**What are your thoughts and suggested talking points on camping ban?**

**Group Discussion Summary • Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness • 10.7.22**

**The Forest for the Trees**

I have seen a tree split in two
from the weight of its opposing branches.
It can survive, though its heart is exposed.
I have seen a country do this too.

I have heard an elder say
that we must be like the willow—
bend not to break.
I have made peace this way.

My neighbors clear-cut their trees,
leaving mine defenseless. The arborist
says they’ll fall in the first strong wind.
Together we stand. I see this now.

I have seen a tree grown around
a bicycle, a street sign, and a chainsaw,
absorbing them like ingredients
in a great melting pot.

When we speak, whether or not
we agree, the trees will turn
the breath of our words
from carbon dioxide into air—

give us new breath
for new words,
new chances to listen,
new chances to be heard.

* *Rena Priest, WA State Poet Laureate*

**Talking Points on Ordinance 28831, shared by Coalition Steering Committee**

* In light of the Johnson v. Grants Pass ruling issued by the 9th District Court of Appeals last week, the Council should delay its vote on this ordinance until the potential legal ramifications can be reviewed.
* The City should focus on creating solutions to homelessness, including creating low-barrier sites with supportive services and access to basic hygiene needs.
* Criminalizing homelessness with financial penalties and the threat of jail time will only extend our community’s homelessness crisis.
* The City should enforce the laws and ordinances that are in place now.
* In summary, our main message should be that the ordinance needs to be withdrawn for more discussion and feedback and that it can’t work without safe places to go and more low-barrier shelter.

**Your Feedback to the City Council is Essential**

* This group needs to bombard the city with our very strong opposition to this.
* Letters and emails to council don’t need to be eloquent or deeply detailed. They just need to get sent to show the depth of concern.
* To submit written comments please email cityclerk@cityoftacoma.org twenty-four (24) hours before the City Council business meeting, study session, Committee of the Whole, or standing committee meetings. Please let us know which meeting your comment is for (City Council regular meeting 10/11).
* Written comments may also be submitted to the Clerk at a meeting; please provide 10 copies.

**Implications of Johnson v Grants Pass decision**

* Grants Pass ruling in the 9th Circuit – people have to have an option available before they can be removed; at the least, we should ask council to delay. Grants Pass case may be more restrictive.
* Implementation of camping ban could be illegal from start.
* As taxpayers to the City, we oppose the implementation of this ban, especially because of the recent Grants Pass ruling. We have NO INTEREST in funding future legal fees to fight the implementation of the ban in court.
* At a minimum the vote should be delayed until a legal analysis can be conducted on the Ban against the legal ruling and determine implications.
* The buffer of ten blocks is overreach. Spokane’s is three blocks.

**Proposed penalties do harm to vulnerable people**

* The impact of a $1,000 fine on someone who is already living in abject poverty only exacerbates the problem. Jail time further limits opportunities for housing in the future.
* Isn’t this a violation of campers’ civil rights?
* Fines are the most unequal tool wielded by the criminal legal system. Note to City of Tacoma: Do the research and find a more just way to approach this problem.
* Criminal history makes it even more difficult to obtain employment and housing
* Jail is more expensive than housing alternatives.
* Fines are untenable and will create more barriers to housing for an already disadvantaged population.

**Proposed ban ignores why people choose to be near services**

* Pushing people away from emergency response, when many don’t have emergency technology, would create more antagonism and those on the street are worried about increased vigilantism in the neighborhoods.
* We're being pushed away from shelters where we can knock in an emergency and into neighborhoods that may be more hostile with increased risk of vigilante action - more glass bottles with screws, more gangs of homeowners like in Puyallup, etc. - pass a law and people will take it into their own hands.
* If everyone is shut out of downtown, it will push people to the west of Pierce County.
* Maybe mobile vans are part of solution to make services available outside of dense services areas.
* Without viable camping areas near services or a plan to address possession storage, this can’t work.
* 10 blocks will push people out of the city, be extremely difficult to enforce. And will be very costly.

**Proposed ban is opportunity to advocate for alternatives to police enforcement**

* Lack of police support if there is harassment of people camping will increase the danger.
* We could advocate for unarmed emergency response teams, not necessarily more police.
* In light of the "cop shortage" and how many are discussing how we can't enforce the camping ban - we can take this opportunity to support the demand for non-police Crisis Response Teams and the Home In Tacoma For All campaign.

**Other feedback**

* People with lived experience are very concerned about what this ordinance would do to their safety.
* We agree with the two underlying reasons for the ordinances, safety for those in the shelters and incentives for neighborhoods to accept new shelters, but as proposed the negatives far out weight the two hopeful positives.
* We suggest the current ordinance be moved back into the creation stage to get public input and that any ordinance be tied to a certain level of housing being created before the ordinance takes effect.
* The City clearly has no care for people - only what 'looks good' and appeases those who are making noise.
* The City's communication strategy is lipstick on a pig. The Ban is inhumane, the homeless population will have no way of knowing the boundaries, no way of paying any fines levied, and jail time will solve nothing.
* We are not in favor of a free for all. What we are opposed to is exclusionary zoning. Can't promote a DEI policy while creating exclusionary zones.
* We need to devote our city's limited budget to provide housing, which is 1/5th the cost of keeping people unhoused, as in emergency, medical and waste services.

**Links to Petitions**

***Camping Ban protest petition***: https://actionnetwork.org/letters/demand-no-public-property-camping-ban-in-tacoma-2?source=direct\_link&

***Home In Tacoma For All petition:*** https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/home-in-tacoma-for-all-platform/

***Crisis Response Team petition:*** https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/fully-fund-a-non-police-crisis-response-team-for-tacoma/