

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Mayor Clyde Roberson

VIEWS ON NEWS

Part 3: Tackling Seaside's tricky-trucks dilemma

By Wanda Sue Parrott

MOVING on awaits Seaside's mobile homeless population. If their vans, recreational vehicles, campers, and trucks aren't gone after the city's vehicle code is amended in the near future, many will be towed away—but to where and by whom?

They live in their vehicles because they can't afford housing. Where will they live next?

Those questions arose at Seaside City Council's public hearing meeting on April 21 where creation of a Draft Ordinance that amends the city's Vehicle Code was approved to prohibit certain overnight parking on the streets and, in some cases, in driveways and on private property.

Ultimate outcome will mean the ouster of illegally parked vehicles used as homes-on-wheels.

Sunday Drive-By

I did a 9:30 a.m. 2-square-mile tour last Sunday, covering Del Monte to Fremont and Canyon del Rey to Broadway in Seaside. Twenty-six vehicles qualified as shelters. Also, I saw at least twenty times as many cars, delivery trucks, gardening trailers and hauling vans lined bumper-to-bumper in residential areas.



Retracing the same two-mile sweep at 2:30 p.m. yielded only 17 sleepers, some of which had changed locations by a few feet to at least one city block. A few had moved to Laguna Grande Park and Roberts Lake.

Obviously, discerning which vehicles are legal, and which are illegal will be as complex as the immigration issue about which major presidential candidates are now campaigning.

A Rainbow Of Tire Marks

Seaside Police Chief Vicki Myers said discretion by city employees, mixed with public cooperation, will be vital to success.

Question: How should the city handle a vehicle whose family of parents and several children has accumulated a rainbow of tire marks without responding?

Or, what if a homeowner reports a camper has been parked at his curb for more than 72 hours? The city must decide what to do about it. If the vehicle has received three citations and still has not moved, must it be towed? If yes, who tows it and where it is stored?

How Is It Towed And Where Is It Stowed?

If a massive RV is half a city block long, how is it towed? Where is it stowed?

Contracts with towing firms loom. Who pays? Vehicle owners, the city, or do they split the cost?

Will it cost Seaside more to oust the four-wheeled homeless than provide shelter for them?

Meanwhile, In Monterey. . .

Monterey now has five bright-red repurposed parking meters in heavily foot-trafficked areas. These “Cents of a Community” collection boxes are repositories for change to help the homeless and reduce panhandling.

What happens if collection-box busters, like old-fashioned bank robbers, rip off the change? If caught, do they do time in jail, or prison?

Mayor Clyde Roberson, who is running for re-election, says affordable housing is a top priority. “The City of Monterey provides yearly funds for many homeless-serving organizations including the Veterans’ Transition Center for housing.”

Mayor Clyde adds, “Monterey has built low-income housing in the past, and currently has a project on city land for 19 very-low-income units.

“Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program (I-Help for Men) currently provides homeless shelter for up to 25 homeless guests every day of the month at different participating churches, one of which is my own, First Presbyterian Monterey, of which I have been a member almost 40 years. Our Pastor Jay started the program almost 25 years ago.”

Monterey is working this year to provide approximately \$700,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds that include \$450,000 to the Veterans’ Transition Center, \$200,000 to Interim, Inc. and \$62,500 to Community Human Services.

Monterey continues pursuing its matching funds challenge to which Pacific Grove and Carmel have now responded, according to Hans Uslar, assistant city manager.

A comprehensive report “Inclusionary Housing in Monterey County” appears in the April 2016 edition of The VOTER, newsletter of The League of Women Voters of Monterey County. Contact LWVMryCo@gmail.com, 831-648-8683.

Where Will Seaside’s Camper Crackdown Lead?

Seaside Mayor Ralph Rubio urges caution in tackling tricky-truck questions that differentiate illegal vehicles from legal commercial/business trucks, vans and trailers.

He says, “Many Seaside residents who park vehicles on the streets rely on them for work and business.”

Ultimate outcome of Seaside's action will be the ouster of illegally parked vehicles higher than 9 and 9-1/2 feet that may be homes-on-wheels to travelers, entrenched residents of Seaside's streets, or newcomers relocating after the Chinatown sweeps in Salinas.

Where will the owners/occupants go if they can't afford housing? Probably along with their vehicles to land the city of Seaside owns in old Fort Ord, according to Mayor Rubio.

Seaside isn't Chinatown West, but it has become Monterey County's Coastal Campground.

This is a political hot potato. Stay tuned!

(Next week: Fun fundraisers and a special recipe.)

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