.

Semper Fidelis Society will meet tonight at 6 in EMU Century Room B. For more information, call 342-1725.

EMU Budget Committee will meet today at 5 p.m. in EMU Cedar Room C. For more information, call 346-3720.

RELIGION

Hillel will sponsor "Rap with the Rabbi" to answer Judaic questions today at 3:30 p.m. at 1414 Kincaid St. For more information, call 343-8920.

Campus Crusade for Christ/Prime Time will meet tonight at 7:30 in Room 238 Gilbert. For more information, call 683-0686.

MISCELLANEOUS

Pre-Law Society will have Assistant U.S. District Attorney Jeff Kent speak about career opportunities today from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. in Room 164 Oregon Hall. For more information, call 686-8699.

Jewish Student Union will sponsor Israeli Folk Dancing tonight at 7 in the EMU Gumwood Room. For more information, call 346-4366.

LETS will meet to find people interested in working directly with LETS on the collective board and planning implementing needed changes tonight from 7 to 8:30 at the Eugene Public Library (upstairs lecture room).

Deadline for submitting Et Als to the Emerald front desk, EMU Suite 300, is noon the day before publication. The news editor does not have a time machine. Et Als run the day of the event unless the event takes place before noon.

Notices of events with a donation or admission charge will not be accepted. Campus events and those scheduled nearest the publication date will be given priority. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for grammar and style. Et Als run on a space-available basis.

COUNCIL

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He said the OCA proposed adoption of the new wording because the organization believes the improved wording would better serve the citizens of Springfield.

The council has declined the offer. As a result, the OCA will launch an initiative campaign to amend 20-08 to align it with the other 32 measures.

Allwander said uniform adoption of the revised measure in all 33 targeted communities would streamline the OCA's efforts and leave less room for lawsuits.

"I cannot understand why the ACLU would be so mean-spirited and pick on poor little old Springfield when they could pick on Hillsboro or any of the others," Allwander said.

Allwander would not officially acknowledge whether the OCA will provide assistance to the city of Springfield in the ACLU's lawsuit, but he did say "there's been talk" of the organization doing so.

Allwander said the OCA is confident the suit will be defeated. He said he believes the amendment is very defensible as well as representative of a majority of Springfield citizens.

"Three times the citizens (of Springfield) have spoken on this issue," Allwander said. "Everybody knows where the city of Springfield stands on this issue."

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