City Council Community Roundtable
March 28, 2013 at 1:00 p.m.
Council Chambers

Mayor Fowler City Manager Cubic facilitated the discussion. The following Councilors were present: Morgan, Webber DeYoung, Gatlin, Goodwin and Williams Also present and representing the City were Finance Director Meredith, Public Safety Director Henner Police Deputy Chief Landis, Police Lt. Moran, Police Lt. Ward, Crime Prevention Officer Donaghy Tourism Coordinator Walters, and City Recorder Frerk. Jared Dill from KAJO radio also present.

Community partners at the table with Council included: Renee Thornton from St. Vincent DePaul; Ken Emilio, executive director Kevin Maloney director of operations, Jim Brumbach, Jeff Davey and Bob Just with Gospel Rescue Mission; Kelly Wessels with United Community Action Network (UCAN); Colene Martin, president, Chamber of Commerce; Renee Carlino with Joe's Place Ministry Marilane Jorgenson from Options of Southern Oregon; Alison Oroao with Downtown Services; Jennifer Marks from Grants Pass Towne Center Association (TCA).

Other community voices participating from the audience included: Jon Bowen and Ryan Clark, downtown business owners; Diane _________ with Josephine County Central Office; Nan Silver Belinda Hill and Neeka Goodwin from Josephine County DHS Child Welfare; Amara Thelen from Options of Southern Oregon; Dan Shelton from Gospel Rescue Mission; and city residents Gerry Kahler Jeff Javelona, Rob Osborne, Diana Wright, Beth Summerfield, Judi Fowler and Jim Gartat.

Purpose:
The City of Grants Pass desired to facilitate a Community Roundtable to identify solutions to current vagrancy problems. Certain organizations and key stakeholders were invited to participate. It was felt the recent Community Forum on homelessness and vagrancy was a good first step and provided important information to consider and a Roundtable would focus on developing strategies to modify behavior connect people to services, and address our vagrancy issues. The City Staff and City Council greatly appreciated the opportunity for strengthening and developing partnerships with area agencies.

Opening statements:
City Manager Cubic opened the meeting and gave instruction on the microphone use and how the meeting would proceed.

Mayor Fowler welcomed everyone who was participating. He would like everyone to be as proactive as possible in dealing with the issue and noted there were limitations on what the City could legally do to help curb some of the negative activity going on downtown and that they would need help from all the key...
stakeholders in the downtown area. They would need to find a balance between providing the help these people need and not enabling the aggressive negative behavior which has become such an issue. It has to be done as a community working together on the problem. He then turned the meeting over to City Manager Cubic to act as facilitator.

**Identifying the issues:**
City Manager Cubic had everyone introduce themselves and state what organization they are representing and gave a little background on the process they have gone through so far. He noted at the Community Forum in February there had been discussion about defining those who are causing the problems and they came up with separate definitions for the types of persons, with homeless persons being the ones who want to better themselves and get help then those classified as vagrant who are not really seeing assistance or interested in bettering themselves. From the forum there were a number of concerning issues coming from the vagrants causing problems in the downtown core but also throughout the city. Most concerning are issues with loitering and even sleeping in alleyways, harassment, and more recently urination and defecation in public places. Today the objective is to discuss strategies and actions that can be taken in partnership with each other toward resolving these problems. He reviewed information he had gathered in researching how the issue is handled in other communities across the state and country.

**Criminal Justice System Issues:**

**Jail/detention:** Director Henner pointed out that until the Jail situation is rectified, the officers cannot do anything except issue a citation to appear which is ignored, then give out a warrant, which is ignored, and the worst offenders will tear it up or throw it away when it is handed to them.

**Increased presence:** County-wide system needs to regain strength of patrols. Councilor Morgan suggested use of County reserve officers at $30 per hour.

**Take them out of town:** Question was raised about driving repeat offenders out of town and leaving them there and Director Henner noted there were liability concerns as well as issues with the legality of detaining someone without charging them with a crime. Councilor Gatlin said he had heard of law suits arising from those situations. Director Henner also noted they had at times tried buying the person a bus ticket to a specific destination, only to have them returned to Grants Pass with a request from the other location to not send them there. They have transported people to Jackson County who had serviceable warrants on them.

