

# What should new city policy be for homeless shelters?

The new Bend City Council wants to get serious about helping the homeless. It's going to look at changing city codes to allow managed camps and shelters. It wants to create housing to house 500 homeless individuals.

Those are topics to be discussed Wednesday at a city of Bend committee meeting. The meeting will be to recommend strategies for the Bend City Council. This and the committee's other meetings will be open to the public. It's looking to come up with new regulations for consideration by councilors by August.

The timeline is relatively quick. The committee may meet twice in April and May and then again later to help implement or tweak any changes. Its nine members includes two city councilors, various representatives from existing city committees and local people with expertise in homelessness.

The first meeting is basically an overview of the challenge. But what sort of recommendations might this committee make? It's foolish to guess, though there are some things that have already been discussed.

One major issue: Where can shelters and camps be? Should there be any zoning designation in the city where they are prohibited? Should what's allowed vary by zone?

Some neighbors don't want homeless camps and shelters anywhere near them. A shelter in downtown Bend that helped keep people from freezing to death in the winter a few years ago also created some concerns. It got pushback from neighboring businesses and residences. When the city proposed a city-sanctioned camp at Juniper Ridge, that got strong opposition from neighbors. The city canceled that plan. So where can camps or shelters be?

At least two bills in the Legislature will impact any decisions in Bend.

Both bills seem on track to become law.

House Bill 2006 would require local governments to allow an emergency shelter — a building or cluster of buildings to provide shelter for people who lack housing — notwithstanding land use laws and regulations. It includes areas in parking lots for people to camp in vehicles even if the vehicle is not designed for camping.

House Bill 3261 states that a local government must unconditionally allow the conversion of a property from a motel or hotel to an emergency shelter.

Both of the bills have limitations and conditions. For instance, both have statements requiring that adequate transportation must be available in the area to medical and commercial services. Any facility must also be in compliance with appropriate building codes. There are more, such as limits on what sorts of organizations that can run emergency shelters described in the legislation. Basically the combination of bills would make it much easier to site homeless shelters or camps. They would have eliminated some of the obstacles the city of Bend encountered when it was considering purchasing a hotel on Third Street to serve the homeless.

By the time this committee's recommendations get to the Bend City Council, whatever the committee chooses will have a lot of momentum. If you want to have an impact on these decisions, you should check out what it is doing now and provide comment. There is more information here: [tinyurl.com/soundingboardBend](http://tinyurl.com/soundingboardBend).

# Collective impact could have more significance

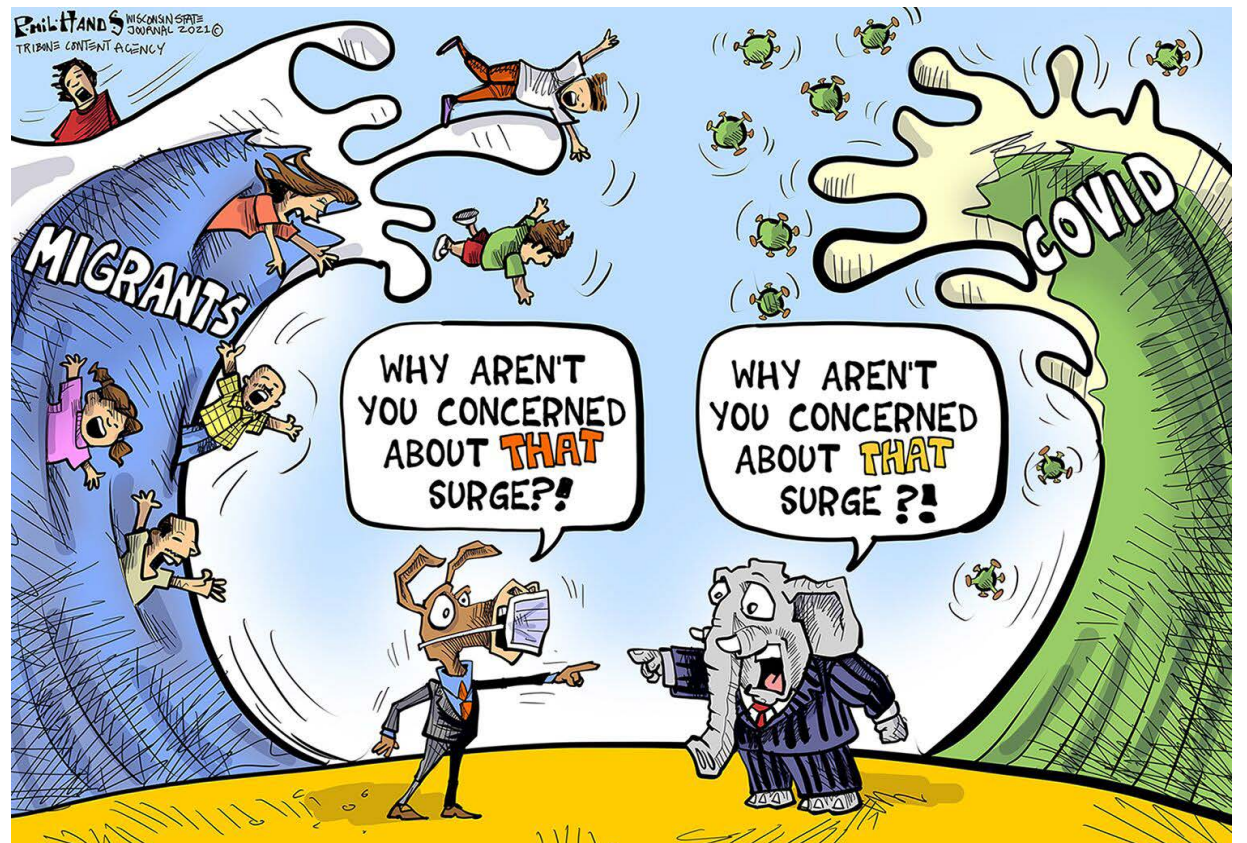
Schools in Bend should not be expected to tackle alone some of the complex societal challenges they face. The same goes for the city of Bend, the park district and even the public library district.

