

## Homeless camping: People would also have to maintain at least 10 feet of distance from building entrances and stairwells

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The City Council will review the draft on Monday night, but no decision will be made until a future meeting. A map identifying areas that camping would and would not be allowed will also be presented.

Former Police Chief Geoff Spalding, who moved into a temporary, part-time role since retiring, noted that the new standards require the ordinance to be objectively reasonable.

Spalding said it must be reasonable from the perspective of the city, community and, in particular, people who are homeless.

“Especially when you’re talking about proximity to services and places they can eat ... and work and what have you,” he said. “Those are all important. So you have to look at it from all perspectives, not just ours.”

The draft outlines two components: camping on public property and camping on private property.

For public property, the city began by identifying places people cannot sleep. Those areas include all parks, city owned and maintained parking lots, public restrooms, residential zones, areas underneath roads or bridges that are not open to the public and sidewalks where 6 feet of space cannot be maintained.

People would also have to maintain at least 10 feet of distance from building entrances and stairwells.

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**Geoff Spalding** | former Astoria police chief who moved into a temporary, part-time role since retiring

Spalding noted that complaints from business owners about people sleeping under awnings and in doorways has historically been the police department’s No. 1 call for service related to homelessness.

The exclusions make up the vast majority of the city, leaving public rights of way in commercial areas on the table.

“We can’t anticipate every possible location that someone could be or a possible place we may want to be off-limits,” Spalding said. “Once this is done, it will continue to be modified.”

He said places could be added or removed from the exclusion list, but it would require approval by the City Council. Spalding said changes after adoption of the ordinance would be done through a more nimble process that could be approved by the council through a resolution.

The second component

deals with camping on private property. A regulated camping program could allow camping in parking lots of churches, nonprofits and businesses, and potentially in vacant or abandoned commercial or industrial properties with owner permission.

An earlier draft that would have allowed homeowners to take part in the program has been taken off the table.

Up to six people in three vehicles or tents in any combination could sleep on the property. The property owner would have to provide sanitary facilities, garbage services and storage areas. They would not be allowed to collect payment.

The draft includes a number of safeguards and the ability to revoke permissions.

The private camping would have to follow the time and manner provisions.

## Housing: County would like to see the state help build capacity for local agencies

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face a roughly three-year waiting list. The letter also cites the county’s 2019 housing study that predicts a need in the coming years for over 1,500 new housing units to meet demand.

The county proposes that the state offer technical assistance to rural communities.

This could include helping counties and cities plan new housing-related development, enforce codes on properties with a history of violations, provide services to homeless veterans and assess whether strategies for addressing housing and homelessness are feasible, the letter says.

The county also suggests “community engagement assistance to address misinformation and public concerns about their proximity to affordable housing developments/programs.”

Astoria’s recent experience with a proposed workforce housing project with a built-in behavioral health component for Heritage Square, for example,

**THE COUNTY ALSO REQUESTS FUNDS TO HELP DISPOSE OF ABANDONED RECREATIONAL VEHICLES AND CLEAN UP WASTE AT DESERTED HOMELESS CAMPS, AS WELL AS FOR WETLAND MITIGATION SO THAT UNDEVELOPED LAND CAN BE USED FOR HOUSING-RELATED PROJECTS, THE LETTER SAYS.**

became mired in such concerns, as well as a focal point of misinformation, before city leaders withdrew support for financial reasons.

The county would like to see the state help build capacity for local agencies — such as emergency shelters and resource navigation centers — that confront the housing issue. The letter argues for more staffing for Clatsop Community Action’s homeless liaison program, which sends advocates into the homeless community to try to connect

them to services.

The letter asks for support in the development of 15 parcels the county recently offered up to cities and nonprofits for housing, child care and social services.

The county also requests funds to help dispose of abandoned recreational vehicles and clean up waste at deserted homeless camps, as well as for wetland mitigation so that undeveloped land can be used for housing-related projects, the letter says.

## Outbreaks: More than 74% of county residents have been fully vaccinated

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Administrators at Clatsop Care Retirement Village and Clatsop Care Memory Community could not immediately be reached for comment. Both facilities operate under the Clatsop Care Health District.

Outbreaks at care homes have been of particular concern to public health leaders because of the vulnerability of the elderly population to the virus.

Jiancheng Huang, the new director of the Clatsop County Public Health Department, said the outbreaks were not surprising.

“Thanks to past efforts by our community to protect themselves and their loved ones from becoming sick with COVID, we have had very few outbreaks,” he said in a statement. “But it is not surprising that we now are seeing outbreaks since the COVID virus keeps mutating and this variant is more contagious.”

COVID-19 case counts had declined

but rose again in the spring as omicron subvariants began to circulate, spiking in May and June. Omicron subvariants BA.4 and BA.5 now dominate new virus cases, according to the health authority.

The Public Health Department, Huang said, urges people to get vaccinated and boosted, especially people 60 and older and who are immunocompromised, to reduce their risk of illness and hospitalization.

More than 74% of county residents have been fully vaccinated.

“Now we have lab and home tests available for COVID,” Huang said. “If anyone tests positive, they need to be isolated for five days, according to (the) Oregon Health Authority. We know many people are testing themselves using home testing kits. If they have symptoms but test negative, they need to retest in 24 to 48 hours.”

As of Wednesday, the county had recorded 5,453 virus cases and 53 deaths, according to the health authority.

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