



## City of Seattle Mayor Tim Burgess

To: City Councilmembers  
From: Mayor Tim Burgess  
Date: November 1, 2017  
Subject: **Budget Proviso Blocking Unauthorized Encampment Removals**

After consulting with Fire Chief Scoggins, Police Chief O'Toole, and Public Health Director Hayes, I want to warn the City Council that adoption of proposed budget proviso [GS 240-1-A-1-2018](#) blocking unauthorized encampment removals will create an elevated public health and safety risk to the people of Seattle. Many of the estimated 400 unauthorized encampments inside the city presently pose health and safety risks to the residents of these encampments and adjacent neighbors. The city government cannot ignore or tolerate these risks. To do so would be to abdicate our obligation to maintain a safe and peaceful city.

Much of the conversation on this topic ignores readily available facts on when, how and why unauthorized encampments are removed and the area of the encampment cleaned. Encampment removals only occur when there are specific identifiable public health and safety risks. Since the removal protocols were refined last year, and since the navigation team became operational earlier this year, we have seen 39.1% of the residents of these encampments accept the services offered. In other words, when conditions mandate that an unauthorized encampment be removed, nearly 40% of the residents are accepting the services being offered. The remaining residents, for various reasons, are declining these services.

In addition to the human factors involved here, so far this year our City workers have removed over 6,000,000 pounds of trash and human waste from the unauthorized encampments that have been cleaned. The public health risks posed by this trash should not be minimized.

The removal practices being implemented by city workers are humane, well planned, and effective.

This work must continue uninterrupted. Should the City Council vote to adopt the proviso as proposed by Councilmembers Sawant, O'Brien, and Harris-Talley, this effective work will stop and the public health and safety risks inherently associated with these encampments will dramatically increase to the detriment of the people of Seattle – including, of course, the campers themselves.

Attached to my memorandum is a summary of department leaders' concerns regarding the operational impacts of a budget proviso restricting the removal of unauthorized encampments in certain areas. These leaders report on their efforts to address problems associated with unauthorized encampments, what actions their departments have taken, and the risk associated with unauthorized encampments. Please review their memorandum.



**City of Seattle**

**MEMORANDUM**

To: City Councilmembers

From: Fred Podesta, Director, Finance and Administrative Services Department  
Kathleen O'Toole, Chief, Seattle Police Department  
Harold Scoggins, Chief, Seattle Fire Department  
Catherine Lester, Director, Human Services Department  
Jesús Aguirre, Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation  
Scott Kubly, Director, Seattle Department of Transportation  
Ben Noble, Director, City Budget Office  
Mami Hara, Director, Seattle Public Utilities  
George Scarola, Director, Homelessness Emergency Response

Date: November 1, 2017

Subject: Operational impacts from proposed budget proviso prohibiting the removal of unauthorized encampments in certain areas

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We understand City Council is currently discussing budget provisos that would dramatically restrict the City's ability to address unauthorized encampments on public property by prohibiting the removal of unauthorized encampments. We are deeply concerned about [GS 240-1-A-1-2018](#), sponsored by Councilmembers Sawant, O'Brien, and Harris-Talley, which would undermine the Navigation Team's ongoing efforts to address the homelessness crisis. We believe such a proposal would harm the City's interests in helping move more unsheltered people into stable housing.

Homelessness is a complex issue. There are many factors contributing to the increase of people living without shelter or those who are at-risk of becoming homeless: Seattle's skyrocketing rents, the retreat of federal funding for subsidized housing, structural inequalities rooted in systemic racial injustice, a woefully inadequate mental health system, and an opioid epidemic.

The City is employing several strategies to address the homelessness crisis, including creating more affordable homes and temporary safer living spaces, overhauling our system of

homelessness services and support, and increasing outreach and assistance to those sleeping outdoors, in abandoned buildings, or in vehicles. None of these strategies will succeed alone. Each can be refined, improved and expanded.

The City is committed to working with Council, the Office for Civil Rights, and advocates to ensure that our work reflects Seattle's values and our commitment to balancing the needs of people living unsheltered and communities impacted by homelessness.

While these efforts continue, the City has a responsibility to address the public health and safety issues that accompany many of the estimated 400 unauthorized encampments around Seattle, which impact the individuals living in the camps and the surrounding community. As of Oct. 18, 2017, the Customer Service Bureau has received 4,389 complaints related to unauthorized encampments this year. The current average of 462 complaints a month is on pace to nearly double the total amount of complaints from 2016 (2,719) and quadruple the amount of complaints (1,245) the City received in 2015.

The most successful effort to-date undertaken to address unauthorized encampments is the Navigation Team, launched in February 2017. The team is comprised of specially trained Seattle police officers, REACH outreach workers, and field coordinators who work one-on-one with individuals to develop personal plans to get the help they need.

The Navigation Team visits encampments around the city, whether the camp is scheduled for cleanup or not. The team does not prioritize removal of encampments that do not exhibit public health and safety risks—and in many cases, the team helps encampments manage waste and other challenges. The team will not remove an encampment if there are no safer living spaces available for every person being asked to move (e.g., space at the Navigation Center, First Presbyterian, authorized encampments, family reunification, emergency shelters, etc.). And the team must offer and provide free storage of belongings during outreach and the day of a cleanup, photograph and catalog the belongings, leave notice for how to retrieve abandoned belongings, and transport items back to people at a time and place of the person's choosing.

Much of the team's work is spent developing relationships with people living unsheltered and building trust. That trust ultimately can help move people away from unsafe living conditions. However, the Navigation Team's work will not be as effective without the removal of the most unsafe unauthorized encampments. Without the incentive to move from unsafe locations, many of the hardest to reach individuals living unsheltered will likely not accept the team's genuine offers for safer living arrangements and other services that will help put them on a path to stability.

