



TO: Chief Crain
FROM: Sgt. Madison
DATE: December 19, 2019
RE: Question Regarding Homeless Population

You asked that I check with our sources and subject matter experts for information relating to the bussing or importing of homeless persons into the Sequim area from other, larger cities. While I can't say I learned anything we didn't already know, here is what I found.

I contacted the following experts in the field and asked them if they had noticed in the past few weeks/months an uptick in new (from out-of-the-area) homeless persons in the Sequim/Port Angeles area of the Peninsula. I then asked them if they had seen any evidence of homeless persons being sent, bussed or otherwise provided transportation to the Sequim area. Here is what they reported;

Mike Johnson is the Shelter Supervisor for OlyCAP, and he oversees the Port Townsend shelter and the Sequim Warming Center. He reports seeing no such thing.

Andra Smith is the Executive Director of the Sequim Food Bank. She reports that out of 138 new clients this month (a normal increase during the holiday season) eight identified as homeless. They were not from out of the area. She has seen no evidence of homeless importation.

Mike Flynn is the Director/Manager of the Sequim Cares Group and St. Vincent DePaul Church. They have been active in helping the local homeless population for decades. He reports they have seen no such thing and reiterates that most of the people seeking assistance from Sequim Cares or from SVdP are local people living out of their cars.

Becca Korby is the Executive Director of Healthy Families of Clallam County, a victim advocacy organization and the second largest provider of housing to the unsheltered in Clallam County. She reports that the need for housing remains at a steady increase as the housing problem grows. She said there are people who come to the area seeking services because it is known that the peninsula provides good quality services, they are just far more limited than those in the metropolitan areas. Still, she no longer provides housing (other than perhaps emergency type) to anyone coming in from out of the area because of HFCC's limitations. In summary, Ms. Korby does not see an increase in homeless people from out of the area, and she certainly has never seen any evidence of them being bussed or imported.

Jen Mobley is the Shelter Director of the Serenity House shelter in Port Angeles. She reports that she sees "about a handful" of new homeless persons every other month

that are referred from shelters in other cities. This is normal however, as there is commonly networking amongst shelters to move people to facilities that provide services not available locally. This includes instances where people are fleeing domestic violence, in need of longer stays and needing more consistent bed availability. Ms. Mobley reports that these people may stay in the area as long as six months before they are re-stabilized by movement into permanent housing or re-connected with family in another area. Interestingly, she noted that many of the new homeless persons seeking sheltering are returning to the area they are from (Clallam County) after having attended treatment programs in other areas. She reports that she has never seen any evidence of bussing or importing homeless persons beyond the normal she'd described. She also said there are frequently used mechanisms in place to provide transportation to homeless people to anywhere they can be re-stabilized, meaning they will work to get these folks to wherever they need to go out of the area.

Amy Miller is the outreach Navigator for Olympic Peninsula Community Clinic (OPCC) formally known as VIMO. Being the in-the-field on-the-ground person contacting the homeless community daily she reports she has seen an increase in homelessness, both local and out of the area. She said that these are all specific cases though, with most out of area homeless having come here for work or housing opportunities that didn't materialize and are now stuck here wanting to go home. The increase in local homeless population growth she attributes to an increase in evictions and the loss of housing for other reasons. Mrs. Miller reports she frequently arranges for transportation home to those stuck in the Clallam County homeless population. To the point, she insisted that any influx of dozens of homeless people being bussed or imported into Sequim or Port Angeles would be instantly noticed, and it doesn't happen.

I spoke with Jamil Awawdeh, the owner of the Sequim Smoke Shop. He told me that he sometimes had issues with people (presumably homeless) hanging out in front of his store asking customers for cigarettes and/or money but he didn't think it was important enough to call the police about. He said he'd read on the Save Our Sequim Facebook page about how homeless people were being brought into Sequim and he'd heard customers talk about it sometimes, but he himself had never seen anything like that and never told anyone he had.

I have not seen an increase in reports from patrol regarding homeless persons, local or otherwise. It's possible I may not have been consistently briefed, and it's probable that some pass through town without any law enforcement contact. It has been my experience that although there are commonly out-of-area homeless sightings and contacts, most of those people only stay in town for a few days or less. That type of transiency has been a part of the homeless population make-up for a very long time, if not always.

On another note, most of the experts I spoke with responded with slight amusement, and sometimes irritation that this question is still being asked. Said one; "If people really want to know who the homeless in this town are and where they come from, maybe they should spend some time volunteering down here".

Several of these experts offered to speak with any group or audience and explain exactly what the homeless is on the peninsula and what causes it.

Original Signed

Sgt. Sean Madison
