

Santa Cruz City Council Meeting
April 23, 2019 (Afternoon Session)

Item 13: Gateway Encampment Closure (CN)

Motion to: (1) direct the City Manager to implement the City Council-approved Standard Operating Procedures for a permanent closure of the Gateway Encampment with a target closure date of April 30, 2019 and coinciding with the opening of the 1220 River Street Camp; and, (2) convert any temporary relocation of the Gateway Encampment under the existing Council-directed Site Management Plan to this permanent closure and alternate shelter sites.

BACKGROUND: The City Council has been deeply entrenched in homelessness-related policy since February 12, 2019 at which time the Council adopted the County and City of Santa Cruz Joint Action Plan for Emergency Shelter Provision and Encampment Management (Action Plan). The Action Plan served as a collaborative plan to ensure the City and the County moved in unison to address the immediate health and safety challenges at the Gateway Encampment, develop sheltering programs to bolster our community's capacity, and close the unsanctioned encampment.

DISCUSSION: Since February, efforts have been made to advance several of the Action Plan objectives, and other ideas and considerations were explored to address the Gateway Encampment closure. At this time, we recommend proceeding with a full closure of the encampment. Closure is necessary to ensure better health and safety outcomes for the encampment residents and surrounding community, and to leverage to the maximum extent all shelter and safe storage resources that are available and secured including the 1220 River Street, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and Laurel Street Salvation Army programs, to provide alternate sleeping locations. If shelter options become unavailable during and after

the closure, as the Council directed on April 9, 2019, the City will not enforce Santa Cruz Municipal Code Chapter 6.36 “Camping” against these homeless individuals, per the Martin v. Boise decision. Acting now will ensure the greatest success and impact in transferring Gateway Encampment sleepers to existing, supported and funded shelter programs.

City Council Action: (2 motions)

1) The city moves forward with opening of the temporarily managed campsite at the Benchlands, that city move forward with preparation of managed campsite at 1220 of north river, city moves forward with temporary relocation of ross campers to the Benchlands, that upon the closure of the Benchlands temporary site on May 1, the city assist Benchland campers to new shelter facilities such as 1120 north river, salvation army locations, and other resources. During the Ross camp closure, the site be secured and accurate census be taken of those remaining, that there be no new occupants at the ross site during this closure period, and that the intent that campers do not return the ross camp once it’s closed

Motioned by Meyers, seconded by Mathews

Passed with Yes: Mathews, Cummings, Watkins, Meyers and

No: Brown, Glover, Krohn

2) Council member Glover moved to have a second transitional camp within the city (location not defined) to accommodate those homeless who are able to move to the River Street site or the temporary Benchlands site

Motioned by Glover, second by Brown

Passed with Yes: Glover, Brown, Krohn and Cummings

No: Watkins, Meyers and Mathews

Chamber's position: Chamber supports a homeless shelter at the River Street site and requests the city council work to locate a second site that is more compatible to serve the homeless population with wrap around services as necessary and in coordination with the County.

The Chamber supports closing the Gateway Encampment, at the directions of the city council and clear and clean the site of the public nuisance, health and public safety of the area.

The Chamber does not support temporary small 'encampments' spread across the City, at city owned lots near schools, parks, and where tourist and businesses generate tax revenues to the city. The Chamber does not believe moving the homeless population around the city, near schools, and into neighborhoods serves the citizens of our community, nor does it address our homelessness issues.