For example, as of mid-October of this year, the City has removed 143 unauthorized encampments. Through the Navigation Team's intensive one-on-one engagement, 1,484 individuals have been engaged, with 581 individuals living in encampments accepting referrals

to safer living spaces, including people who were required to leave when an encampment was cleaned up, and those who took advantage of City outreach-only efforts.

This 2017 acceptance rate is significantly improved from 2016, when outreach workers made 4,548 contacts and only 213 people accepted offers to move to a safer location. There were no rules in place at the time to ensure people living in unsanctioned encampments were offered safer living arrangements when asked to leave. The City removed 213 encampments that year—a trend similar to this year’s efforts, yet the success rate of moving more people, more quickly indoors, was much lower. By prohibiting the removal of unauthorized encampments that pose significant health and safety risks for people living there and the surrounding community, the City will decrease its ability to successfully move people into safer shelter and will neglect to resolve a primary and ongoing concern of Seattle residents.

Additionally, GS 240-1-A-1-2018 would prevent the City from removing chronically dangerous encampments that present significant public safety and health concerns. For example, former chronically dangerous encampments such as “the Jungle,” “the Field,” the Spokane Street corridor, the I-90 and Rainier corridor—all of which experienced violent crime, including homicides, sexual assault, drug and sex trafficking, theft, and extreme public health hazards—would still be in existence today if the City were operating either without the Navigation Team or under the proposed proviso which bans encampment removals, which in our opinion is unacceptable.

In the case of “the Field,” the City attempted a serve-in-place approach similar to that suggested by or what will result from the proposed proviso. Regularly serviced porta-potties and dumpsters were not utilized by campers, and, at the time of cleanup, the City removed 1,263 tons (2.5 million pounds) of garbage and debris from the site, including four inches of topsoil contaminated with human and rodent waste. It has been our experience that when the City serves residents in unsanctioned encampments, many campers naturally infer services as an endorsement of their site. Word-of-mouth about a seemingly endorsed site attracts more campers, but as more arrive, trash, bio-waste, rodents and crime proliferate and an entire unauthorized encampment can quickly become unmanageable.

Living in such conditions puts already vulnerable residents at risk for illness and the City at risk for a disease outbreak. As recently advised by Public Health – Seattle & King County, an ongoing hepatitis A outbreak in San Diego highlights the sanitation and hygiene concerns. As of mid-October, San Diego reported 18 individuals dead, 386 hospitalized and at least 578 individuals infected. The conditions in San Diego’s unmanaged encampments encouraged the spread of this entirely preventable disease.

This proviso would undermine the City’s most successful intervention strategy to date that has persuaded the most vulnerable individuals to move inside. It is inhumane to make living outdoors the City’s default response to homelessness. Living outdoors in Seattle, for all but the most prepared, is wet, cold, dark and dangerous. Meeting basic needs becomes a full-time

occupation. Providers estimate that 50 percent of people living unsheltered are experiencing mental health or substance abuse issues: living outside exposes them to constant life and death risks. They can't or won't seek the help they need. They risk becoming dependent on those who would exploit them to traffic in drugs, sex and crime.

The City has an obligation to balance the needs of people living unsheltered with the public health and safety of the surrounding community. This proviso does not strike the right balance and would authorize camping throughout the City of Seattle, prevent Seattle Police from addressing criminal activity, increase the City's liability exposure, put City workers at risk, prohibit the City from fulfilling obligations under [Executive Order 2017-07](#) to remove litter and illegal dumping in public places, and undermine the City's efforts to humanely address the homelessness crisis. The practical impact of the proviso would be dramatic, as outlined below:

**1) Prohibiting the removal of unauthorized encampments would open City parks and green space to unauthorized camping.**

One of the essential responsibilities of the Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation is to act as the chief steward to protect and preserve the more than 6,400 acres of publicly owned parkland, comprising about 12 percent of the City's total land area.

As a public park agency, Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) is committed to creating access to a safe system of parks and recreation spaces for youth, adults, seniors, people with disabilities and people from all backgrounds and walks of life. Parks and protected public lands improve water quality, protect groundwater, prevent flooding, improve the quality of the air we breathe, provide vegetative buffers to development, produce habitat for wildlife, and provide a place for children and families to connect with nature and recreate outdoors together.

Any proposal that allows unauthorized encampments in parks spaces that are not "activated" (an undefined term) would result in a significant increase the number of encampments in parks. Over the last 15 years there has been measurable increases in encampments on parklands, including in greenbelts, natural areas and in developed parks under the jurisdiction of SPR.

Among the hazards of encampments in parks:

- **Park encampments pose a risk to human health** both for visitors and neighbors, as well as for encampment residents themselves. Garbage attracts rodents and other vermin. Food cannot be stored safely, and dishes cannot be washed properly, facilitating the spread of food-borne diseases. Depending on a camp's location, some campers use portable toilets or public facilities, but most use an outdoor location. Hypodermic needles used to inject drugs in parks and park restrooms are often discarded in parks and near encampments. These needles present a clear danger to park visitors, and particularly to children. These problems contribute to unhealthy conditions in our parks and present a significant public health hazard.

