



City of Yakima

News Release

Subject: Homeless Encampment Update

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Rules Tightened at Yakima Homeless Encampment

In response to the continued growth in the number of people staying at the homeless encampment located on City of Yakima property near the 3rd Street and Walnut Street intersection, as well as concerns about some activity reported to be taking place there, the City of Yakima has tightened rules that everyone staying in the encampment must follow.

With the assistance of non-profit service providers and in cooperation with the City, a set of rules was originally developed by people staying in the encampment. However, as the number of people staying at the encampment grew, some people staying there weren't specifically aware of the rules while others were not following them.

"A meeting was held at the encampment earlier this week and updated, more restrictive rules were shared with the people staying there," said Communications & Public Affairs Director Randy Beehler. "It was made clear that the rules will be enforced to make the encampment as safe as possible," said Beehler.

The updated rules include a requirement that anyone staying at the encampment must register with the City and that all of their belongings, including tents or other shelters, must fit within a single stall assigned to each person staying at the encampment. The revised rules also require any pets to be leashed at all times, establish quiet hours between 11:00 pm and 6:00 am, do not allow anyone under the age of 18 in the encampment, and prohibit the use of drugs or alcohol, violent behavior, or any illegal activity in the encampment.

The revised rules also include a statement that the encampment will close on November 15th and that, "the City reserves the right to dismantle the camp at any time if it deems it necessary or appropriate."

"During the meeting at the encampment, the City also distributed a flyer with information about local service providers who offer assistance to homeless," said Beehler. "The goal is to get people the help they need so they can transition from being homeless as quickly as possible."

One of those service providers, Yakima Neighborhood Health Services ("YNHS"), has so far placed eight people from the encampment in temporary housing through a "master lease" program it is operating and expects to house another 14 people within the next couple of weeks. Using grant funding from the Yakima Valley Conference of Governments, YNHS ultimately expects to house up to about 30 people from the encampment.

"The 'master lease' program list is full," said Beehler. "No one else is being added to the list at this time. People coming to stay at the encampment now should not expect to be offered housing through the master lease program," said Beehler.

Some community members have been dropping off donations of all sorts at the encampment. Beehler said while appreciated, donations for homeless should only be dropped off at YNHS' The Depot (602 E. Yakima Avenue), the Salvation Army (9 S. 6th Avenue), the Union Gospel Mission (1300 N. 1st Street), or Rod's House (200 S. Naches) so they can be sorted and properly distributed.