This week the Bend-La Pine School Board may take a step to join forces. It will consider signing on to a collaborative organization with all those groups as partners. The Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council will also be a part. The new collaboration will be called Collective Impact Bend. It will meet monthly. The idea is to work together on problems or issues that impact them all.

Guess what? There won't be miracles.

But working together could help. One almost certain benefit may be better understanding and relations between the people who serve on the boards of the respective organizations. Sometimes, the city and the Bend Park & Recreation District have been at odds. The friction between them over fee waivers for affordable housing is just one example. New school board members also expressed surprise not so long ago when they learned of changes to school revenue because of city policies for the Bend Central District.

Collective Impact Bend won't end any friction. But the regular meetings and working together on other problems may better align them for success.



# My Nickel's Worth

## Hovekamp for Bend parks

I cannot overemphasize the essentiality of reelecting Nathan Hovekamp, Ph.D., to another term of service on the Bend Park & Recreation District board of directors, which he currently chairs.

As reflected in the Deschutes County 2021 Special Election Voter's Pamphlet, this fine scientist and educator — whom I have known for over two decades — possesses the full range of attributes and abilities essential to appreciating and acting on the challenges involved in continued constructive administration and development of Bend's outstanding park and recreation resources.

A veteran of public service in elected positions, he has previously proved his mettle with four years of service on the Bend-La Pine School Board and eight years of service on the Bend Planning Commission, both of which he chaired. He knows Bend and its people, and he knows how to work constructively and consistently with others to meet their needs.

To return Nathan Hovekamp to the Bend Park & Recreation District board position in which he has served so successfully since 2015 would continue his consistently great service to our community.

— Les Joslin, Bend

## Headline could mislead

An April 9 front-page headline in The Bulletin announced, "17 residents contract virus despite vaccination."

While that fact is not in dispute, the headline — which unfortunately is the only thing some will remember and repeat — is misleading. One could be forgiven for thinking the headline is bad news, or that it reflects poorly on the efficacy of vaccines.

However, the opposite is true. The

article states that more than 700,000 Oregonians are fully vaccinated, and of that number, 168 have received a positive COVID-19 test. What that means is that out of all the fully vaccinated Oregonians, a mere 0.025% have contracted the virus (almost always with few or no symptoms), and of that tiny number, only three have died. At that rate of death, a fully vaccinated state would have suffered deaths in the low double digits, rather than the nearly 2,500 deaths to date.

In other words, the vaccines are both safe and astonishingly effective.

We are in a race between rising infection numbers and vaccine distribution. Given that a not insignificant number of Oregonians are skeptical or hesitant to be vaccinated, public messaging ought to tout the amazing benefits of the vaccines. Spreading misinformation — even unintentionally, even when factually correct — will only increase the chances that fewer people on the fence will choose to be vaccinated.

Here is an idea for a headline that is both factual and true: "COVID-19 vaccines, proven to be over 99.9% effective, offers Oregon a return to normal life."

— David Jacobsen, Bend

## Too slow on civics

The Oregon Senate is backing a bill for a civics requirement for Oregon graduation. This has bipartisan support. The law would take effect in the 2025-26 school year. Why in the world wait over 4 years for such a crucial requirement? It should start this fall 2021.

