

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

June 11-17, 2021

### LET THE BOONDOGGLE BUSTING BEGIN! - Part 4



This rendering of the future Campus Town development depicts the area where homeless campers who live in their vehicles have been staying during the Covid-19 pandemic on the Monterey Peninsula. Where they will go after the “Ides of June” (when California is slated to reopen) is unknown. (Photo courtesy City of Seaside)

### ARE YOU READY FOR THE IDES OF JUNE?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

**DROPPING** by the homeless encampment on the future Campus Town's site was my plan on Tuesday. If anyone remained in the church lot, where the Roberts Lake Community camped during the 15-month Covid-19 pandemic, I'd ask where occupants of those 35 vehicles will go, since Seaside's deadline for vacating the premises is June 15, 2021.

That's the “Ides of June,” the same day Governor Gavin Newsom hopes to reopen California. My questions included:

Will vehicle dwellers return to Lapis Road in Marina?

Will they move on to land in Salinas or Santa Cruz?

Or relocate elsewhere within the city limits of Seaside?

After the March, 2020, Shelter-in-Place orders were issued, Seaside welcomed homeless sheltering in vehicles within city boundaries, and suggested other communities share such hosting, an invitation not acted upon by the six other cities of the Monterey Peninsula.

Now, driving toward the future Campus Town site, I mused on the “Boondoggling in Brief” page from my paperback book *The Boondogglers' Bible*:

--- Trying to Cut Through Bureaucratic Red Tape ---

*A process of convoluted time-energy wasting  
That's often so confusing it winds up unresolved,  
back at the point where it began.  
This point of origin can be reached time after time,  
which is why it is always called  
Square One.*

**Is Seaside heading back to Square One?**

Turning off General Jim Moore Boulevard, I wondered if I were heading back to square one in the city I dubbed the Boondoggle Busters because Seaside broke the long pattern of avoidance by finally, in 2019, agreeing to a shelter for homeless women and children to be opened on county land within the city limits at 1292 Olympia Avenue.

The shelter, known as Casa de Noche Buena, opened at limited capacity earlier this year under joint operation of the Gathering for Women and Community Human Services (CHS).

When operating at full capacity, it should accommodate as many as 35 homeless guests.

The future Campus Town sign on General Jim Moore Blvd. reminded me six months had passed since I visited the 35 vehicles owned by homeless folks who had relocated from Roberts Lake to the church lot across from Monterey College of Law.

As soon as I pulled into the Roberts Lake Community lot last December, a mature woman in stocking cap picked up three ugly Christmas sweaters from a long table and raced toward me, garments waving like bright wool flags.

“Thanks, but I don't want to deprive you and your friends of these lovely warm items,” I'd said. “I'm not homeless. I'm a reporter...”

“Doesn't matter. They're just your size and color,” she said.

“I don't need...”

She shoved the sweaters through my driver's side window.

“But, I...”

“Then they're going into the trash...”

“Oh, no. That would be such a waste...”

The expensive, high-quality knits someone had donated, therefore, sustained me all spring and I wore one of them to visit the campsite on Tuesday to fend off the chill of a gusty June ocean breeze. I wondered what kind of Boondoggler that made me, for the book says:

*The difference between a swindler and a boondoggler?  
A swindler is cheap! A boondoggler can be generous,  
especially with unkept promises.  
A boondoggler takes with his left hand and gives with his right.  
Most boondogglers have balls...*

### **Where had all the campers gone?**

The parking lot was virtually empty. I counted only 15 vehicles where a teeming village of campers, trailers, box vans, and cars had stood. Piles of trash lay between generators and coolers, signs folks were readying to leave.

One long table stood untended. Boxes of apples and other foods were scattered across it. A man with a gray ponytail, wearing a plaid shirt and sweatband, was placing apples in a duffel bag.

I rolled up to the table, leaned out the window, and asked, “Do you live here?”

A sideward glance met me. “I dunno.”

“I’m a reporter. May I ask a few questions?”

“I dunno.”

“Are you the only resident who's here right now?”

“I dunno.”

“Well, where is everyone?”

“I dunno.” The man cut in front of me and crossed the lot.

Trailing him, I asked, “Are you leaving on or before June 15?”

“I dunno.”

“Do you have a place to go when you leave here?”

“I dunno.” He went into his camper and shut the door.

Rolling out of the lot, I turned my car away from the unwelcoming encampment and sped home to assess the situation, whose theme I dubbed “Beware the Ides of June.”

### **Beware the Ides of June**

I decided to go directly to Seaside City Manager, Craig Malin, head of the team I christened “The Boondoggle Busters” because they broke through peninsula-wide resistance to a shelter for the homeless being built in the first place.

My e-mail to Craig asked: “...do you know what will happen to the former Roberts Lake Community of campers after June 15?”

Craig Malin responded promptly: “Wanda: We have provided everyone with a list of RV locations and housing and other support resources. We are not directing people to any specific location. Craig.”

I researched my files and found an April 26, 2021, press release from Community Human Services (CHS) announcing their board of directors “has approved the acquisition of 600 E. Franklin Street in Monterey for use as a (future) homeless shelter for women and families.”

So, if it’s not back to square one as of June 15, where are the soon-to-be-unsheltered homeless headed?

As the man in the parking lot said, “I dunno!”

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**CREDITS:** Photo courtesy City of Seaside.

*The Boondogglers' Bible - How to Fight Like City Hall to Win!* (\$17 from author Wanda Sue Parrott, P. O. Box 1821, Monterey, CA 93942-1821) or search by title on amazon.com.

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