

What actions should we take to reverse the harm of the sweeps and camping ban?

Group Discussion Summary • Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness • 9.1.23

On Work

Full poem at <https://poets.org/poem/work-4>

And what is it to work with love?

It is to weave the cloth with threads drawn from your heart, even as if your beloved were to wear that cloth.

It is to build a house with affection, even as if your beloved were to dwell in that house.

It is to sow seeds with tenderness and reap the harvest with joy, even as if your beloved were to eat the fruit.

It is to charge all things you fashion with a breath of your own spirit,

And to know that all the blessed dead are standing about you and watching.

— Khalil Gibran

Problems with Sweeps

- Sweeps not promoting public health, both from a law enforcement community perspective and impact on houseless.
- Camping bans being a human rights violation. City of Tacoma forcing people to sleep on the streets due to lack of shelter, but also punishing people for sleeping on the streets.

Contributing Issues

- People in charge at the city don't really have a clear picture of homelessness in the city.
- It should be unbearable for us to know that the substantial suffering that's going on out there is only increasing.
- Council members have different ideas based on their districts. They should visit other council districts.
- Council members don't come into this space, so how can they hear us?
- Often most vulnerable people not being entered into shelter due to being "too vulnerable."
- "Not In My Backyard" attitudes limiting access to affordable housing.
- Issues with City of Tacoma and churches.
- This is a countywide issue.

Potential Solutions or Actions

- Props to the Mayor for being brave enough to come to us.
- Props to Jay for being bold and strong.
- Make firm demands of action from the city before more talks.

- We need to rise up as grassroots citizens.
- Sweeps were supposed to increase shelter capacity.
- Look at who is invited to speak at study sessions - ei therapeutic courts.
- How does Lived Experience and PC Homeless, etc, get invited to speak at study sessions?
- Get public officials to come to meetings and hear about what's happening in the city.
- Use of churches to provide RV hookups or bathrooms to support the needs of people coming to camp.
- Safe Parking with churches placed under shelter codes.
- Questions around private businesses providing "safe" places to shelter.
- We should work together to vote some of our council members out.
- We need publicly funded elections and RCV (rank choice voting) to effectively change who our elected are or can be.
- Need to lean into our common humanity during these discussions and make our experiences meaningful to each other.
- We need genuine community dialogue that reassesses the impact of the sweeps strategy. We should shoot for a community dialogue event in November that brings people with different perspectives together to discuss reducing the harm of unsheltered homelessness. This leads into a discussion of the need to stop the sweeps in a way that people can hear.
- Int'l homeless day is Oct 10 and Oct 12 is anniversary of sweeps legislation, which points to an event then. There is energy for working on this.
- Common Good Tacoma is working on a "listening event" for Sept. 28 at 1st United Methodist that invites the Mayor and Council to hear lived experience perspectives.

Notes and Resources List

New and Notable

Building Beyond the Walls is a non profit that works to build community through service. Our avenue to achieve this free construction training. In exchange for the free training participants agree to give 50 hours back to the community. Every Saturday local nonprofits bring lunch for our crew and share what they do in our community and how our participants can get involved with that organization. During the training we build a small structure for a nonprofit or organization in need. We would like to partner with other organizations to build small communities for those who need shelter. Contact Sue Hart. Sue@buildingbeyondthewalls.org 425-337-6544

Background and links on Trueblood lawsuit

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/bha/trueblood-et-al-v-washington-state-dshs>

Contact info from Manni Valenzuela Parks Guides briefing

Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions, feedback, or needs. My hours as of right now are Sunday-Wednesday 8am-6pm. Thank you all so much! My contact information is: manni.valenzuela@tacomaparks.com 253-304-1742.

A good local bail fund program: <https://www.nwcombailfund.org>

Elevate Health is hosting a 4-hour workshop, "Navigating Overwhelm" Oct 5. Register at [BIT.LY/3Q8WFOF](https://bit.ly/3Q8WFOF). This is geared toward community health workers (includes those who bridge the gap between folks in need and those who can access resources, especially healthcare). The topic is to show how we can build resiliency to deflect the risk of burnout.

Do you have any outreach items you need or to share? Post them in the chat and I'll grab them, or enter them here: Outreach Supply Need and Share form: <https://forms.gle/2zfK8Y5JvC1K5eXLA>

Community Spotlight Opportunity: Tell the coalition about your organization's good work. Contact tpdrutis@nctacoma.org to schedule a brief presentation. 😊

Ongoing Resources and Needs

Covid is still here.

<https://www.tpchd.org/healthy-people/provider-resources/homelessness-providers-toolkit>

Research on the impact of sweeps/abatement

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2667321522000269?via%3Dihub#bib30>

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11606-022-07471-y>

<https://nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/NHCHC-encampment-sweeps-issue-brief-12-22.pdf>

Wildfire info:

<https://www.tpchd.org/healthy-homes/outdoor-air-quality/wildfire-smoke>

More information on inclement weather response is available at

https://www.cityoftacoma.org/inclement_weather

Everyone should connect with Isiah to get masks for air quality. Email him at:

icocroft@tpchd.org As you know, masks help with poor air as well helping reduce the transmission of cough cough, COVID and other diseases.

Outreach Supply Need and Share form: <https://forms.gle/2zfK8Y5JvC1K5eXLA>

How to sign up for Coalition listserv:

You can sign up for the email lists here: <http://pchomeless.org/Home/Listserv>

Pierce County Comprehensive Plan to End Homelessness can be found here:

<https://www.piercecountywa.gov/7309/Comprehensive-Plan-to-End-Homelessness>

Please sign up to the inclement weather listserv at

<https://www.pchomeless.org/Home/Listserv>