- **Park encampments harm the surrounding environment.** Urinating, defecating and inadequate human waste disposal in or around wetland areas can pollute groundwater and damage plants in the park.
- **Fire is another hazard** for park environs linked to homeless encampments. Residents of homeless encampments often use wood stoves or camp fires for heat and cooking. If left unattended, these fires can burn out of control and burn down camp structures, destroy vegetation and wildlife habitat and endanger people. Additionally, on Oct. 12, 2017, a fire started at the peat bog at Roxhill Park; it was caused by people using sterno cans. An area of 30x40 feet, 7-feet deep, was dug up as the Fire Department sprayed hundreds of gallons of water over a three-hour period to put out the hotspot that reached 150 degrees. Parks staff had to remove several trees to clear a path for SFD.
- **Many park encampments are situated in Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA), including steep slopes and hillsides.** Camping increases the potential for landslides and contributes to slope instability by changing infiltration rates and groundwater movement, removing vegetation, and/or over-steepening slopes. This can result in property damage, bodily injury, and even death.
- **Park amenities are designed for daytime recreational use, not overnight or long-term camping.** In many of our parks where people are camping, park amenities such as benches, barbecues, toilets, sinks and faucets have been damaged, sometimes requiring staff to remove these features.
- **Homeless campers are camping in park locations where permits have been issued for events** such as athletic fields, wedding venues and picnic shelters. It is difficult for other park visitors to use the spaces they have already paid to use. As a recent example, the situation at Gas Works Park became so challenging that SPR decided to demolish a structure within the park otherwise enjoyed by the public that had become a site for illegal camping and that had created significant safety and security challenges for parks users.

The impact of encampments on parks and SPR park maintenance staff has been significant, and encampments or encampment-related issues have been the primary complaint we receive from the public. SPR crews this year have hauled away tons of trash. Even so, garbage, needles and feces continue to pile up in our natural areas and greenbelts across the city.

SPR staff are spending so much time dealing with homeless encampments that work on regular, preventative maintenance in parks has declined. SPR estimates that the time spent managing encampment clean-ups, including posting the sites, and moving, cleaning and storing belongings takes up approximately 12 percent of our parks maintenance staff's time per year.

Preventing SPR from removing unauthorized encampments from City parks would undermine both the authority of the Superintendent to fulfill his role as steward of public lands and his responsibility to make policy decisions for the park system. It would also run counter to SPR's mission to provide welcoming and safe opportunities to play, learn, contemplate and build community while promoting responsible stewardship of the land.

Unauthorized encampments in public parks are covered by laws that regulate SPR's administration of the park system:

- **Chapter 18.12 of the Seattle Municipal Code** includes provisions that set operating hours and mandate that it is “unlawful to camp in any park except at places set aside and posted for such purposes by the Superintendent.” SMC 18.12.250.
- **Initiative 42, adopted by Ordinance 118477**, prohibits the non-park use of park land. I-42 requires public hearings regarding the necessity of the transaction/change in use, and then an ordinance finding that the transaction/change of use is necessary because no reasonable and practical alternative could be found. I-42 also requires that the City receive land of equivalent or better size to use for the same parks purposes. I-42 provides that within 30 days of the effective date of such an ordinance, any person may seek review by the Superior Court. The Superior Court could set aside the proposed substitution if it is not equivalent or better than the park land exchanged.
- **State of Washington Conservation Futures Tax (CFT)** funding has contributed to the purchase of many properties throughout the park system. For more than 30 years, SPR has received CFT funds to acquire new parkland, including forests, shorelines, greenways and trails. Over time, CFT has become one of the primary fund sources to acquire new land in our system. CFT funding carries the requirement that all public recreation lands purchased with CFT funds be maintained in perpetuity for public recreation uses. Under the terms of the agreement with the State, “conversions” are expressly prohibited.

The State alerted the City in 2016 that authorizing encampments on parkland acquired through CFT funding constitutes converting a park-use to a non-park use. The penalty for conversions require the department to repay CFT grants to the State. Roughly 300 acres in our system were acquired with CFT funds. (*See attached letter from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, Appendix A*). Between 2008-2017, SPR has received almost \$35 million in CFT funds which would potentially have to be repaid if the City authorizes camping in parks.

If the City is effectively unable to remove unauthorized encampments from parks, the financial and resource impacts on SPR staff and parks maintenance would be significant and cannot be understated. These impacts would include the following:

- **Diversions of resources:** SPR would have to divert more labor resources to service the camping sites, including supplying dumpsters; providing ongoing daily garbage and cleaning of those sites; collecting needles; continuously restoring vegetation; making more repairs to the built environment; performing additional restroom maintenance; keeping rodent populations in check; and addressing neighbors' complaints. This would divert significant resources, and lead to even more loss of landscape, turf, shrubs, tree assets.
- **Costs:** SPR would need to establish dedicated camping zones in a significant portion of City parks and greenspaces. The estimated cost of setting up, managing and mitigating the impacts of those designated camping zones could be several million dollars.

Finally, allowing encampments in our parks would have also have the effect of undermining years of taxpayer investment. Seattle voters approved the Seattle Park District in August 2014. The primary emphasis of the first six-year Park District financial plan is to reinvest in infrastructure and physical improvements to preserve the parks and recreation system for generations to come. This support carries the expectation to have a public park system that is clean, safe and accessible for public recreational use for all.

**2) Prohibiting the removal of unauthorized encampments would inhibit the City’s ability to address encampments in unsafe locations and which create fire and explosion risks to critical infrastructure.**

The City regularly removes unauthorized tents and structures that are in dangerous proximity to roadways. These tents may be on grass adjacent to roads, but are still in grave danger from vehicles as demonstrated by the tragic death of Walter Burton in September 2016 in a tent adjacent to a freeway ramp.

According to Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), significant encampment structures, propane bottles, associated dilapidated vehicles and related debris form a significant fire and explosion risk for critical transportation infrastructure. Encampment fires in the past have damaged the concrete of bridge pillars and low bridge decks, causing hundreds of thousands of dollars of damage and threatening to shut down bridges. Various highways have been closed from time to time due to fires beneath them, including the Alaskan Way Viaduct in the summer of 2017. Had it been worse, the 2017 fire at an encampment at the west end of the Spokane Street viaduct could have resulted in a long-term closure of the West Seattle high bridge.

