

MEMO: Response to Barron Homeless Services Proposal Public Comment

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Subject: Barron Homeless Services Proposal Public Comment

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Dear Members of the Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee,

We would like to reiterate our opposition to the City's current proposal to relocate the Homeless Services Center to the Barron Center campus in the Nason's Corner Neighborhood. We have been active in the process, keeping an open mind to the proposal, and asking questions to gain an understanding of how City Staff feel that this model and location will be successful. We previously submitted a number of questions to the public record which were recently responded to in the document *Homeless Services Center: Answers to Public Hearing Questions*. We thank staff for responding to the questions, however, in our view, the responses to two of the questions seem rather dismissive and not indicative of truly understanding our concerns. We have outlined our follow-up questions/concerns below.

Original Question: As parents of a future Rowe School student, one of our primary concerns is around the safety of the students and staff at the school. Have there been any impact studies reviewed by the City as to what effect putting a homeless shelter in close proximity to an elementary school has on both the school and the shelter? If so, what lessons learned can be taken from other locations where this has been implemented?

City's Response: *There are currently numerous schools in close proximity to the current Oxford Street Shelter as well as the Family Shelter being located directly across the street: Baxter Academy: 316, Portland High School: 793, Youth and Family Outreach Max of 68, Bayside Learning Community Max of 48.*

Follow Up: We understand that there are several schools located in close proximity to the current shelter however, they are not elementary schools with an open playground. Portland High School and Baxter Academy are both high schools with limited open space, Youth and Family Outreach has a gated entrance and playground, and the Bayside Learning Community is a self contained specialized learning environment with limited outdoor recreation area.

Could you please elaborate on how the City plans to work with Rowe school on areas of safety specifically around the open spaces such as the playground. As you mentioned there are schools in close proximity to the current shelter, what lessons did the City learn from their experiences? For example: Will there be a resource on hand to do sweeps of the facility in the event of any drug paraphernalia being found on the playground? How will the center staff work with the school to enforce the good neighbor policy?

Has the City researched to see if examples exist in other communities of a large scale Homeless Shelter being placed in close proximity to an *elementary school*?

City's Follow Up Response: The City would reach out to Rowe School as it would with all entities that have concerns about the location of the shelter, in order to hear what concerns there may be and to develop a plan of action which could include deploying City outreach staff resources or involvement of other community partners to implement a course of action. We have a City safety officer that would be available with sharps containment equipment that would pick up any drug paraphernalia. Our current location is within a mile of Reiche School; there has not been a single instance of a shelter client issue on the school ground space or negative interactions that we have ever been made aware of.

Original Question: It was mentioned several times that shelters and neighborhoods can be good neighbors. If a study or example could be provided of this it may help current residents come around more to the idea. Are there such examples that could be presented to the public?

City's Response: *There are many shelters located in many neighborhoods in Portland. Each have a relationship with the neighbors that strive to be cooperative and collaborative in nature. We currently work closely with the Bayside Neighborhood Association to work through any issues that arise, and we believe they would testify to the quick responsiveness that shelter staff provide.*

Follow Up: *We understand that there are currently shelters in place throughout the city that have been blended with the neighborhood however, this proposed shelter will be much larger than those currently in place and in addition will also host other services (such as the proposed FQHC). As the City mentioned in the proposal this space will allow shelter staff and the proposed on site community policing office to keep eyes on the daily events, but it is still a much larger facility and that fact should not be glossed over in regards to the impact to the neighborhood and surrounding areas.*

In summary, it is our opinion the City has spent the majority of this process promoting the shelter model itself, but providing little qualitative information on *why and how* this will integrate successfully into the residential Nason's Corner Neighborhood.

Thank you,

Derek and Melanie Caldwell
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