

From: [Wendy Martin-Miller](#)
To: [CityCouncilListPublic](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Budget Priorities and Council Goal Setting
Date: Wednesday, February 9, 2022 11:12:41 AM

In reviewing your 2022 Council Meeting Calendar I see that the upcoming February 15, 2022 meeting includes an item for setting budget priorities for the next fiscal year and that you have a council goal setting meeting/workshop scheduled for later in the month. While I acknowledge that what I really want is immediate action on my concerns, I do know that getting that action is a bit like turning the Titanic and I hope to have you consider my concerns for the city that I have called home for over 30 years when planning for the future and for formulating your goals as a governing body. I will present my concerns and requests in as clear and concise a manner as possible, which may make the tone seem terse and demanding. Please know that even though I try to stay apprised of current events and the status of programs and laws, I understand that my knowledge is inhibited by only being an ordinary citizen and not a political insider. My list is meant to provoke thoughts and ideas for change and improvement, not to be demands written in stone. My hope is that my missive will spur both conversation and real action on these two subjects.

My first concern is for the state of the homeless situation. I do not believe that the current plan provides enough options for curbing the problems of homelessness, which affect us all negatively. Your adoption of the Housing First approach seems to have limited options to only include "4 walls", meaning emergency housing, shelters, shack/shed encampments, or safe parking. This excludes sanctioned or "tolerated" outdoor camping in tents. While having large numbers of RVs, vans, trailers, or other vehicles parked on our streets and next to our parks is a disturbing problem, so are the numerous tent campsites on public property. Those tent sites (or cardboard box forts) are often the dirtiest and most unsanitary and unsafe of any homeless situation. They are located on busy street corners and on or next to sidewalks where we walk ... indeed, where our children walk in order to get to and from school. They have no toilets or trash receptacles available, other than those belonging to private businesses or homes, often resulting in a build up of trash and human waste that attract rats and disease. I would like to see the following added to the city's toolbox for helping the homeless and cleaning up our public areas:

1. One or multiple sanctioned/tolerated campsites
 - a. On city owned land that is not already designated as an urban park or recreation area, or;
 - b. On leased land from other public or private land owners
 - c. The site would provide and maintain;
 - i. Toilets
 - ii. Showers
 - iii. Laundry facilities
 - iv. Trash disposal services/bins
 - v. Access to service such as mental and physical health professionals, referrals or other access to rehabilitation services, assistance in finding or training for jobs
 - vi. Opportunities to earn token amounts performing jobs to keep the camp clean
 - vii. 24-hour security patrols
 - viii. Adherence only to the same laws as any other citizen (no special rules)

- e. When offered this option and refused, the city will exercise its option to remove unsanctioned campers from public land and thoroughly clean and sanitize the vacated site
1. Make a commitment to this citizens of Santa Rosa to keep city-owned public areas clean. Use the same or even more stringent code requirements that are enforced on private citizens to define expectations for keeping property clean, sanitary, and safe. It is imperative that our government hold themselves accountable on all fronts to the same extent as they hold citizens. This would include the expectations placed on landlords, vacation rental owners, or campground owners.
2. Fund and hire more city staff to address all of the issues and programs needed to address the homeless issue

My next concern relates to the state of our police force. While corruption of any kind within law enforcement must be dealt with swiftly and decisively, the backlash and lack of support that law enforcement around the country has experienced in recent years has caused a decline in the ability of our law enforcement agencies to attract and retain both qualified veterans and new recruits.

There is a significant increase in property crimes, including blatant theft from merchants, which can total anywhere from hundreds to tens of thousands of dollars in a single incident. The calls made to SRPD, even when called in as an active crime, are often not answered until an hour or more after the call is made. As seen in incidents around our region, this puts both workers and customers in great danger. Please consider the following when setting goals and budgeting for the upcoming and future years:

1. Provide incentives, both **non-monetary** and small financial incentives, to new recruits and veterans for milestones including (but not limited to);
 - a. Completion of academy and signing on to SRPD for a set amount of time (2 years?, 5 years?)
 - b. Significant anniversaries without verified public complaints and/or disciplinary actions
 - c. Reductions in crime statistics (overall ... not just one category)
 - d. Reductions in response times to calls for help
 - e. Completion of continuing education or training programs, especially those that include community policing strategies
2. Actively and publicly support law enforcement when they are performing their very dangerous and stressful jobs to expectations
3. Swiftly and decisively deal with all form of misconduct, doling out consequences ranging from warnings to suspensions without pay all the way to prosecution
4. Make it difficult for the police union to block disciplinary actions – renegotiate contracts as they relate to discipline and investigations of misconduct
5. More officers on patrol, in general, and more officers doing community policing
6. More opportunities for neighborhood residents to meet the officers assigned to patrol their area

If you have made it through all of this, I thank you for your time and hope that you can see that these are very real issues that need to be addressed as soon as humanly possible.

Sincerely
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