Finally, any action that undermines the City’s efforts to remove encampments that pose impacts to public health and safety will cause confusion for both unsheltered people and City employees. For example, GS 240-1-A-1-2018 prohibits the removal of encampments or structures unless located on “active rights-of-way, including sidewalks and stairways,” yet fails to define these terms. Is a median in a major arterial or a parking lot an “active right-of-way”? As written, this proviso will expand the swirl of frustration from all members of our community in understanding what encampments may be removed, and which may not.

**3) Prohibiting the removal of unauthorized encampments would limit the City’s ability to address unauthorized encampments associated with criminal activity.**

According to SPD, a number of unauthorized encampments have been associated with negative behavior and criminal activity. In many cases, individuals prey on those in the surrounding areas and residents living within encampments. Surviving in these conditions often involves bartering stolen goods, sex trafficking and narcotics use/sales. People living outside are at high risk of exposure to these activities.



Interacting with these encampments gives the City increased opportunities to identify and disrupt criminal enterprises, reach out to the victims, and change the environment using a harm-reduction model. All facets of city life are affected by the criminal activity associated with many sites, but those living there are in the most direct need of the City's intervention.

Though not an exhaustive list, the incidents below provide context to the very real public safety impacts experienced by those living unsheltered, and those who live and work in the surrounding communities:

- Homicide by firearm at 1<sup>st</sup> Ave S & S Spokane St.
- Homicide by bludgeoning in the 9700 block of Myers Way S.
- Life-threatening slashing/bludgeoning assaults at encampments located at Airport Way S & S Spokane St, and I-90 and Hiawatha Pl S.
- Arson fires along Ballard's Burke Gilman Trail.
- SWAT operation resulting in the recovery of firearms, narcotics and other weapons at 10<sup>th</sup> Ave S & S Dearborn St.
- Trafficking of a 13-year-old girl by an adult camper at 10<sup>th</sup> Ave S & S Main St.
- SPD Vice investigation of sex-trafficking ring involving four campers at Airport Way S & S Royal Brougham Way.
- Navigation Team officers assisted CPS in locating endangered two-year-old at encampment beneath freeway.
- Recovery of loaded firearm near tent at Alaskan Way S & S Jackson St.
- Attempted arson to patrol car near encampment at City Hall Park.
- Local businesses moving or contemplating move outside the City due to ongoing public health and safety impacts to themselves, their employees and customers.

**4) Prohibiting the removal of unauthorized encampments of unauthorized encampments would expose the City to significant legal liability.**

The proposal creates significant legal risks for the City, the most notable of which are summarized here.

The proposed proviso would require that the City repeal several of its laws that prohibit camping on public property. Such laws include: the sit-lie ordinance, the ban on camping in public places, and the general park use requirements that people get permits to place objects in parks.

If the City passed the proviso, the City would potentially be liable to third parties who may be injured or impacted by campers on City property. By allowing the camping, the City could become responsible for the natural consequences of the camping activity. This would be a significant and potentially costly legal risk for the City.

The proposal also increases the City's risk exposure with respect to "personal property," and is likely to result in increased claims, related expenses and litigation by creating a new argument

that the City negligently destroyed property by failing to follow its own standards. Under the proposals, the City may deliberately increase its own risk exposure, as the proposal appears to intend.

In addition, enactment and implementation could expose the City to significant liability for failure to comply with multiple federal and state laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, various requirements for maintenance of the public right-of way, environmental and health rules.

**5) Prohibiting the removal of unauthorized encampments will hurt firefighters and increase public safety risks for people living unsheltered and the surrounding community.**

The limitation or prohibition of the City's ability to remove unsanctioned encampments would pose significant additional risks to our firefighters. The Seattle Fire Department (SFD) respond to individuals experiencing homelessness multiple times per day, and see firsthand the extreme conditions at unsanctioned encampments. The majority of these locations are not designed for human habitation and present a serious health and safety risk to firefighters when they are dispatched to the area.

- The presence of open sewers, human waste, drug paraphernalia and hazardous materials are a threat to the residents of the encampments and also firefighters.
- The large accumulation of propane tanks and butane canisters at encampment sites poses serious fire and safety hazards. During winter months, there is an uptick in the number of responses to warming fires, which often turn into brush fires. In the dry summer months, fires can quickly spread to nearby residential communities.
- Firefighters often encounter violence at unsanctioned encampments, and typically need Seattle Police presence to ensure their own safety before entering.
- Gaining access to these sites continues to be challenging due to the dangerous locations and high-hazard areas where the encampments are, including next to and under the freeway.
- Firefighters often have to walk in to access encampment areas, leaving their apparatus unattended and far away.

Additionally, the City has included a letter from Seattle Fire Fighters Union Local 27 President Kenny Stuart to Councilmember Sawant (dated Oct. 22, 2017), detailing labor opposition to the proposed proviso [Appendix B].

**6) Prohibiting the removal of unauthorized encampments undermines Seattle Public Utilities ability to fulfill its obligations of Executive Order 2017-07, which calls for increasing the removal of litter and illegal dumping in public places.**

According to Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), GS 240-1-A-1-2018 will negatively impact the effectiveness of the encampment trash collection pilot program and SPU's ability to collect

illegally dumped waste. Executive Order 2017-07 directed SPU to address “the accumulation of litter, waste, and debris continues to be illegally dumped, accumulate and create unsightly, uninviting, unsafe and unhealthful environment that affects all people of Seattle”.

The encampment trash pilot currently collects a small portion of the overall trash generated from encampments. Most of the waste collected from encampments has been collected during the removal of an unauthorized encampment, where all areas of litter and unhealthy conditions can be addressed. If this safe method of waste removal is eliminated, the accumulation of litter, bio-waste, sharps and hazardous waste discarded throughout the city would drastically increase.

The proviso would also make it difficult to collect any of the illegal dumping that SPU is effectively removing today. If unauthorized encampments were to remain in place, staff and contractors would have no way of distinguishing between garbage and personal property, as well as determining what could legally be collected from the streets and public areas. This new proviso would essentially eliminate all recent improvements to the tracking and timely collection of reported illegal dumping.

**7) Prohibiting the removal of unauthorized directly undercuts the City’s lawful interest in humanely removing encampments that pose significant public health and safety risks.**

Twice this year, U.S. District Court Judge Ricardo S. Martinez denied requests to halt the City’s enforcement of rules (MDAR) and procedures that authorize the removal of unauthorized encampments for health and safety reasons.

The City is fully aware that the current homeless crisis raises complicated choices. However, the City has an obligation to both the public interest and to people living unsheltered to ensure that the City addresses the challenges consistently and humanely. As a result, the MDAR was revised in the spring of this year to better reflect the needs of people living unsheltered.

The MDAR provides fair recourse for people to recover possessions the City stores during the removal of an unauthorized encampment. The proviso directly undercuts the City’s lawful interests in humanely removing encampments that pose health and safety risks.

## RCO-Director (RCO)

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**From:** RCO-Director (RCO)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 25, 2016 9:47 AM  
**To:** jeanette.geiger@seattle.gov  
**Cc:** Cottingham, Kaleen (RCO); Snyder, Jon (GOV); heather\_ramsay@nps.gov; Barker, Myra (RCO)  
**Subject:** Long-term Obligations for Grants from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office  
**Attachments:** SeattleSN-2016.pdf; RCO Long-term Obligations.pdf

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VIA EMAIL

October 25, 2016

**TO:** **Jesús Aguirre, Parks and Recreation Superintendent**  
City of Seattle

**FROM:** Kaleen Cottingham, Director  
Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office

**RE:** Long-term Obligations for Grants from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office  
(formerly the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation, IAC)

Recent coverage of the homeless crisis in Seattle and its impact on Seattle parks has triggered this letter. Since 1966, the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) has awarded over 130 grants to the City of Seattle to help acquire and develop parks, trails, boating facilities, natural areas, and to restore habitat. In light of proposed legislation being considered which would allow public areas to be used for temporary housing, this letter serves as a reminder that RCO grants come with a long-term obligation to maintain the project area as originally funded. None of the grants include homeless encampments as an allowable use of park or conservation lands.

Attached is a list of grants awarded to the city. You may access information about each specific grant award by selecting the link in the first column, which will take you to RCO's Project Snapshot.

Failure to comply with the long-term obligations of an RCO grant has certain consequences for your organization to mitigate for the loss of grant-assisted land or facilities. This may require the appraisal of the property and the purchase of similar replacement property or development of replacement facilities equal to the grant expended. It also may jeopardize future RCO grant funding for the city.

For more information about RCO grant obligations, please contact Myra Barker, Compliance Specialist, at [RCOStewardship@rco.wa.gov](mailto:RCOStewardship@rco.wa.gov) or (360) 902-2976. I look forward to working with you to protect and steward RCO's investment in parks and other recreational amenities, open space, farmland, and wildlife habitat and to help the city meet its goals.

CC: Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Members  
Jon Snyder, Governor's Office  
Heather Ramsay, National Park Service  
Myra Barker, RCO

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[Kaleen Cottingham / Director / Recreation and Conservation Office / 360.902.3000](#)



## RCO Grants with Long-term Obligations City of Seattle

Project Number and Project Snapshot	Sponsor	Project Name	Grant Program
<a href="#">66-006A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Armeni Boat Ramp #2	Department of Housing and Urban Development, Initiative 215
<a href="#">66-024A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Magnolia Tidelands Park	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">66-036A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Armeni Boat Ramp #1	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<a href="#">68-084A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Peppi's Playground	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">68-085A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Armeni Boat Launching Ramp Extension	State Bonds
<a href="#">68-086A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Elliott Bay Park	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">68-088A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Wallingford Playfield	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">68-089A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Miller Park	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<a href="#">68-121A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Flo Ware Park	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<a href="#">68-122A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	West Queen Anne Playfield	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">69-018A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Chittenden Locks Park	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">69-019A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Matthews Beach Park	Department of Housing and Urban Development, Initiative 215, State Bonds
<a href="#">69-020A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Seattle Small Urban Parks	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">69-021A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Sandell Playground 69	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">69-075A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Beacon Hill Playfield 69	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">69-076D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Lake Washington Boulevard Bicycle Path	State Bonds
<a href="#">69-080A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Seattle Mini Parks	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">69-150A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Red Barn Ranch	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">69-152A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Schmitz Waterfront Park	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">69-183A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Bhy Kracke Park 69	Federal
<a href="#">69-186A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Freeway Park	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds

## RCO Grants with Long-term Obligations City of Seattle

Project Number and Project Snapshot	Sponsor	Project Name	Grant Program
<a href="#">69-188A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Plum Tree Park	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">69-204D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Powell Barnett	State Bonds
<a href="#">70-017A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Thornton Creek #1 & #2	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">70-045A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Fauntleroy Park	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">70-068A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	North Beach Park	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">70-069D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Sandell Playground 70	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">72-012D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Atlantic City Park	Boating Facilities Program, Local Agency Category
<a href="#">72-014D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Rainier Beach	State Bonds
<a href="#">72-031D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Beacon Hill Playfield 72	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">72-070D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Waterfront Park Development	State Bonds
<a href="#">73-001D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Central Freeway Park	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">73-041A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Brighton Neighborhood Park	Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Bonds
<a href="#">74-029D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Bhy Kracke Park 74	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<a href="#">74-042D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Gas Works Park	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<a href="#">75-006D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Discovery Park #2	State Bonds
<a href="#">75-007D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Licton Springs Park	State Bonds
<a href="#">76-009D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Discovery Park #1	State Bonds
<a href="#">77-021D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Sand Point Park	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<a href="#">78-030D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Central West Seattle Playfield	State Bonds
<a href="#">78-031D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Genesee Park & Playfield	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<a href="#">79-019D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Green Lake Park Improvement	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<a href="#">80-030D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	International Children's Park	Land and Water Conservation Fund

