

From: [Jacob Simoneau](#)
To: [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)
Subject: Camping Ban Proposal Testimony
Date: Thursday, October 27, 2022 3:14:48 PM
Attachments: [N Columbia Blvd N Columbia Way - Please help us.eml.mso](#)

Dear Mayor and Members of the Council,

My name is Jacob Simoneau. Approximately one year ago, my wife and I were able to realize our long time dream of becoming homeowners in this wonderful city. It is my great hope that this city is able to recover from the issues that currently exist, and that more people are able to fulfill this dream. Unfortunately, not even one week after we moved into our home, an unsanctioned camp began to take root just a stone's throw from my front door. This camp quickly deteriorated into a haven for car thieves as well as an environmental disaster. I confirmed many cars as stolen using the PNW Stolen Cars Facebook page, and helped reunite several people with their cars. The camp has been cleared twice due to the blatant criminal activity, but comes back quickly each time. I have been pleading with the city since this first began to take some kind of decisive action to prevent it from happening again. My main request was that something be done to prevent vehicle access to this area, as that would stop the thieves from being able to use the area as their hub. I have seen similar action taken on areas overseen by Parks and Recreation, however this area is in the public right of way and thus under the umbrella of PBOT. I contacted PBOT and was told by the front desk staff that it was their policy not to take any sort of proactive measures in this public right of way, and that I would need to contact an elected official to change that. So, I reached out to PBOT's commissioner JoAnn Hardesty to explain my position, email attached here. I realize council members are busy and can't be expected to respond quickly to everyone, and this is not meant to be accusatory, but it is worth noting that this was one month ago and I have yet to receive a response.

Naturally, we are very uncomfortable having this activity so close to our house, and feel that it is extremely irresponsible to let it continue. In our time living next to a camp plagued by criminal activity, that continues to come back after being swept, I have come to the realization that this problem will never stop until the option to set up a tent anywhere you please is removed. The additional measures addressing housing affordability are also very important, but as long as there is the option to live in a tent anywhere you want, there will continue to be people taking this option. Ultimately, the ban on unsanctioned camping is an absolutely essential piece of the puzzle for making real progress on this issue. I realize people are upset by this, but I wholeheartedly reject the notion that providing access to an organized camp with food, health services, mental health services, hygiene, trash pickup, and security is somehow more cruel than the continuation of disorganized misery we see on our streets every day. If we do not do this, there will be no progress. I am glad to see that all three candidates running for governor appear to have come to this conclusion as well.

Additionally, as Mayor Wheeler has said, this will drastically improve our city's logistical ability to provide services to those who need them. With a small number of organized camps in fixed locations, services can be scheduled and provided at reliable and predictable intervals, and scaled to accommodate the number of people residing at the campuses. This kind of sense of security simply cannot be provided to 700 mobile campsites. At some point, we will need leadership that has the courage to do what is best for our homeless population, even if it is not necessarily their preferred choice.

My only concern with the plan so far is that, if I am understanding correctly, no enforcement will take place for at least 18 months. Enforcement needs to begin as soon as at least one of the campuses is open, and not a second later. It will certainly take time to remove every unsanctioned camp, but there is no reason we can't start as soon as the first campus becomes available. Camps should be swept beginning in a specific area, perhaps based on severity, and continue to be swept in that area until the reality sinks in that the city is no longer allowing campers to simply move tents around, and is in fact no longer allowing camping in that area at all. With this strategy, it will become clear how many of the homeless population will choose to go to the campus versus how many may continue to resist or choose to leave the city. This would provide valuable insight into how much resources will be needed to enforce the ban, and what the most effective strategy is. If there is still room in the campus after the ban in the first part of the city is enforced, move on to the second part, and so and so forth until the ban has been completely rolled out. The average Portlander has been fed up with the state of the city for years already, another 18 months of no progress is simply not acceptable. It is about time for city leadership to start considering what is best for improving the lives of the vast majority of the population. So while I wholeheartedly support this measure and believe the city is beginning to get on the right path, I would ask that you please consider beginning the ban as soon as the first campus becomes available, not all three. I believe you can see the wisdom in this, and I hope you take it to heart for the sake of the average Portlander.

Thank you for taking the time not only to sit through hours upon hours of public testimony, but also for accommodating those of us who could not participate in the live session by allowing written testimony to be sent in.

Best Regards,
Jacob Simoneau