

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Column #37



CAMPERS, BEGONE!

Where will the houseless go from here?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

WHILE PACIFIC Grove's city council was debating sites for Pebble Beach Company's proposed affordable housing in June, Monterey and Seaside pondered how to quash the spread of illegal campsites in Laguna Grande Park, which they jointly share.

Since Monterey passed its "Sit & Lie Ordinance" last year, the homeless have migrated to Seaside. Many sleep in the 35-acre Laguna Grande encampment corridor on Canyon Del Rey, between Fremont and Del Monte, sandwiched between residential neighborhoods.

During the Seaside City Council's meeting Thurs., June 18, a Seaside resident addressed council about her encounter with a homeless woman who wandered from the park. I was that resident to whom council members listened politely.

My presentation, truncated below, was an unexpectedly well-timed warning that something dire could—and did—happen soon.

Warning alert to Seaside City Council!

On Tues. of this week (June 16), a sixtyish homeless woman came onto my property at around 10:00 AM. She went around back to the patio. I'd left the door open while feeding my cat.

I intercepted the intruder as she was entering the house with her dog. "I lost my wallet containing \$150. Please, can you help me?" she said.

"I don't keep cash in the house," I said, politely forcing her back toward the patio.

She pushed past me into the house. "Please, may I use your restroom before I soak my pants?"

I held the dog's leash and walked her down the hall. I managed to find a \$5 bill and, when she exited the bathroom, gave it to her and led her to the door.

She spotted several tall bottles in a cabinet and said, "Oh, I see you have wine. I sure would like to have a bottle."

"It's not wine. It's sparkling apple juice," I escorted her out the door to the sidewalk.

She went on her way and I posted a large, ugly yellow NO TRESPASSING SIGN on the fence outside my house.

I was lucky. No harm came from the intrusion.

This was not the first invasion I've had by homeless men and women who need help.

Later on Tues. I went to City Hall to read the proposed agenda items, believing Seaside City Council was going to vote for funds to be allocated in the budget to helping the homeless. There was no indication of any such item for the budget, which was to be voted on the following Thurs., June 18, although the subject had been delayed several times before.

I hope the council will address the reason the item is not in this budget. I wish to go on record as saying I am disappointed in Seaside. I know council planned to vote after hearing the results of the 2015 Homeless Census, and if by chance Katherine Thoeni of the Coalition of Homeless Service Providers gives a report tonight, I hope council will table its vote so the budget can be revised to include funds for addressing homelessness.

If the issue keeps being boondoggled (delayed), and more incidents happen in which homeless people invade private homes because adequate help is lacking, Seaside could really have problems. Let's all hope no one is badly injured or killed next time."

A Homeless Killing In Monterey

Katherine Thoeni did not show up and council passed its budget sans provision for funds for homeless services. One day later, nearby in Monterey, a killing occurred in a homeless encampment behind the Monterey Public Library.

A *Monterey Herald* story by Ana Ceballos stated: "Just after midnight on June 19, three homeless men were involved in a tragic event that left a man dead, a 22-year-old injured and a suspect behind bars. Word traveled fast among the homeless community after the killing, but stories varied on what sparked the violent act. About five men agreed, Scott Mendez Long, who was killed next to a tree in the quad area, had never been confrontational. Police have not confirmed the rumors citing an open investigation."

<http://www.montereyherald.com/general-news/20150626/at-the-heart-of-the-monterey-public-library-a-homeless-community>

Separate reports claimed the decedent might have suffered a psychotic attack that triggered the confrontational tragedy that would not have happened if he had been sheltered.

Homeless Encampments Hit The Front Page

The unknown results of the 2015 Point-in-Time Homeless Census, release of which were expected in May 2015, piqued my curiosity. I looked up the Coalition of Homeless Service Providers website at <http://chspmontereycounty.org/Census2015.html> but my computer could not open its tabs. Contacts at the Fund for Homeless Women advised that census results were still being compiled and reports were delayed.

Does this justify Seaside City Council's passage of another annual budget without inclusion of funds for homeless programs in Seaside? Has Seaside entrapped itself in a quandary from which it needs, but doesn't know how, to get out?

Consider this headline on the front page of the June 29 online edition of the *Monterey Herald* story by James Herrera that announces: "New plan for homeless encampments."

The sub-headline sums up the content of the story about plans by the Laguna Grande Regional Park Joint Powers Authority to force illegal campers out: "Seaside, Monterey committed to preventing encampments."

<http://www.montereyherald.com/environment-and-nature/20150629/laguna-grande-park-may-have-a-plan-to-deal-with-homeless-encampments>

Where will the homeless go if they're run out of yet another town? Across Fremont into land behind and around Safeway?

Readers are invited to submit solutions, starting with these ideas.

Rezone the parking lot at Roberts Lake on the ocean side of Del Monte to allow RVs, and campers of both types—vehicular and human—to camp overnight until a shelter is built.

Build a shelter in the Roberts Lake parking lot or at the Del Monte end of Laguna Grande Park.

Form an experimental corporation of private and government, as well as homeless, shareholders who purchase land in Marina and build a tract of tool-shed-sized units tall enough to accommodate bunk beds. This legal entity would put in a communal bath house per block; and sell, rent, or lease the units cheap, any or all eligible for Title 8 rent subsidy. What to call it? How about Backyard Bunkers.

Meanwhile, Del Rey Oaks, a private-property residential neighborhood with brushy canyon sides, might heed the Boy Scout motto: *Be prepared!*

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