## RCO Grants with Long-term Obligations City of Seattle

Project Number and Project Snapshot	Sponsor	Project Name	Grant Program
<a href="#">80-031D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Ravenna/Cowen Park	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<a href="#">81-9018D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Armeni Boat Ramp	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<a href="#">83-023D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Burke-Gilman Place Park	State Bonds
<a href="#">84-046D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Mt. Baker Rowing & Sailing Facility	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<a href="#">85-069A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	South Lake Union Park 85	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<a href="#">85-9036D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Arboretum Waterfront Trail	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account
<a href="#">86-027D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	South Lake Union Park 86	State Bonds
<a href="#">87-036D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Golden Gardens Boat Ramp 87	Boating Facilities Program, Local Agency Category
<a href="#">88-029D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Seacrest Park	Boating Facilities Program, Local Agency Category
<a href="#">89-014D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Magnuson Park	Boating Facilities Program, Local Agency Category
<a href="#">89-027D</a>	City of Seattle	Lake Union Waterway 19	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account
<a href="#">91-054A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Kubota Gardens	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Local Parks Category
<a href="#">91-055A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Thornton Creek	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Urban Wildlife Habitat Category
<a href="#">91-056A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Pipers Creek	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Urban Wildlife Habitat Category
<a href="#">91-057A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Longfellow Creek Natural Area	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Urban Wildlife Habitat Category
<a href="#">91-058A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	South Lake Union/Kurtzer	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Water Access Category
<a href="#">91-059A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Olmsted/Fairview Park	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Water Access Category
<a href="#">91-246A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Cheasty Grnblt & Mt View Nat. Areas 1992	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Urban Wildlife Habitat Category
<a href="#">91-247A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Duwamish Head Greenbelt, Ph. 1	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Urban Wildlife Habitat Category
<a href="#">91-249A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Ship Canal Trail & Park	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Trails Category
<a href="#">91-9820D</a>	City of Seattle	Tidepool at the Seattle Aquarium	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account



## RCO Grants with Long-term Obligations City of Seattle

Project Number and Project Snapshot	Sponsor	Project Name	Grant Program
<a href="#">92-088A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Cheasty Grnblt & Mt.View Nat. Areas 1993	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Urban Wildlife Habitat Category
<a href="#">92-089A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Duwamish Head Greenbelt Ph. 2	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Urban Wildlife Habitat Category
<a href="#">92-290D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	14th NW Shilshole Bay Boat Ramp	Boating Facilities Program, Local Agency Category
<a href="#">92-291D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Sunnyside Boat Ramp Improvements	Boating Facilities Program, Local Agency Category
<a href="#">92-292A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	West Duwamish Greenbelt	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Urban Wildlife Habitat Category
<a href="#">92-293A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	East Duwamish Greenbelt	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Urban Wildlife Habitat Category
<a href="#">92-348A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Kiwanis Ravine	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Urban Wildlife Habitat Category
<a href="#">93-132D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Martin Luther King Jr. Outdoor Improv.	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Local Parks Category
<a href="#">95-049D</a>	City of Seattle	Alki/Harbor/Duwamish Trail Art & Interp.	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account
<a href="#">95-050D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Alki Beach Trail Improvements--Phase I	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account
<a href="#">96-1163A</a>	Seattle Dept of Transportation	South Ship Canal Trail Acquisition, Ph 2	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Trails Category
<a href="#">96-1191D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Last Open Space in Lake City	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Local Parks Category
<a href="#">96-1214A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	South Lake Union Navy Acquisition	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Water Access Category
<a href="#">96-1248D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Fairview Olmsted Park	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Water Access Category
<a href="#">96-1252D</a>	Seattle Police Department	"Scrap" Containment Log Boom	Boating Facilities Program, Local Agency Category
<a href="#">96-188A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Puget Creek Natural Area	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Urban Wildlife Habitat Category
<a href="#">96-198D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	I-90/Judkins Park Improvements	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Local Parks Category
<a href="#">96-200D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Bobby Morris Playfield Park Renovation	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Local Parks Category
<a href="#">96-201D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Webster Playground	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Local Parks Category
<a href="#">96-349D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Golden Gardens Boat Ramp 96	Boating Facilities Program, Local Agency Category

## RCO Grants with Long-term Obligations City of Seattle

Project Number and Project Snapshot	Sponsor	Project Name	Grant Program
<a href="#">97-080D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Green Lake Park Improvements - Ph. 1	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Local Parks Category
<a href="#">97-1311D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Alki Beach Trail	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account
<a href="#">97-1331D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	South Lake Union	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account
<a href="#">97-1332D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Seattle Aquarium Mountains to Sound	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account
<a href="#">98-1052D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	TT Minor Park Expansion	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Local Parks Category
<a href="#">99-1074D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Van Asselt Ballfields	Youth Athletic Facilities, Maintaining Category
<a href="#">99-1075D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Ravenna Ballfield Improvement	Youth Athletic Facilities, Maintaining Category
<a href="#">99-1076D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	West Magnolia Ballfields Improvement	Youth Athletic Facilities, Maintaining Category
<a href="#">99-1278D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Riverview Park South Fields Improvements	Youth Athletic Facilities, Improving Category
<a href="#">99-1279D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Lower Woodland Field #1 Lighting Project	Youth Athletic Facilities, Improving Category
<a href="#">99-1280D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Judkins North Field Renovation-Phase I	Youth Athletic Facilities, Improving Category
<a href="#">00-1311D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Roxhill Ballfield Improvements	Youth Athletic Facilities, Maintaining Category
<a href="#">00-1312D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Pinehurst Playfield Improvements	Youth Athletic Facilities, Maintaining Category
<a href="#">00-1316D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Cal Anderson Park Development	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Local Parks Category
<a href="#">00-1377D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Judkins Park Upper Fields Maintenance	Youth Athletic Facilities, Maintaining Category
<a href="#">00-1715A</a>	Seattle City Light	Guse Property Acquisition, Sauk River	Salmon Recovery - Federal
<a href="#">01-1025A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Linden Ave Neighborhood Park Acquisition	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Local Parks Category
<a href="#">01-1026D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Sand Point Magnuson Boat Ramp Renovation	Boating Facilities Program, Local Agency Category
<a href="#">01-1115D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Sand Point/Magnuson Field Development	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<a href="#">02-1049D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Sand Point North Shore Development	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Water Access Category