Councilor Morgan stated the point is to make it uncomfortable enough for them in our city so they will want to move on down the road.
Just get them out of downtown: Director Henner and Deputy Chief Landis spoke of establishing a
detox/sobering center where police would be able to lawfully detain and put people into protective custody
Councilor DeYoung asked about using the old jail in the Courthouse basement for detention of disorderly
persons even if only for a few hours, but long enough to get them away from the location where they are
causing disturbance. Director Henner brought up staffing and other cost-related issues involved
associated with the City providing that type of service. Deputy Chief Landis said the sobering center they
are looking into would be a private facility. Councilor Morgan noted how short detention would tie-up
police officers and interfere with their ability to properly respond to calls.

Councilor DeYoung started a discussion in answer to his question on why the aggressive vagrants have
shown up downtown. He felt they were coming here from other places because they heard about our
criminal justice problem. Lt. Moran stated he and Officer Donaghy had been working plain clothes
downtown and through contact and surveys they have found that most transients here had local ties,
though there are a few that come from out of the area because they have easier access to services than
they do in the bigger cities. Mr. Emilio from the Gospel Rescue Mission and Ms. Thelen from Options
both agreed the homeless downtown are mostly local. It was suggested to limit services to those who had
undesirable behavior. There was agreement that the concerns being raised were caused by persons who
were choosing not to access certain services because there were “too many rules attached.” Ms.
Thornton said St. Vincent De Paul’s has a policy where they do not allow troublemakers to continue
receiving services.

Detox/Sobering Center:
[Major portions of this subject were discussed at a later point in the meeting.]
Deputy Chief Landis described how Grants Pass previously had a detox center and how it could assist
Public Safety in dealing with that 5% element who are causing problems and how much help a center has
been in Medford. A Sobering Center or detox center can take those folks and do something with them.
Deputy Chief Landis said he had brought up on KAJO Radio how he felt having a detox center would take
away a lot of the problems they are discussing with vagrancy. He later had a call from Mr. Emilio which
began the formation of a group which has been meeting to discuss funding the building of a detox center
and are hopeful they can have it built by this time next year. There are a number of groups who have
stepped up to offer funding for a sobering center and that would be a huge relief since the State, County
and the City are all struggling with their public budgets. He noted how important it was to have this center
being built and run by a private entity rather than by the City. A crucial reason it would be helpful is that
ORS allows police to detain and for up to 48 hours place into a custodial center someone who is
intoxicated by alcohol or drugs among other things. It is exciting to have so many service agencies on
board in agreement and cooperation with building a sobering center here in Grants Pass. He described
how police would possibly be able to pick up an aggressive transient and turn custody over to the detox
center personnel and then the officer could be on their way. Deputy Chief Landis noted how persons coming out of the sobering center would likely be more amenable to receiving the other services. It also has a deterrent factor as those who get locked up to sober up don't like that, so they decide to change.

Ms. Martin asked if there was something that could be done in the interim while that type of facility was being built. Deputy Chief Landis said the group had considered a temporary location but was concerned about losing momentum for completing the full project. He also noted that the type of facilities needed because of the issues associated with coming off substances were closer to a jail cell with steel doors and concrete walls and it would be hard to find a facility you could remodel in that way for a temporary situation.

Mayor Fowler asked if they could use existing empty jail space to house detox care temporarily. Deputy Chief Landis noted the requirements to use a public facility are different and have more strings attached than if a private entity were operating the center.

Ms. Nan Silver asked if detox services would be available to teens as substance abuse is a big issue with child welfare has to deal with for homeless teens.

Councilor Goodwin answered in his role as Juvenile Justice Coordinator stating how his center did provide that service while it was up and running. They would be checked out at the hospital first to make sure there was no other physical or mental problem with the person, but his facility had nursing care available to aid in the withdrawal process. He did not feel it would be possible to come into juvenile and adults in a detox facility that is being described. Deputy Chief Landis noted how expensive it is for persons who are intoxicated to be processed in the emergency room. It may be possible to have medical persons available to screen persons at the Sobering Center rather than in the emergency room.

Councilor DeYoung asked if they could consider using the old jail cells in the Courthouse basement for a temporary center because he would like to see something done sooner. By using a temporary place, he thought it might help them better learn what things are needed for the permanent sobering center. He didn't think the County would say no. Deputy Chief Landis stated they had spent a year studying all the possibilities. Having a temporary facility is not just an issue of location but they would need to have staff for it and an entity that would take on the responsibility and liability involved. Councilor Morgan did not think the jail in the Courthouse was the way it used to be. Deputy Chief Landis said the group is considering all options.

