

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to ask you to enforce the current RV ordinance. If, for some reason, you cannot implement the current ordinance then another system needs to be put into place to limit RV street camping.

I would suggest the Permit System that was discussed prior to the RV Ordinance.

As Sebastopol owns Park Village – see my previous correspondence – it appears that Park Village could host a limited amount of RV parking to fulfill a permit process.

3 Known Transient Deaths

Allowing people to live in vehicles, in a laissez faire manner, has led to three known deaths. Cynthia Janssen, an RV Dweller was shot to death on August 20, 2020. A man was found dead in his vehicle on Morris Street in August 2020, cause of death unknown. A woman overdosed on Morris Street in the spring of 2021. If Council continues to let people live in their vehicles, they are enabling a system that leads to death and overdose. There is a well-documented national drug epidemic. In San Francisco, more people died in COVID hotel rooms of drug overdose than of COVID.

Not Helping Transients

Simply allowing people to live in their vehicles or use Sebastopol City streets as an illegal, unzoned RV camp has not helped transients transition into permanent housing, gain employment or become sober. There is no record of a single RV Camper, who has been living rent free on the streets of Sebastopol, obtaining housing or employment. Even with 2 years of all-expenses paid, the RV dwellers have not become self-sufficient.

The main drivers of homelessness are mental illness, drug addiction and former incarceration. Simply letting people live in their vehicles on our City streets does not address any root causes of homelessness; it simply compromises Sebastopol's streets and public spaces.

Strain on City Budget

Encouraging and supporting illegal RV encampments is a strain on public resources and City finances. At this time, all Sebastopol's vital public departments including City Administration, Police, Fire and Public Works are understaffed and underfunded.

The previous encampment on Morris Street cost citizens money in terms of port-o-potties, garbage pickup, public works time, police time and the cost of a homeless outreach coordinator.

Transients Use Social Media and Social Networks; More Vehicles Will Come

Transients like the rest of society use social media and social networks. This can make cities that do not have parking restrictions vulnerable to those who want to RV camp for free. People using "boondocking" networks. People living on Morris Street make

YouTube videos promoting Morris Street. There are a host of networks connecting people to "free RV camping". Sadly, nothing is "free" as people pay taxes for garbage, public works, public restrooms, roads, sidewalks and other city amenities. That is why hotels charge a transient occupancy tax - because visitors have an impact on city budgets. That is why parks charge entrance fees.

Sebastopol can't be a free campground; the City's budget is less than \$10,000,000.

This article features the "overnight stay."

<https://blog.campingworld.com/at-the-campsite/boondocking/3-types-boondocking-every-rver-should-know-about/>

<https://go.campendium.com/what-is-boondocking/>

If you watch this YouTube video by Rick G., you will see at 2 minutes 37 seconds, he says "It's legal to live in Sebastopol as long as you move every three days."

<https://youtu.be/eUenefLvkAw>

Currently, Sebastopol is off the boondocking network. If we allow people to establish RV camping on 116, it will become part of the network again. Our streets will fill up with RVs and we will have a huge problem.

<https://ioverlander.com/places/31951-morris-street>

RV DWELLERS IMPACT PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY SPACES

The current illegal RV campers impact children and families when they walk to school and community members who want to use the sidewalks.

When Morris Street was in full effect, the Community Center could not hold events. Bicyclists could not use the bike lanes. The Little League had to deal with human waste and needles.

If we want to support children, families, and community spaces, we cannot allow an RV encampment to take hold on 116 or other places.

If we are a compassionate community, we will make sure that low income children and working families in our community have access to clean and safe sidewalks and commute routes, supported school campuses and clean and safe public spaces.

RV ENCAMPMENTS ARE DANGEROUS

As I pointed out in my other correspondence, there were many fires on Morris Street. One happened just as people were moving into Horizon Shine on 3/24/22. One unhoused person lit the trailer of another unhoused person on fire. Luckily, many trailers had already been moved. If the fire had happened a few days earlier, it would have been a disaster. See photo:



