

TO: Planning and Sustainability Commission

I am medically unable to attend the hearing for the proposed Mass Shelters and Housing: Zoning Code Update being held this Tuesday, September 13.

In order to participate in the public discussion of this proposal I ask that my following testimony be read into the public record at the hearing.

Thank you.

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Testimony about the Mass Shelters and Housing Zoning Code Update being considered today.

On January 28, 2015 the official Multnomah County Point-In-Time count of homeless people in Multnomah County (including but not limited to Portland) identified 1,887 unsheltered homeless.

Unsheltered homeless was only one of the federal Housing and Urban Development categories counted. Further definitions showed that 17% of the homeless were families. 266 of the homeless population were unaccompanied youth. half of which were unsheltered. Women made up 31% of the counted homeless.

57% if the unsheltered homeless had one or more disabling conditions. 48% of the unsheltered homeless were judged chronic homeless. 50% of the unsheltered homeless had been unsheltered for one year or less. 27% had been homeless for more than two years.

The official report noted: "Economic Context - Multnomah County's continuing struggles with homelessness can be attributed to the combined economic challenges of high housing costs, low vacancy rates, stagnant wages, and high levels of unemployment among some of our community's most vulnerable population."

In 1993, the city added a new chapter to Title 33 (33.285) titled Short Term Housing and Mass Shelters. It defined both short term housing and mass shelters as Community Services and provided a Conditional Use approval status for them.

The Purpose Statement of the code gave this direction: "... These regulations are intended to reduce conflicts between these and other uses. These regulations recognize that short term housing and mass shelters have differing impacts, and encourages providers to locate in existing structures and work with neighbors. These regulations also focus on the land use aspects of these uses."

Please note that while the land use aspects of the use were noted in the purpose statement they were added as an additional criteria for the code, not the primary purpose needed to support the regulation.

The original 1993 changes described a “certification process” that was created for shelters and housed in ONI. In 2015, RICAP 7 removed that provision and did not redirect it to any other responsible governmental resource.

The proposed Mass Shelters and Housing Code does not clarify any of the questions that need to be considered in dealing with the homeless in our community. It doesn’t address service requirements, neighborhood impacts, resource delivery, or even the criteria for selecting a service provider. It doesn’t stipulate how to separate services for the variety of homeless people that may or may not be housed. It removes the Type III status that allowed these questions to be answered when Neighborhood Associations identify reasonable concerns.

Most importantly, it fails to treat Homelessness in a way which respects the needs, wishes, or experience of the human beings who deserve the community service purpose of 33.285.

The way in which this code proposal has been handled is unacceptable. The fact that the City Council can put these complex issues on a fast track to change tested code is unacceptable.

The lack of an appropriate public process needs to be recognized by you. It deserves your response that the proposed code change to Title 33 will only bring further confusion, arguments, and lack of focus to effective solutions for the homeless residents of our community.

Please provide a recommendation to the City Council that reflects your opposition to the proposed code changes and to the unacceptable process used to provide to you.

Bonny McKnight