Councilor Williams asked how big the facility would be that is being discussed. Deputy Chief Landis stated how the facility in Medford said they regretted having community cells because of certain problems.
it caused so the group here was looking at having 12 to 18 individual cells.

Mr. Brumbach said it is a good step and noted how they do not want to rush things but wanted to do what needed to be done the right way the first time. The Gospel Rescue Mission is assigning a group to look into the project in more detail and provide a recommendation to the board in July or hopefully sooner. A detox element is a vital missing part in the services being provided right now. He gave an example of someone he has been working with at the Mission and what it has taken for him to turn around and face his responsibilities.

**Relief Agency Service Levels:**

*Communication between agencies:* City Manager Cubic noted there was a concern brought up regarding a gap in communication between agencies with regard to the people they serve and the services they provide. Ms. Wessels from UCAN stated there are legal limitations to sharing information based on confidentiality issues for UCAN and other agencies. They are allowed to share data, but not identifying information.

*Equal accountability for offenders among service agencies:* Councilor Morgan suggested possibly having some type of release of information available so they could share information and be able to have some form of consequences forcing accountability on the offenders. There is concern it is too easy for offenders to continue being a nuisance because they can just move between agencies and receive the services they need without any accountability on their part. Ms. Wessels brought up how the problem people are usually the ones who do not want to receive services and for those who do, not all agencies are capable of tracking the information to be exchanged.

**Individual Responsibility**

Councilor Webber noted that until the pain of staying the same outweighs the pain of changing, people will not change; and some people need an external source to motivate that needed change. He did not feel the connectivity of services and level of services had any impact on the problem we face with those who are sleeping and defecating in the alleyways. It is a different issue.

Mr. Bowen asked if it was possible to have a registration card to receive services so they could track people more easily and be able to provide some accountability.

Ms. Marks asked if there was any way to track the people who do not receive services and causing the most problem.

Lt. Moran felt they would be able to make a list of repeat offenders because police deal with them every
day and can identify who they are.

Denial of services as consequence for bad behavior: Mr Emilio noted at the Gospel Mission that like St. Vincent De Paul’s, they also will deny services if they are made aware of people who are causing trouble in the community. These organizations understand how dependent they are on local donations for funding and if they are catering to people who are causing trouble then they could risk loss of funding.

City Manager Cubic noted that perhaps not all agencies would participate in providing that consequence of denying services.

Ms. Wessels noted the Food Bank did used to have an ID card to receive services from them but it did not work out and was phased out. The thought had been that by having the identification they would be able to track people taking too much from a limited supply by using different food pantries. You have to keep in mind that the people directly providing services at these agencies are volunteers and often elderly and have no administrative support another problem with denying services is that it could cause a violent reaction.

Councilor DeYoung suggested the use of video cameras for security and to identify perpetrators. He was glad they all are in agreement there is a problem because that is the first step in solving the problem. It sounds like there are maybe 12-18 perpetrators we seem to be having the problems and perhaps we should figure out how to handle just those persons we have identified as causing problems downtown and we need to do something about it before the tourist season coming up.

Ms. Wessels pointed out that these issues occur outside the downtown core as well and agreed something needs to be done before the tourist season.

Ms. Oroas at the Downtown Services office stated she had had problems with persons who are getting services and they are also causing problems in the parks. After agencies have had food trucks in the parks feeding the homeless, there are homeless who steal private people’s food. Her opinion was that if you stop feeding them then they will stop coming, eventually.

Councilor Webber related that his church sponsored events for homeless in the parks two years in a row and was told by one of them that if anyone was going hungry in Grants Pass it was their fault because there were so many services available. He pointed out how well-networked these homeless persons are and gave an example how quickly it spread through the homeless community when one of his church staff gave shoes to someone, within hours there were several others coming to ask for shoes for themselves.
Councilor Morgan said she was in favor of having a 'do not serve' list but would like to include some form of redemption, a way for them to at a certain point come back and receive needed services if they decide to change their behavior or maybe an appeals process.

