

Michael Stine

#279125 | March 26, 2021

Testimony to **Portland City Council** on the **Shelter to Housing Continuum Project, Recommended Draft**

Please delay the S2HC vote for 1 month- many Portlanders are not yet aware of the long term consequence, for years, to our City. Dignity is an important feature of the alternative detailed below. The Primary Focus is getting Everyone to safe shelter before next December. People who are homeless should be hired to operate sustainable transition-camps in large areas, such as many empty Port of Portland lots on Marine Dr and campground-suitable Delta Park. Folks should be in campgrounds, like others, with warming areas & maybe food offered. One cost-effective solution is trying to find possible Natural Help Options for people- family, friends, AA sponsor, clergy, etc The City of Portland shouldn't Enable further homeless camps to threaten neighborhoods. We need to help folks get back on their feet. Here's a true story about a man whose life was changed-he talked to me in counseling about being homeless soon. He was from NY and thought he had burned bridges. He was supported in his choice to make contact- it turned out his uncle was a month from death, had been trying to reach him for years. There was a tearful reunion and my client inherited some NY property- Not Homeless and a life changed! This is a dramatic case but others may have people they know ready to help with a couch, job, or other resources. Thank you for your important work, Michael Stine, SE Portland for 45 years, houseless as a youth People Who Are Homeless Crisis Plan In any "Crisis"- The Greatest Good for the Greatest Numbers guide becomes most important. It's essential to help Every person get into better living conditions. However, having hundreds or thousands of folks living on the streets, even in "managed" camps is unsafe, unsanitary, and unsustainable. Therefore please consider these steps: 1) Come better weather, homeless camps should be encouraged to move to a different location. One possible place is Delta Park- a large expanse of open spaces with some sanitary facilities already in place. I'm sure this park is important to many people but in a Crisis, such as in an earthquake, emergency measures are taken. Port of Portland with very large empty parking lots on Marine Drive could be a place for car campers, etc. 2) Folks can be encouraged to come to these places voluntarily given the right incentives. Food would be the first attraction- make it known that there is a good free meal on a certain day at what we could initially call Camp Transition. A flyer could be given to each homeless camp. At that point people would also be invited to move to some of the choicest camp spots- closest to the bathroom, quietest, etc. For the next meal KFC food would be a Huge Draw (rare treat!)- the word would get out in the homeless community but direct flyers could again be given. Next small pizza places, etc. could be supported. Shuttle buses should be available. Pick-up truck volunteers might be recruited for people to move their stuff to the more comfortable new place- an actual campground, like others,

with dignity. 3) The Hope is to make the new location so attractive that people want to go there. Eventually a ban on camping in public places would be Enforced. More focused persuasion would be offered with assistance in the relocation. There could be escalating interventions with the very last being forced move by police officers. Of course, the new legal places to transition-camps should be properly spaced to meet Covid guidelines. 4) People who are homeless should be hired to operate/oversee the camp, maybe with professional help. Each person who moves to Camp Transition should have a brief conversation with one of the other homeless Persons hired as staff. Only this info is essential: Name, any Immediate Needs (health, safety, etc), Contact name and number. Further questions about where they are from, possible resources to help them get longer term shelter, goals, etc could be attempted, at the contact point or in a later talk. City/County staff will be needed to organize/moderate these new locations, possibly moved from other current duties during the Crisis. If new staff are hired- they should always be homeless folks. Peer help has been shown to be the most powerful in areas of mental health, substance abuse tx, civilian reintegration, etc 5) For some folks the intake contact might identify possible resources to help the person get themselves back on their feet. Wouldn't it be great to help someone find out that they haven't burned all their bridges and help is waiting? These are Natural Solutions, not manufactured at considerable cost by an agency. The Resource might even be in a different geographic location. People should Never just be given a bus ticket or gas money to go there. A staff should document that contact was made with an individual who said they would take the person in, or 2 people- say a clergy, friend, or cousin who vouches to be a resource to the person in the other area. Non-refundable bus tickets could be offered; gas cards might be available that couldn't be sold. That could be a Permanent, Life Changing step with people known & trusted- and very cost effective! 6) For those remaining it should be a transitional place. A fine balance will be needed to make the Camp comfortable but not too inviting to leave. Help with job search or at least day labor for income is needed. Mental health, medical, and substance abuse treatment will be easily available but not mandatory unless there are problem behaviors. Many of the transition-campers use some substance to help cope with the hard life open to the elements. Alcohol & drugs will be prohibited but the rule shouldn't be actively enforced. If a person draws attention to themselves with their actions then the rule could be invoked. Peers would offer natural limits to "not spoil it for everybody". 7) Various resources should come to the camp or if necessary transport provided to those needed resources. Many services for the poor and homeless appear to be in the Old Town area. Maybe there could be a longer term goal of relocating these to a less troublesome area. Isn't that prime real estate, between the River and the Pearl District, for downtown development and in-fill apartments/homes? Perhaps developers and the City could make this financially beneficial to the important missions of the agencies. We have all been recently reminded how unforgiving and dangerous the weather can be. This redoubles the metro area's compassion. A robust transition-camp is needed. The inevitable needs of current and future humans can be helped systematically before another Crisis arises. Michael Stine, SE Portland ps- I am a retired mental health counselor with many years experience assessing people for psychiatric admission and helping them stay in the community with dignity. As a youth I was rootless for a while with no home, so I have some personal insight into the above ideas.

Testimony is presented without formatting.