



R.J. Marx
Spencer Kyle, center, at his first City Council meeting as city manager. At left, Kim Jordan, the city recorder, and at right, City Attorney Dan Van Thiel.

Campers: Stay extended to six days before move-out

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It means you are not offensive or dangerous. Rather than penalize 25 people for the actions of two, we can just say to those two people, 'You have lost the ability to live in the camp.'"

Elizabeth Davis, who described herself as a resident and RV camper at the site experiencing temporary homelessness, said the policy limiting stays to one night has negatively impacted her family's life.

"The gas required to constantly move our RV in order to comply with the ordinance is an undue burden, about the cost of renting a house by the end of the month," Davis said. "That actively thwarts my ability to save or get into a place."

Wear and tear on her vehicle leads to expensive mechanical problems not easily fixed, which occur more often and sooner, Davis said.

"Certainly the instability created by the current ordinance and the way that it is enforced makes it inherently difficult to have a normal household stability or routine that most people take for granted in their daily lives," she said.

Mill Ponds camper Michael Howard said that despite working 30 hours a week, he could not afford housing. He, like others, sought a longer length of stay.

"I'm on a three-year waitlist for housing," Howard said.

Camper Jeanne Faller said she was homeless as a result of COVID, mold exposure and osteoporosis.

"I'm too sick to get up every single day and walk," Faller said. "I can try, but I end up back in the emergency room."

The overnight limits had come in an effort to prevent a repeat of an encampment at the city-owned lot at 10th and Necanicum, Mayor Jay Barber said.

"We had people moving in and



Police Chief Dave Ham and Community Service Officer Paul Knoch respond to the Seaside City Council's consideration of homeless camping hours.

the first six or seven campers really self-governed themselves, kept the place clean," he said. "Within weeks, there were 20 campers, and then 30 campers, then 40 campers in chaos. And our concern was that we don't want to see that happen. You have to move out so that we don't see an RV park and a 10th and Necanicum established in the neighborhood where the problems would come again."

Extending the length of stay for homeless campers is the least burdensome enforcement approach, Community Service Officer Paul Knoch said.

"I think one day out is critical, though, because it's a temporary camping program," he said. "Public works needs to clean up the area. We don't want a 10th and Necanicum-type setup."

According to the new policy, participants must check out on Thursday by 10 a.m. and are allowed to return after 4 p.m. when the gates are reopened. Those who do not comply with camp rules may be denied entry or issued a citation to appear in court.

Campers found to be repeatedly in violation of the ordinance and deemed to be a nuisance will be excluded from

camping in the city.

"I'll be going into Mill Ponds every single day to make sure campers are tidy," Knoch said. "I know what a clean and tidy camp looks like. If there's trash just starting to spread out, I can have contact with that individual. Our presence won't change even if they don't have to move out every day. We just won't be having these daily fights and struggles. And I also believe we'll have more people who are currently not participating in the program."

Barber, Phillips, Montero, City Councilor Steve Wright, City Councilor Tom Horning and City Councilor Randy Frank approved the policy, which went into effect immediately on a temporary basis.

Additional tweaks to the camping ordinance included a prohibition on camping in aquatic or wetland areas, as well as wording that would have permitted homeless camping on private property in residential areas.

Camping on nonresidential private property requires property owner permission and participation in the permit process.

Lot-size requirements will be a topic of future policy discussions.

Kyle: 'Excited to put roots here'

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a credentialed city manager from the International City/County Management Association.

He was selected by the City Council from a national pool of candidates using Jensen Strategies, a Portland-based recruitment firm.

His first council meeting included a ballot measure for a moratorium on psilocybin dispensaries, changes to the city's homeless camping ordinance and an appeal to a vacation rental approval.

"There are a few procedural differences, but the work we're doing is about the same," Kyle said after the meeting. "What I appreciated tonight was we had

some vigorous debate on some important issues, and I think some minds were changed in the process. That's what the process is for and I think it's good for our community."

The Kyles have found a rental home in Gearhart and plan to buy.

"Our kids are loving all the amenities, the beaches and everything else in particular," Kyle said. "This would be a great experience. We're excited to put some roots down here. So I'm just excited. I'm drinking from the fire hose right now and a little overwhelmed with everything, but I can't wait to be better up to speed and really be able to serve you and the community."



R.J. Marx
A proposed ordinance would prohibit signs on trees and areas where they would pose a public safety hazard.

Signs: Public safety concerns spur ordinance

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regarding election signs," City Administrator Chad Sweet said. "The council is mainly concerned with election signs nailed to city trees, on city right of way, and placed in a manner that creates a hazard to walkers and drivers."

Residents asked the city to remove a campaign sign on private property at the corner of Pacific Way and North Cottage. They said the sign, which advocated a "yes" vote for Measure 4-213, was too big and violated the city's zoning code. They also said that the law is being exercised unfairly, as in the past, the city has required the removal of oversized campaign signs.

According to the city's zoning code, temporary and permanent use signs in the neighborhood commercial zone are limited to no more than 8 square feet. The code does not have a provision for campaign signs.

City Attorney Peter Watts said the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that signs are an important medium of political, religious, or personal messages for which there are no exact alternatives. The ruling limits the ability

of local governments to regulate political signs.

His opinion opened the door to campaign signs of increasingly greater size, on parked cars and on the fence along Pacific Way in front of the former Gearhart Elementary School.

Other elements of the sign ordinance will be untouched.

"We're not proposing changes to the current city sign ordinance except for election signs," Sweet said.

Watts said he is concerned about public safety, maintaining vehicle sight lines, right of ways and protecting city trees. Rules would likely not exceed that.

"I would just say the higher the level of regulation, the higher the legal risk, because it could impair people's ability to express themselves," Watts said.

"I think we should try to keep the regulation to a minimum that keeps public safety and our tree safety paramount," City Councilor Brent Warren said.

Watts will bring a draft of the election sign ordinance to the council at the August meeting for discussion, Sweet said.

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