Mr. Maloney suggested having a 'most unwanted list' made by taking pictures of the offenders when Public Safety cites them for repeated incidents and then disseminating it to all the service agencies.

City Manager Cubic asked the service providers present if they would use a 'do not serve' type of list as a guideline to follow through in not providing services.

Ms. Wessels said there could be legal constraints tied to something like that because of the different funding sources they use.

Ms. Thelen stated that Options of Southern Oregon would not be able to follow-through on not providing services. They are obligated. She also cautioned on there being increased violence [aggressiveness] if less services are provided.

Councilor Morgan assured everyone they would in no way want to deny anyone from receiving mental health services. The types of services they are considering would be food, clothing, bedding, hygiene, and those types of things. Since right now they can get a new sleeping bag or clothes rather than be encouraged to try and maintain things they have received for a time. encourage pro-social behavior

Councilor Webber noted how his church had remodeled their offices to add a zone of safety for his staff so the 70-year-old women processing someone for a service could feel more secure in saying no. He stated that there are people providing faith-based services who would never say no. He pointed out how no one has to provide services the way these people want, because some will go down the list and pick and choose where they will go because they don't want to follow certain rules. Maybe they aren't hungry enough or cold enough [desperate] to make a change in their behavior. If you are truly in need, you will do what it takes to receive the service you require.

Councilor Gatlin asked if there could be an ordinance enacted by Council to provide blanket trespassing restrictions for all of the service agencies. Director Henner admitted that Safeway could have trespass in effective in all their stores but he was not sure a place like the soup kitchen and Gospel Rescue Mission could have that but they could network and give notice to each other regarding certain persons.

Mr. Clark suggested it may be least expensive to just increase the presence downtown and in a few of the parks where there are problems, either police presence or volunteers just by having enough people
around to make them uncomfortable.

City Manager Cubic stated it sounded like everyone agreed they would like to encourage a culture of transformation and not just provide a meal or clothes or whatever else.

Public Health Issue
Councilor Morgan said her biggest concern is public health related to dealing with homeless persons using the patios of businesses or alleyways for restrooms and the inability to enforce any laws or ordinances.

Councilor DeYoung agreed the public health issue is a paramount concern. He wanted everyone to keep in mind that it isn't just the homeless who are victims, but they are also sometimes the perpetrators with the business owners being the victims or the kids who go to Joe's Place being the victims.

Ms. Marks felt the issues regarding defecating and urinating might best be handled by having a No Trespass agreement with Public Safety

Faith-based Resources
City Manager Cubic noted the strong commitment and coordination provided through faith-based entities and how there is a huge number of people who will come together for projects and what an important resource that is to keep in mind that we can use. As was noted earlier it may be difficult for all the faith-based entities to agree to the accountability of a do not serve list but if the majority of them follow-through on withholding services then the ones who don't will maybe get so hard that they will reconsider. It may be good to work toward increasing coordination between agencies to encourage a culture of transition throughout the faith-based network.

Mr. Brumbach agreed they do need to take the time to educate on what positive results can be achieved through tough love.

Councilor Webber agreed and noted there is sort of a theme that government handouts have 'helped us into ineptness.' There are so many regulations tied to government funds that things can't happen in a way they need to unless you step away from the government systems. There are a huge group of people ready to volunteer who are not restricted by a bunch of regulations that can probably do more for these people than anything the City or any other government entity could do.

If you build it, they will come.
City Manager Cubic noted how some of the faith-based agencies are more flexible/unencumbered or even mobile and one thing that came out of the Community Forum in February was a concept that wherever the
services are provided, they will find you. In researching what other communities have done he found some places have developed sort of a transformational campus, a place where all service providers are housed in one campus-like area that is usually not within the central business district. That campus would be the only place where services would be allowed so then churches could not be pulling into a parking lot in the central business area on a Friday evening with a food truck to provide food. The idea is to take all the services and provide them somewhere else. It is a big undertaking and would a lot of coordination and effort, but it is a possible solution.

Ms. Carlino stated the emphasis of Joe’s Place Ministry is on youth. They do not want to turn kids away but they have turned away ones who were disruptive. The ministry always has men around when they serve the youth who make sure there is respect in the area where they are serving and they have very few problems. She feels there is a generational problem and would like people to realize these kids have names and have plans for their lives. She was upset to be hearing an attitude of ‘if you just didn’t feed them, they wouldn’t be there’. She did not feel they were going to go away. She felt they needed a youth center so they could better help these kids. If they could not be in the River Valley parking lot or some other places, it might push away the youth they are trying to reach. She did not feel the kids they saw at Joe’s Place were part of those 15-20 who cause problems downtown.

