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City Council discusses bathrooms not housing

MEETING: A toilet task force will offer insight on public restrooms

By Sherry Rainey
Community Editor

The Eugene City Council created a toilet task force Wednesday afternoon in a work session, while failing to discuss the prohibited camping ordinance, which was an agenda item at the meeting.

Prior to the work session, the Homeless Action Coalition had a news conference outside of the McNutt Room at City Hall and accused the city of violating the Constitutional rights of homeless people by criminalizing camping.

Wayne Ford, co-director of HAC, read a memo from the council that said no one is turned away from the Eugene Mission.

"That is a lie," Ford said. "It is absolutely false. Some people are not able to stay at the Mission because of criteria for providing services."

Before the meeting, homeless protesters who had camped in front of the McNutt Room said they wanted the council to examine the legality of the camping ordinance.

Jon McClendon, a homeless protester, said, "We want the City Council to take a look at how legal [the camping ordinance] really is."

During the meeting, the council was presented with a history of its previous discussion around the housing issue.

A part of the presentation by Richie Weinman, the housing and community development section manager for Eugene, included several options on how to address homelessness:

- Maintain the status quo (do nothing).

- Amend the prohibited camping ordinance to reduce the penalties.

- Establish a task force to study additional toilet and sanitation facilities.

- Allow greater leeway for camping on private property.

- Fund the housing plan identified in Cracking the Housing Crisis.

- Scope a pilot demonstration designed to break the cycle of homelessness for a small sample of homeless participants.

- Create safe zones where the prohibited camping ordinance does not apply.

After discussing several of these options and then running out of time, the council passed a motion to create a task force to examine the possibility of creating more public restrooms.

"I am disappointed that no more was done," Ford said after the work session. "On the other hand, they expressed desire to get something done."

City attorney, Glen Klein, said during the work session that the current ban on camping is constitutional, but the council has the ability to change it.

Klein also said that several individuals have appealed their citations in District Court for illegal camping, so the legality issue will be raised then.

Weinman said the council seems sympathetic and wants to do something about the homeless, but no one presents them with a solution to vote on.

Councilman Kevin Hornbuckle raised the issue of housing as a constitutional right in the meeting.

"There are political causes of homelessness," he said. "The council is doing a lot of charity, but not doing anything for housing."

The Pit: New gable roof will top off Mac Court

Continued from Page 1
morning when the trucks show up."

The two-day closure is for safety reasons. Seven trucks carrying the boom and other equipment will be arriving Saturday morning.

"We are going to be flagging off the street to the sidewalk," Ferguson said. "We want to make sure that everything is kept a safe distance from the public while we assemble [the crane]."

No parking will be available along either side of University Street. This temporary closure will eliminate 50 to 60 metered parking spaces, he said.

"We have to make sure that there is space for the semi-trucks

to park," Ferguson said. "It's not easy to find parking for seven 40-foot trucks."

The sidewalk will be open on the west side. An area of the east side of the sidewalk will be open near Howe Field to allow spectators to get to the two softball games scheduled for this weekend.

"We will be letting the television truck come in and set up on the street by the field like usual," Ferguson said. "But the street will still be closed to everyone else."

Removal of Mac Court's roof will begin on Monday, Ferguson said. In order to put on the new roof, the crane will be used to maneuver 17 steel roof trusses.

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