

# HOMELESS IN PARADISE

October 7, 2016

Column #104

## Part 6 – Monterey Workshop Addresses Affordable Housing Solutions



### THE EMERGENCY SHELTER RACE TO BEAT OLD MAN WINTER

By Wanda Sue Parrott

“**ROUNDING** the clubhouse turn” is how my racing-fan mother might summarize the quest for an emergency warming shelter in Monterey before winter returns. If you recall, last December two homeless men froze to death in an empty lot in downtown Monterey.

Rumors claim they refused help offered by the police to get themselves, without their worldly goods, to a shelter in Salinas.

Alarmed activists sought social justice by advocating for a warming shelter to provide respite in Monterey. They argued that early campaigning could result in a shelter being established before more houseless people suffer from exposure this winter.

The advocates appealed to Monterey City Council while El Nino still loomed as a threat. Council members agreed: an emergency shelter is needed. In April, the issue was assigned to Monterey Planning Dept. to study and recommend location(s) for such a shelter.

So, as every good realtor knows when advising a client about where to buy, sell or settle on prime property, the question was: location, location, location?

### LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION?

What, if any, is the perfect location for an emergency/warming shelter? That is, one site that’s great for the agency running it, the neighbors near it, and the guests who will use it?

Following receipt of this notice from the Planning Dept., I expected to end this 6-part series by reporting Monterey City Council’s action at its Oct. 4 meeting. While the rest of America watched the vice-presidential debate, I watched and waited for:

1st Reading – M.C.C. Chapter 38 Amendment to Amend Section 38-11 (Definitions) and Section 17(P) (Use Classifications); Add New Article 16B Establishing an Overlay District for Emergency Shelters and Amend Zoning Map to apply Emergency Shelter Overlay District to the

General Commercial (C-3) Zoning District (Exempt from CEQA per Article 19 Section 15305)  
(Plans & Public Works - 201-12)

Instead, at 11 p.m., Monterey Mayor Clyde Roberson adjourned the meeting after council had engaged in four arduous hours of civil verbal debate about the wireless installation of a cell tower near Cannery Row.

Namely, the issue was how to prevent the city from being sued by the provider, who wants to put in the tower that outspoken citizens claimed are toxic.

At the end of the night, Item 15 wasn't even mentioned. So, here's how I am ending this series.

### **The Reading That Wasn't Read**

Item 15., aka Amendment 5 to the 2015-2023 Housing Element, was unveiled for public viewing at the Affordable Housing Solutions Workshop on Aug. 31, following which I drove north on Del Monte Ave. to check out the overlay of map area zoned as multiple commercial (C-3).

C-3 is roughly between the new In-n-Out Burger north of Seaside's City Seahorse and the Fish House in Monterey. Residences are tucked behind such side-street enterprises as a used-tire business, automotive repair facility, van and storage warehouse and self-storage units. A home-building supply and a limousine service front Del Monte Ave. one-quarter mile south of the Canyon Del Rey off ramp from Hwy. 1, where homeless persons camp in the underpass and panhandle across from Roberts Lake.

The outskirts-of-Monterey may be ideal for the homeless in that area, but online comments from neighbors claimed it is "too low" and is "flood-prone." Were they really saying, "We don't want it in our own backyard?"

By the time this issue arises again, and the second reading has been heard, winter will be knocking on our doors.

What else is news in Monterey?

Meanwhile, Mayor Clyde Roberson says no local law prevents renting affordable rooms in private homes.

"My wife and I did that for 10 years when our children grew up and I had 'empty nest syndrome'," he says. "We rented a room to Middlebury students with its own bathroom. kitchen and laundry privileges for our costs only. Our privacy was not impacted since the students were mostly at school studying. Doing such a thing provides affordable homes, friendships, and potential extra income to help homeowners with expenses. It is a win-win."

### **Will Monterey Open An Emergency/Warming Shelter By Winter?**

My mother would probably say, "Until they're in the home stretch, I wouldn't bet on it."

I add: Before a shelter can open, a site must be named within the designated area. That is, if Monterey City Council approves the item when it reappears on the agenda.

Early in the meeting at the reading that wasn't read, councilmember Libby Downey said, "Salinas had a warming shelter, and it was never filled. I hope we do some research on that."

Libby, thanks. A lot of others hope so, too!

(Next week: Pacific Grove council member Rudy Fischer discusses the Matching Funds Challenge.)

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