Lt. Moran noted that while people are at St. Vincent’s or at Joe’s Place these people may behave fairly well but when they leave they do behave aggressively in other places.

Councilor Gatlin talked of how he went to the park to look into the complaints being made about problems because they were serving the homeless people there. He said there were very few who turned out but he didn’t see any issues coming from the people they were serving. He has known that ministry to be a safe and responsible outreach to the community.

Ms. Marks reiterated the confusion being caused by grouping all homeless persons under one label when there are different levels different elements of people. You may not have the problem people and what you are doing is helping to prevent the problem people from becoming more of a problem for the rest. No one is trying to push anyone away or stop services. We are trying to make downtown more viable and maybe if we moved that different element of people a little farther away then perhaps business people would not have these issues happening. There may be some kids who get what they get from Joe’s Place but may cause problems when they are not in your parking lot because you have that control and respect. They are doing stupid stuff that kids sometimes do and it is not your fault. We want to keep in mind that those business people are ones who donate to your ministry or fund soccer teams or volunteer to help do all those other things which make our town great.
Mrs. Goodwin pointed out that with the kids she works with there are a certain number of kids who may go to Joe’s Place, who wander around town but they cannot be locked up because they haven’t committed any crime. They are out there and they might be victims for people who are out there recruiting young people to do criminal things. She agreed there needed to be a bigger group of people out in the community intentionally doing things that are positive would be a detriment to this recruiting behavior.

Councilor DeYoung noted he has been hit up by teenagers panhandling when he has gone downtown on First Friday and they are being more assertive. He likes the idea of having a campus area that would avoid having a traffic pattern of people going between agencies that cut right through downtown.

Ms. Marks noted there was going to be a group assessing whether or not to continue doing those First Friday events because they have been sort of taken over by youth. People will drop their kids off and then come back and pick them up later in the evening.

Councilor Webber noted that only 6 kids showing up for services in the park because it was a blustery day probably means there were only those 6 kids needing services so they showed up no matter what kind of day it was, but the ones who show up only when it is nice likely just want to socialize and probably don’t really need that help. The ones who truly need the service will come even if you move the service away to another place. He liked that idea.

Ms. Thornton said if the people were not going to get fed then they would steal or become more aggressive, because a hungry person is going to find food somehow.

Ms. Wessels said she was at a meeting and an assistant district attorney had a discussion about the violence occurring being related to drugs. She understands that during this discussion it may have seemed like the agencies are being pitted against each other but the elephant in the room, so to speak, is that there is no ability to have consequences related to actions because of the County criminal justice situation. If you don’t have a consequence then that negative behavior escalates. Perhaps they should have different steps that can be taken in dealing with the problem people. She noted that no matter where her non-profit has been located in the city there have always been problems but the difference now is there are no consequences for the individuals.

Mr. Just said he liked the phrase ‘culture of transformation’ and asked if it would be possible to require community service with a private sector entity as consequence for the more nuisance troublemakers.

Director Henner restated the issue Public Safety has with not being able to enforce when they ticket them right now and they would have to go through court in order to determine guilt and be assigned community
Councilor Gatlin encouraged everyone who is concerned regarding the current criminal justice issues to participate in the Securing Our Safety meetings.

Options/Things for city staff to look into:
City Manager Cubic asked to wrap up by reviewing things they could do to address this transient issue. One thing is an exclusion zone for downtown. The City has an exclusion zone now in the parks where we can exclude someone from being in the parks and we could do the same in the central business district area. Again, the problem now is with enforcement but it could be something that is ready to go once the system is fixed. Another legislative thing we have is the unlawful transfer ordinance for panhandling. That has been effective because it has moved panhandling out of the main right-of-ways and it also has an impact on the person giving, who can afford a ticket and would end up paying the ticket and they don’t want to so they don’t participate in the transaction or they draw it onto private property instead. He asked if they should look into a corporate trespass agreement to disallow that activity on private property and they could have signs posted for example at Taco Bell by Walmart and other places.

