

City establishes temporary shelter for homeless at Community Center



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

The city has set up a small, temporary shelter behind the Community Center in a move to address homelessness in the area.

By **DAMIEN SHERWOOD**
DSHERWOOD@
CGSENTINEL.COM

A small row of tents on the Cottage Grove Community Center property has raised the eyebrows of some in the community.

A few weeks ago, the City of Cottage Grove made accommodations for a handful of homeless individuals in the area by establishing a small relief site situated in the back of the center. The site was equipped with canopies provide a temporary shelter space.

"This is not going to be the permanent solution," said City Manager Richard Meyers. "This is just temporary

as we're trying to address some of the other issues."

The site is part of an active step the city has taken in addressing homelessness in Cottage Grove.

The reasons for the move are manifold, starting with a court decision almost three years ago.

A Dec. 16, 2019, U.S. Supreme Court decision to deny a petition to review *Martin v. City of Boise* finalized a significant holding by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals which protects the right for homeless people to sleep in public spaces without reprisal.

The Circuit Court ruling held that if a homeless person has no option of sleeping

indoors, a city cannot cite or punish him or her for violating an ordinance disallowing sleeping outside in a public space.

Governor Kate Brown also signed into law House Bill 3115 this year.

The law mandates that any city or county law must be reasonable if it regulates "sitting, lying, sleeping or keeping warm and dry outdoors on public property."

Under the measure, a homeless person charged with violating a ban on camping or loitering would have an affirmative defense against a law that is not objectively reasonable. A person experiencing homelessness may also sue to challenge the

objective reasonableness of a city or county law, and be awarded attorney fees if the plaintiff prevails.

However, this bill will not take effect until July 1, 2023.

In the meantime, the Circuit Court ruling stands.

Beyond legal reasons, though, Meyers invoked a basic appeal to humanity.

"They're humans and we've got to do what we can try to do to get them back on their feet," he said.

In setting up the site, however, the city has laid down some rules. Site occupants are not allowed to loiter in the front of the building and cannot be on the sidewalks entering into the building.

They may also not block

any of the handicap pathways or block any of the doors, even if the door is not an entrance.

The site is also limited to just six people to keep it manageable.

Part of the strategy is to provide a pathway for individuals who need a hand up.

While some in the community have complained that city should not be providing this service at the community center, city staff have said that the proximity provides the opportunity to make much-needed connections.

"If we pushed them off the Community Center, they'd be in the parks and they'd be scattered around throughout the community," said Mey-

ers. "And we wouldn't have that direct connection where we're able to regularly check on them."

The city is working with other organizations such as Carry It Forward, Be Your Best, Looking Glass and others to establish avenues of upward mobility.

South Lane Mental Health is also a resource, though the nonprofit is currently understaffed and finding it difficult to secure positions.

Another reason for the city's approach has been to help other members of the community and businesses by providing an alternative to doorsteps and sidewalks, said Meyers.

See SHELTER A6

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Are you ready?

How pet owners can prepare for disasters in advance

The need to prepare for natural disasters is never more apparent than right after an especially harsh storm touches down. But disaster preparation should be a proactive endeavor, as taking action before a storm can make confronting the storm that much easier.

Pet owners must give extra thought to disaster preparedness to ensure their pets can make it through harsh storms unscathed. Natural disasters like storms and fires can put pets in jeopardy, so it's vital that pet owners take the steps necessary to protect their furry friends before such disasters strike.

- Place a rescue alert sticker on your front door or window. Rescue alert stickers alert first responders to the presence of pets in a home. The ASPCA recommends placing the sticker on the front door or window (visit aspc.org to receive a free sticker). Include the types and numbers of pets in the home as well as the name and phone number of your veterinarian.
- Learn about local safe havens. If pet owners must evacuate in the case of a coming storm, their pets must evacuate as well. Some animal shelters provide emergency shelter for pets and/or can arrange for pets to be fostered until their owners can safely return home. It's vital to conduct this research in advance, as the ASPCA notes that not all shelters can accommodate pets during storms or other emergencies. Knowing which ones do can ensure pets have a safe place to go should disaster strike.
- Stock up on emergency supplies. The ASPCA recommends pet owners plan as if they won't be allowed to return home for several weeks, even if they suspect their time away will be much shorter. Speak with your vet about what to include in a pet first-aid kit, and be sure to bring at least several days' worth of canned (pop-top) or dry food. Disposable litter trays, liquid dish soap and disinfectant and an extra collar or harness and extra leash are some additional emergency supplies to pack. A full list of recommended emergency supplies can be



found at aspc.org.

- Make sure pets wear collars and tags at all times. Disaster can strike at any time, so it's vital that pets wear their identification tags and collars at all times. The ASPCA urges pet owners to include pets' names and any urgent medical needs on the tags. A telephone number where owners can be reached at all hours of the day should be included on tags as well.
 - Take location into account. The ASPCA advises pet owners who live in regions prone to certain disasters to find rooms in their homes which can serve as safe havens during storms. Many storms do not require evacuations, but that does not mean pets won't be frightened. Safe rooms should be clear of windows and be easily accessible and easy to clean.
- Disaster preparedness includes strategies to keep pets safe in the wake of storms or other potentially hazardous situations.

PUT TOGETHER A PLAN

Make sure all the pieces are in place to render you and your family prepared in the event of a natural disaster.

- Listen to radio or television newscasts for the latest weather information, and follow all evacuation directions and suggestions.
- Keep a stock of non-perishable food items as well as bottled water on hand inside your home.
- Keep a 72 Hour Kit on hand inside your home that is easy to get to in the event of a disaster.

For more information and tips on disaster response and preparedness, contact your local emergency services center.

South Lane Fire & Rescue • 233 Harrison Ave, Cottage Grove 541-942-4493 • 55 South 1st Street, Creswell 541-895-2506



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