— Katy Sanchez, Bend

## Limiting access to the wilderness

With disappointment, I logged

onto the [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) site to buy permits on April 6 at 7 a.m. in order to buy "access to walk up to Green Lakes or to camp in the Three Sisters Wilderness."

My take on this matter is that the Deschutes National Forest is engaging in tactics to prevent citizens from accessing the Three Sisters Wilderness though shoddy politics and bureaucratic impedance versus enabling access.

So, why is the DNF trying to make wilderness areas in Oregon into a Nanny State versus enabling access with more parking and rangers to be ambassadors of the wilderness?

The way that it is happening, the DNF looks like it is putting a chain-link fence around the wilderness to keep folks out.

The DNF appears to be run by a bunch of petty bureaucrats versus leaders. Why not partner with non-government organizations and businesses to help preserve the wilderness through open access versus the shameful tactics of the permit system? What about expanding parking at the trailheads? Citizens want to enjoy the wilderness versus looking at it through a fence.

— Mark Jewell, Eugene

## Bad plan for Worrell

I was taken aback when I read about the proposed plan for Worrell Park. As I drive around Bend, looking right and left, I wonder where it will stop. Every patch of empty land falls, one by one, to construction. This little habitat in downtown Bend should be preserved. When I read the article, it was "parking" that jumped out at me. In that area there is ample parking. Worrell Park is unique. This little park should be preserved and \$2.5 million spent elsewhere.

— Antonia Fenech, Bend

## Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's signature, phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of The Bulletin. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

## Guest columns

Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words; they must be signed; and they must include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere. Locally submitted columns alternate with national columnists and commentaries. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

## How to submit

Please address your submission to either My Nickel's Worth or Guest Column and mail, fax or email it to The Bulletin. Email submissions are preferred.

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# With the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, there is no over, only a pause

BY KATE COHEN  
The Washington Post

My first COVID-19 shot felt like the first burst of spring in upstate New York: thrilling and full of promise. At long last the winter is over!

Or is it? As every upstater knows, the moment you dare to put your parka away up here you inevitably find yourself scraping snow off your car. So too, with COVID-19, as joy and hope hit reality.

As I write, 29% of my county is fully vaccinated; appointments are now open to every New Yorker. The vaccines themselves are — let us pause to note — incredible: practically perfect and created at superhero speed. It's as if the scientists said, "Just stay put. We'll

get you out of this," and, after just one season of "Ted Lasso" and two Taylor Swift albums, they did.

But in Albany County, as in the country as a whole, new cases are up, the positivity rate is up, hospitalizations are up. Our county transmission rate is rated "high." I drove by a highway sign this morning that flashed "COVID IS STILL A RISK." So how are we supposed to behave? Do we put away our parkas yet?

I know: Obviously, we wait for our second shot, then wait two weeks more. But then am I free to behave as before? Can I travel? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says it's safe but also that it's not really safe. When can I eat in restaurants again? When can I have my friends over?

When can I plan for the future?

Oh, how I miss planning! I know I'm supposed to have perfected the art of living in the moment, but sometimes the moment is located midway through a Zoom meeting about the feasibility of setting up another, larger, Zoom meeting, and at those times it would be nice to have something to look forward to.

The same week I got my first shot, my daughter was accepted into a program out of state for the fall semester. That acceptance letter included a start date — Aug. 28, 2021 — which I seized upon as the first real, true, definite date of our post-pandemic life.

But as soon as I let myself picture packing, driving and saying goodbye, I got nervous. I thought of all the events

— the high school graduation, the senior recital, the milestone birthday, the trip with friends — that evaporated from our calendars last year; each date marked now not with fond memories and photographs but with the faintest ghostprint of loss. Could I really start believing that what I plan for six months from now will actually occur?

Federal officials are warning of a possible fourth surge. Health experts worry that fast-moving COVID-19 variants might outpace vaccine distribution. France just entered lockdown for the third time. That means two times someone said, "C'est fini!" and it wasn't. Twice my son went through dorm-room quarantine: first arriving last fall to an "isn't this fun?!" basket brimming with junk food and next ar-

riving this spring to an "I guess we're still doing this" case of bottled water. All signs indicate that next fall will bring a return to campus as usual. I can't help noting, though — that's what we thought this time last year, too.

My local library closed, then opened, then closed again. Now it's open, but when I tiptoed in for a book last week, it looked less like my second home and more like an art installation: "Protocols" c. 2021, plexiglass on wood laminate, A-frame signage, hand sanitizer. Was it my imagination or were all the chairs removed?

COVID-19 is still a risk. But as soon as it's not a risk to me — and I'm not a risk to others — I'm heading out.

■ Kate Cohen, a Washington Post contributing columnist, is a writer from Albany, New York.