## RCO Grants with Long-term Obligations City of Seattle

Project Number and Project Snapshot	Sponsor	Project Name	Grant Program
<a href="#">02-1053D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Mt. Baker Rowing and Sailing Center	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<a href="#">03-1067D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Atlantic City Boat Launch Renovation	Boating Facilities Program, Local Agency Category
<a href="#">03-1185C</a>	Seattle Public Utilities	Salmon Bay Natural Area 03	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account
<a href="#">03-1257D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Lower Woodland Field #1 Outfield Fencing	Youth Athletic Facilities, Maintaining Category
<a href="#">03-1258D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	E.C. Hughes Playfield Improvements	Youth Athletic Facilities, Maintaining Category
<a href="#">03-1260D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Hutchinson Playfield Improvements	Youth Athletic Facilities, Maintaining Category
<a href="#">04-1059D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Gas Works Park - Open Space Expansion	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<a href="#">04-1060A</a>	City of Seattle	Ercolini Park Acquisition	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Local Parks Category
<a href="#">04-1204D</a>	City of Seattle	Lower Woodland Skate Park - Phase I	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Local Parks Category
<a href="#">04-1207D</a>	City of Seattle	Myrtle Edwards Park/OSP Expansion	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Local Parks Category
<a href="#">04-1208D</a>	City of Seattle	South Lake Union Park dev.Ph I	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Water Access Category
<a href="#">04-1266R</a>	City of Seattle	Myrtle Edwards Park Beach Restoration	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account
<a href="#">04-1507R</a>	Seattle Public Utilities	Lower Tolt River Floodplain Reconnect	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account
<a href="#">04-1655C</a>	Seattle City Light	Hoy Riparian Restoration	Salmon Recovery - Federal
<a href="#">06-1614D</a>	City of Seattle	Ercolini Property Development	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Local Parks Category
<a href="#">06-1620D</a>	City of Seattle	South Lake Union Park Development	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Water Access Category
<a href="#">06-1621D</a>	City of Seattle	Magnuson Park Wetlands/Habitat Res	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Urban Wildlife Habitat Category
<a href="#">06-1933A</a>	City of Seattle	Discovery Park - Capehart Inholding Acq	Land and Water Conservation Fund

## RCO Grants with Long-term Obligations City of Seattle

Project Number and Project Snapshot	Sponsor	Project Name	Grant Program
<a href="#">06-2056A</a>	City of Seattle	Longfellow Creek Greenspace Expansion	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Urban Wildlife Habitat Category
<a href="#">07-1796D</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Amy Yee Tennis Center Outdoor Court Expansion	Youth Athletic Facilities, New Category
<a href="#">08-1292A</a>	Seattle Parks & Rec Dept	Ballard Park Acquisition	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, Local Parks Category
<a href="#">09-1263R</a>	Seattle City Light	Tolt River Riparian Area Restoration	Salmon Recovery - Federal
<a href="#">09-1450C</a>	Seattle City Light	Savage Slough Acquisition and Restoration	Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Funding
<a href="#">09-1578A</a>	Seattle Public Utilities	Royal Arch Reach Acquisitions	Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Funding
<a href="#">10-1520A</a>	Seattle Public Utilities	Royal Arch Reach Acquisitions - Phase II	Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Funding
<a href="#">10-1558C</a>	Seattle Public Utilities	Mapes Creek Mouth Daylighting Feasibility & Design	Salmon Recovery - State
<a href="#">10-1769A</a>	Seattle City Light	Upper Skagit Tier 1 & 2 Floodplain Protection	Salmon Recovery - Federal
<a href="#">11-1536A</a>	Seattle City Light	Skagit Tier 1 and Tier 2 Floodplain Acquisition II	Salmon Recovery - Federal
<a href="#">12-1191A</a>	Seattle Public Utilities	Cedar River Belmondo Reach Acquisition	Salmon Recovery - Federal
<a href="#">13-1103A</a>	Seattle Public Utilities	Royal Arch Reach Protection - Selland	Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Funding

Note: This list of projects is based upon RCO's PRISM data as of October 2016. A project agreement may contain more than one worksite or park. Please review your project agreement for details. Your project agreement can be found by following the Project

Project Types: A=Acquisition, C=Combination, D=Development, R=Restoration

# Long-Term Grant Responsibilities



## Long-Term Obligations

Grant recipients have long-term obligations for land purchased, developed, or restored with RCO grants. When an element of the project no longer meets the terms in the grant contract or the site no longer meets the original function of the grant, the grant recipient must check with RCO about resolving the issue.

These responsibilities are described primarily in the project agreement and RCO's *Manual 7 Long-Term Obligations*. RCO and the grant recipient must inspect funded sites to ensure these obligations are upheld.

## Types of Changes

There are two ways a site or structure may no longer meet the terms of the contract or the original function of the grant: Element change or conversion.

