

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Mary Gourley](#)
Subject: Public Comment - Agenda Item 9a Homeless report - What do the changes at Elderberry Commons Mean to Sebastopol?
Date: Saturday, November 18, 2023 9:54:50 PM
Attachments: [public comment - homeless.pdf](#)

Thank you for the abbreviated report on the "unhoused."

This is the third meeting reporting on the same Homeless information. This report is the most readable for those who are interested but not looking for a volume of detailed reports. The detailed reports however provided the most useful information yet to understand the homeless situation in Sebastopol.

It correctly recognizes that the recent homeless census reports substantially fewer homeless in Sebastopol now than several years ago. It does not recognize that the Homeless today are much more encamped within our city center. Driving by yesterday there were only homeless present in the Central Plaza. Eight to ten individuals, one with prominent behavioral issues which may have discouraged others from entering the area.

Police reports include arrests almost weekly for what appear to be fairly serious crimes at locations with known concentrations of homeless. Public Works made new budget requests this year for daily patrols of our public buildings to deal with homeless who have overnighted and left behind needles and other expected forms of waste. The senior center made a budget request to fence off their parking overnight to keep out uninvited guests.

Attached for public comment is my analysis that combines Homeless census data and Population Data from the US census for Sebastopol. We currently have the highest density of Homeless compared to the census population of any city in Sonoma County. To date the only help we are receiving from the County is a grant to SAVs to manage the RV village. The County also pays for half our homeless coordinator.

The County purchased the Sebastopol Inn in September 2020 creating "permanent" homeless housing called Elderberry Commons. We were told it would house only elderly with health issues which made them high risk for COVID infections. Promises were made to prioritize individuals from Sebastopol but there were no reports. There was a public concern voiced about the potential for increased drug use in related activities in the Gravenstein Station. We were assured there would be no drug use allowed in Sebastopol. 24-hour security was to be provided so there would be no demand for our own police services. Anecdotal reports suggest not all is perfect but probably better than we expected.

Elderberry Commons has now been donated to the non-profit Burbank Housing who will operate it to provide more permanent housing for homeless who can pay for their stay there with Section 9 vouchers. There has been no information provided regarding the promises the County made to Sebastopol. With the reported change

of ownership, there have been no reports from the Ad-Hoc Committee on the Unhoused regarding queries it may be making with Burbank and West County regarding the policies that will be in place for the new population of tenants moving into our city. Will there be 24-hour security? What is their policy on admitting known felons, child offenders, or active drug users?

The city of Sebastopol lost approximately \$200,000 TOT revenue each year since the purchase in September 2020. This would have gone a long way to address many of our revenue issues. The County promised on initial Zoom briefing to address our concerns that they would make up for our lost revenue.

\$600,000 in lost city revenue so far, who is addressing this issue with the County?

Lee

