

**From:** [Diane Meisenhelter](#)  
**To:** [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)  
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On the surface, most of your analysis of the houseless problem is correct and there is a tremendous need for action, but I'm very concerned about the idea of forcing 500 houseless persons into a concentrated area. First, based on their widespread knowledge, work, and communication with houseless communities, housing advocates put together Challenge 3000 months ago and had the City started immediate work on that plan we might have had up to twice the number being proposed housed in permanent housing with services in a model more along the lines of what many houseless folks have expressed interest in. Secondly, having as part of the NET team worked both warming and cooling shelters, I have seen the challenges of having a large number of folks with health, mental health, and addiction issues in a single tight space even though they had opted for being there. Yet the shelters I have worked are far less than 100 folks generally. The thought of forcing folks into a large concentrated camp of 500 seems like a recipe for failure, plus all of the money spent will still leave them houseless. Many houseless folks have described their fear of being forced into a large concentrated camp. Having witnessed mental breakdowns from just the reality of having to leave a warm shelter forced into a cold winter morn, I can only imagine the stress forced removal into a large camp will cause. I've often felt that every able-bodied Portlander should be asked to serve at these shelters, hear the stories, see the failures of our system, and have a better understanding of, empathy for, and motivation to solve houselessness.

For the next 6 months working in public-private partnership and with other government agencies as you described to secure every available avenue for housing as described in Challenge 3000 to house all those who are willing to accept a roof over their head with services would be a much more humane approach. With numbers reduced, having an option for a few smaller sanctioned camping spaces for those who want a safer space to pitch their tents with provided services would be an additional choice. Criminalizing houselessness by banning unsanctioned camping is unconscionable and more a public relations stunt to ease the discomforts of those with privilege. We have a real and serious problem that needs to be addressed with care, not force.

Diana Meisenhelter  
Cell: 503-349-1460  
[meissun@hotmail.com](mailto:meissun@hotmail.com)