Ms. Martin said she thought it would be worth a try and thought businesses would be on board. They could also ask the Tourism office to tell people not to participate with panhandling but we would have to do it in a positive way. Ms. Marks agreed it needed to be done in the most positive way because they don’t want to scare people away.

Councilor DeYoung asked if they could put signs up at all the entrances into the city stating we are zero tolerance on. and list the ordinances we want to enforce like drinking in public places and panhandling, and also list the fines. Maybe put 5 or 6 ordinances we already have on these signs and maybe even have them at the bus depot. We should put up a bunch of signs everywhere people congregate, like in the parks – saying we are not going to tolerate these behaviors and then list the ordinances. It would only mean the cost of the signs and it’s worth a try because maybe we can get rid of 12 of the 18 bad guys and we could deter others from potentially moving in here.

Councilor Gatlin agreed and like that it would put everyone on notice and maybe cause some second thoughts. It would be something that can be done quickly.

Councilor Webber stated he and people at his church had thought the trespass ordinances were enforceable anywhere in town because they are city laws but it wasn’t until after several times calling police to come take care of someone who was defecating outside the window of a room full of 8 year old
girls that they were told they could not take them for trespassing unless we signed a trespass agreement. He thought perhaps other business owners are thinking the same way about police enforcing the trespass laws for their property. It's an assumption that if it is a law then it should apply everywhere and not just if the city owns the property unless you sign an agreement to request enforcement on your private property as well. Maybe they should have that agreement sitting on a table at the greeter's meeting for the Chamber.

City Manager Cubic noted the difference is that laws are enforceable except for the trespass situation where they need to get that information from the property owners. Lt. Moran noted that the situation where someone is defecating in front of children is a criminal issue and they would definitely take that person away and not just for trespass. The letters for trespass are usually to have on hand after hours so we don't have to wake business owners in the middle of the night to make sure there are trespassers.

Deputy Chief Landis asked Council if they would be interested in hearing information they could lobby the DA's Office to have a certain number of misdemeanors force prosecution kind of like the 3-strikes law.

Councilor Williams told the other councilors present he thought maybe they had things upside down because they were recently looking at spending $375,000 for a spray park and even more money for other things when maybe they should be looking instead at putting money toward building that sobering center so it could get done faster.

Mayor Fowler said he didn't think they should stop doing the things the City needs to do to keep citizens here. He wondered where they should draw the line on what things should and should not be done because they do have to maintain certain services for quality of life.

Councilor DeYoung said he had heard of government agencies paying for the lease or upkeep on a building when they don't own it.

Director Henner noted that Medford does contribute financially to the Sobering Center and it could be something they could do in Grants Pass, similar to how they contribute to the Women's Crisis Center.
City Manager Cubic stated they could do a public-private partnership but it would bring in red tape and added costs. The most efficient way to build it would be to allow the private sector to handle it. He cautioned they were beginning to move toward giving direction on a Council level and that is not where they were headed in this meeting. He asked them all to consider what would be the next steps in this process. He noted there are action items for Council and other things to put together to go out to everyone or perhaps they could have another meeting to discuss more specific actions.

**Actions to move forward on:**

- Putting in brighter lighting at alleyways.
- Ways to increase police presence downtown; utilizing volunteers or part-time county officers, and bicycle patrols for ease of access.
- Create an exclusion zone and possibly have a blanket trespassing regulation for the future as enforcement for persons causing trouble.
- Specific amount of misdemeanors leading to prosecution.
- Not feeding in parks or other specific areas of the city
- Posting "zero tolerance" signs stating certain ordinances will be strictly enforced.
- Look into possibility of creating a 'do not serve' or 'most unwanted' list and enhancing communication between service agencies and Chamber of Commerce
- Pass out the trespassing letters or get word out and have them signed.
- Find out what the City can do to facilitate building a sobering center
- Provide assistance in constructing safe areas at agencies to protect volunteers from aggressive behavior
- Possible youth center
- Ms. Martin volunteered to work with TCA and Chamber to work on signage for the tourism offices and local businesses.
- Ms. Wessels suggested they look at redoing the brochure which had been done in the recent past.

Mayor Fowler adjourned the discussion at 4:13 p.m.

These minutes were prepared by contracted minute taker Wendy Hain.