### Element Change

- Minor element changes do not conform to the project agreement but have no negative impact on the recreational opportunity. Example: A 15-car parking lot funded in 1995 is reduced to an 11-car lot to make room for a new park feature.
- Major element changes do not conform to the project agreement and negatively affect, but do not

eliminate the recreational opportunity. Example: A tennis court funded in 1995 has been turned into a skate park.

- Exceptions include acts of extraordinary vandalism or arson, acts of nature such as floods or earthquake, and obsolescence (structure past its useful life).

### Remedy

May require an amendment to the project agreement, approval from the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board or Salmon Recovery Funding Board, or remediation.

### Conversion

A conversion occurs when:

- All or part of the property is conveyed for an ineligible use, or to an ineligible third party.
- Public or private uses impair the original purpose of the grant.
- Non-eligible, indoor facilities are constructed.
- Public use is terminated for more than 180 consecutive days.

### Remedy

If RCO assisted with acquiring the site, it must be replaced with new property of equal utility and market value in today's dollars. If RCO assisted with development or restoration of the site, it must be replaced with new facilities or restoration of equal function.

## Long-term Obligations

- Maintain the funded site and structures as originally funded.
- For recreation projects, maintain public outdoor recreation opportunities in a safe and attractive manner and at reasonable hours and times of the year.
- For habitat projects, manage and maintain the habitat values or functions.

## Please Contact RCO

before you significantly alter a grant-funded site or facility to see if your plans are compatible with the project agreement and RCO policies.

Recreation and  
Conservation Office (RCO)  
[www.rco.wa.gov](http://www.rco.wa.gov)  
E-mail: [RCO ML Stewardship  
@rco.wa.gov](mailto:RCO_ML_Stewardship@rco.wa.gov)  
Telephone: (360) 902-3000  
TDD: (360) 902-1996





# Seattle Fire Fighters Union, Local 27 IAFF, AFL-CIO

517 Second Avenue West, Seattle, WA 98119 • (206) 285-1271 or (800)423-4224

October 22, 2017

Councilmember Sawant  
PO BOX 34025  
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

Dear Councilmember Sawant,

Seattle Fire Fighters are very concerned about the proposed legislation that would prohibit the removal of unauthorized encampments in the City of Seattle.

As you know Seattle Fire Fighters respond to each and every citizen and provide the same high level of service to them regardless of where they live or their economic status. Every week we respond to hundreds of homeless individuals with acute medical or emergency needs and we see firsthand the tragic, unsanitary, unhealthy, unsafe, and often horrific conditions that many of the unsheltered individuals in our City endure. An increasing number of these emergencies are at unauthorized encampments in fundamentally unhealthy and unsafe conditions. While there are no easy solutions, letting vulnerable individuals live in these conditions without intervention cannot be the answer.

While Seattle Fire Fighters will always respond to those in need and facing fire and medical emergencies, the high volume of trips to unauthorized encampments in recent years poses very real health and safety concerns to our members. Needle sticks, exposure to biohazard and contaminants, and assault are serious issues that our fire fighters face at unauthorized encampments every day. Your proposal to restrict the City from appropriately addressing unauthorized encampments on public land creates a substantial hazard for fire fighters and, in our opinion, would lead to greater medical and fire emergencies for our most vulnerable residents. Before Council condones people living in unhealthy and unsafe encampments, I ask you to consider the significant increased risk that your decision poses for Seattle's firefighters, and all City employees.

Our compassion for these individuals, like the compassion of most other citizens in Seattle, exists concurrently with a sense of helplessness; we want to do something about it, but what? Although fire fighters respond and extinguish their tent or trailer fires, provide emergency medical services, give them an emergency blanket, or even give them a little money for food or coffee, the unsanitary, unhealthy, and unsafe conditions remain as a result of their lack of housing, especially in unauthorized encampments. These unauthorized encampments become extremely unsanitary and dangerous places when allowed to exist. They not only foster disease but allow for more crime against the unsheltered population and a reduced ability for important services to reach them. One can only assume that many of the crimes occurring there disproportionately affect women and the most vulnerable among them. It is inhumane to allow unauthorized encampments to continue and grow.

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www.iaff27.com • email: info@iaff27org • fax: (206) 285-9479

Kenny Stuart, President

Jeff Miller, Vice President • Darren Schulberg, Vice President

Dennis Karl, Treasurer • Tyson DePoe, Executive Secretary

Directors: John Cameron • Ryan Ellis • Liam Roney • Rich Milligan



However, one thing that has been developed by the City to address this situation and help those struggling with homelessness is the Navigation Team. The Navigation Team has been the most effective response to the homelessness crisis. As you know, the Navigation Team is comprised of outreach workers paired with specially trained Seattle Police Department personnel, who connect unsheltered people to housing and critical resources, while helping address pervasive challenges around the issue of homelessness in Seattle.

According to the City of Seattle website the Navigation Team's purpose is to "bring more people inside and create faster resolutions to hazardous situations. They will begin working with unsheltered individuals who have urgent and acute unmet needs...The Navigation Team will work with people living with the most severe challenges, such as ongoing opiate addiction or mental health issues...This population of people living unsheltered are too often found in dire circumstances, in unauthorized encampments where they are more vulnerable to serious criminal activity."

Fire fighters understand more than most exactly how these people are living and what conditions they are living in. We also understand the complex nature of this problem. However, our oath to protect the public demands that we voice our deep concern that as a city we cannot allow these unauthorized encampments to continue when they pose a public health risk and endanger the health and safety of the inhabitants, other people in that area, and fire fighters.

Seattle Fire Fighters Union, Local 27 urges you to continue funding this critical service in order to be actively compassionate towards this population and to continue to reduce the health and safety threats they face until other, more long term, solutions are found. Do not let perfect be the enemy of good.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenny Stuart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kenny Stuart  
President  
Seattle Fire Fighters Union  
IAFF Local 27  
Lieutenant  
Ladder 8 Seattle Fire Department