

Dignity Village Threatened

City officials may close tent city in northeast Portland unless order restored

(AP) - It seems the behavior at Dignity Village has been anything but dignified this fall.

Troubled by reports of drunkenness and domestic violence, Mayor Vera Katz and Commissioner Erik Sten are warning residents that the tent city near Portland International Airport in northeast Portland will be closed unless order is restored.

Police have received 18 calls related to the homeless village since Oct. 7. One of the five domestic violence calls involved a registered sex offender, according to a police summary, and two others involved Ibrahim Mubarak, the camp's frequent spokesman.

Last Thursday, a former resident who was booted out of the camp called Sten's office and threatened to "shoot up" the village and his wife, who still lives there, the summary says.

Early Sunday, Mubarak and his wife were arrested on suspicion of domestic violence, according to police reports. The district attorney's office did not press charges at the couple's arraignment Monday afternoon.

"This is a lot of calls in a short period of time, and it takes a lot of our resources to go out there," said Derrick Foxworth, commander of the Northeast police precinct. "If we were having this number of problems at an apartment building, I'd be meeting with the landlord or the tenant

association and possibly considering a chronic nuisance letter."

The tent city, founded a year ago as Camp Dignity under a bridge downtown, now sits with City Council approval on seven acres of city-owned property near the airport.

But Katz and Sten, in a letter to residents, warn that the council's "support for the Village is predicated on the assumption that the Village remain free of violence and alcohol. If these types of illegal activities continue, we will be forced to conclude that this experiment has not succeeded."

Village supporters say some of the trouble has come from residents who were kicked out and returned intoxicated.

"There was a handful of people that needed to be ejected from the village permanently, and that was tremendously traumatic for village residents," said John Hubbard, a community organizer working with the village. "I'm confident that we're through the worst of that, but it has been a very difficult last six weeks."

Jack Tafari, a resident, said the village plans to develop a protocol for when police should be called and route calls through a security liaison. The police summary includes one call from two residents complaining that another resident had poisoned their sugar.

Club Holds Kwanzaa Event

The 30th annual Portland Kwanzaa celebration kicks off Wednesday, Dec. 26 with a 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. program hosted by the Black Educational Center at the Blazer Boys & Girls Club, 5250 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

Kwanzaa is a seven-day African American cultural holiday founded in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga. The holiday begins on Dec. 26 and ends on Jan. 1.

The Portland Kwanzaa Harambee Umoja program begins with storytelling by Askari and the opening of the African Marketplace at 4 p.m.

The Harambee celebration will begin at 5:45 p.m. with a processional led by African drummers followed by a libation and the traditional Nguzo Sava, the seven Kwanzaa principles candle lighting ceremony.

Harambee means, "let's pull together." After the opening ceremony, a tribute to elders in the community will take place. Julia Fletcher will be honored for her many years promoting African history and culture and community service.

The Prospective Gents will perform in celebration of the festival's "first fruits". African arts and crafts activities will be provided for children. Kids will also participate in African drumming, dancing, storytelling and refreshments.

A closing ritual will include African drumming and dancing by everyone.

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OHSU Nurses Strike

continued from Front

A total of 802 nurses, or 72 percent, voted against the proposal, with 319 favoring the offer. About 400 nurses did not vote.

The nurses want a 19-percent pay increase over two years, while management offered a 14-percent raise over 27 months. OHSU also offered to pay part of a scheduled increase in health-insurance premiums, but not as much as the nurses had sought.

Nurses also complain that they deal with the state's most difficult cases at OHSU, and that considering there's a nationwide shortage, OHSU doesn't pay enough to attract the most qualified among them. OHSU nurses earn about \$18 to \$28 an hour, \$2 to \$3 less than at the state's highest-paying hospitals. OHSU counters that it compensates by contributing 12 percent of the nurses' salary to their retirement plans.

"I know of no retirement package in the private sector that even comes close to OHSU's retirement package," Driggers said. She also said that the hospital's last offer is "both fair and the best we can do."

Kathleen Sheridan, a negotiator for the Oregon Nurses Association, countered that OHSU is spending freely on expanding its hilltop campus, at the expense of patient care.

"We're asking them to change their priorities," Sheridan said. "The priority at OHSU should be patient care, and it's not. It's research, and VIP rooms and marble floors. They have a ton of money, and that pie needs to be cut differently."

A prolonged strike could cost OHSU millions, in training of replacements and in reduced patient admissions. But Driggers said meeting the union's demands would place a long-term financial burden on the hospital.

"It will cost a lot," she said of the strike. "It will also cost a lot for the nurses to be on strike."

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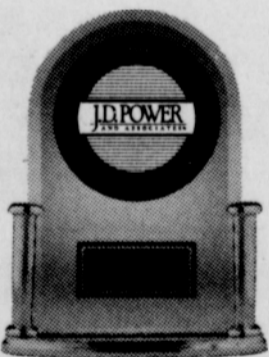
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