



## HOMELESSNESS ISSUES STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING

City Hall  
130 Cremona Drive, Suite B  
Goleta, California  
Tuesday, November 14, 2023

**6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.**  
**City Council Chambers**

Mayor Paula Perotte  
Councilmember Stuart Kasdin  
Robert Nisbet, City Manager  
Jaime Valdez, Neighborhood Services Director  
Chuck Flacks, Homelessness Services Coordinator  
Melissa Cure, Neighborhood Services Management Assistant

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OR ONLINE VIA ZOOM**

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**PUBLIC COMMENT: PUBLIC COMMENT MAY BE PROVIDED IN PERSON, ELECTRONICALLY OR BY MAIL**

To submit written comments for the Committee's consideration and inclusion in the public record, email [cflacks@cityofgoleta.org](mailto:cflacks@cityofgoleta.org) up to 4pm, prior to the Homeless Issues Standing Committee meeting date. Please include the Agenda Item Number in the subject. This meeting will be conducted in accordance with the Brown Act, Government Code Section 54953. Any member of the public may attend this meeting in person or online. Questions regarding this matter may be addressed to Chuck Flacks, email [cflacks@cityofgoleta.org](mailto:cflacks@cityofgoleta.org).

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**AGENDA**

- I. Public Comment (5 Minutes)
- II. Discussion of People Living in Vehicles on Public Roads (85 minutes)

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## MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 14, 2023

TO: Homelessness Issues Standing Committee

FROM: Jaime A. Valdez, Neighborhood Services Director  
Chuck Flacks, Homelessness Services Coordinator

SUBJECT: November 14, 2023 Homelessness Issues Standing Committee Meeting

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### **Item I. Public Comment (5 minutes)**

### **Item II. Discussion of People Living in Vehicles on Public Roads (85 minutes)**

#### ***Background***

The Homelessness Issues Standing Committee (HISC) reviewed and considered the rise in people living in their vehicles at the September 25, 2023 meeting. This included a review of Goleta numbers from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development required Point-In-Time Count (PIT Count) of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January (January 25, 2023). The PIT Count showed an increase in the number of homeless individuals and in particular, an increase in the vehicular homeless population in Goleta. At that time, the recommendation from the Committee was to work with New Beginnings' Safe Parking Program on a proposal to provide daytime lot space and incentives for people to participate in the program and to secure permanent housing.

Since the previous meeting, additional concerns have been raised by City residents about the expansion of the use of recreational vehicles (RVs) for habitation and the correlating demand on public resources. The City is increasing its efforts to provide aid and assistance to those living in their vehicles, but the impacts of vehicular living, particularly in RVs, remain. In general, members of the public have observed or have concerns that:

- Potential health and safety risks both for the vehicle residents and the community at large due to use of open air fires, barbecues, illegal dumping, drug use, and litter.
- People living in vehicles likely are defecating and urinating in public areas.
- RVs on public streets are unsightly, potential traffic hazards, and significantly reduce limited space on public streets where they are parked.

- The presence of children and families attending activities and sporting events at nearby parks and open spaces is not compatible with people living in vehicles.

City staff have worked with law enforcement and outreach teams from City Net, New Beginnings Counseling Center Safe Parking Program, and Good Samaritan Shelter to identify homeless people living in their vehicles and offer them services. As reported at the September 25, 2023 HISC Meeting, the following are some of reasons given by people for not wanting to enroll in homeless services:

- **Rules** – most Safe Parking lots require that residents be in their lot at a certain hour in the evening, be out of the lot in the morning, and comply with rules about behavior including making noise, consumption of alcohol or drugs, among others.
- **Vehicle Condition** – The Safe Parking program requires that vehicles be in working order, with proper license and permits. Some people are unable or unwilling to comply with these requirements.
- **Housing Navigation** – Like any homeless shelter, the Safe Parking program is designed to help people move out of their vehicles into housing. For some people living in their vehicles, their living situation (no rent, mobility, etc.) is preferable to the responsibilities and expense of permanent housing.
- **Service Resistance** – A subset of people experiencing homelessness have either a history of bad experiences with service providers and/or a history of mental health issues that make them especially leery about compliance and cooperation with an organized program.
- **Lack of Housing** - Staff discussions with people experiencing homelessness living in vehicles at the Showers of Blessing sites have revealed that some people living in vehicles have been on waiting lists for months or years and feel frustrated with the lack of real housing alternatives in the region.

**The purpose of this memo** is to inform the discussion and make staff recommendations about this growing problem of the misuse of public space and the struggle of people without homes to find a safe place to stay. This memo will address three areas:

- Current regulations and enforcement;
- Potential changes to existing ordinances based on examples from other jurisdictions in the tri-county area; and,
- Other potential remedies – infrastructure change and expanded services.

## **Current Regulations and Enforcement**

The City of Goleta has several ordinances that are potentially being violated by people living on public streets in vehicles, particularly over-sized vehicles.

**10.01.290 Large Vehicle and Trailer Parking Restrictions**

**10.01.310 Oversized Vehicle Parking Permit**

**12.01.030 Camping and Open Fires in Certain Areas Prohibited—Generally—Exceptions**

**12.01.140 Urinating or Defecating in Public Prohibited**

**10.01.290** – This ordinance is currently being enforced. **Between September 24, and November 6, 2023, law enforcement reported eleven (11) citations for illegal large vehicle parking in areas with significant increases in RV usage.** This ordinance only applies on weekdays between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. When a vehicle has a disabled parking placard, they are currently exempted from compliance with this requirement by the municipal code. At all other times, RV parking is allowed. Parking enforcement reports that they are regularly citing RVs for violations, including parking for 72 hours or more.

**10.01.310** – This ordinance is partially implemented. People who want to park their RVs and campers on streets near their homes receive short-term permits to do so from Neighborhood Services. Regarding homeless people living in their vehicles, because of uncertainty from higher court rulings like Grants Pass and Boise, the City is not enforcing rules against living in one's vehicle without adequate shelter and accommodations.

**12.01.030** – This can be enforced against homeless individuals camping in high fire areas. City policy has preferred multiple contacts with individuals with offers for services and shelter over rigid enforcement in non-high-fire areas at this time. **The main area where RVs and other occupied vehicles are located around Girsh park is *not* in the high fire area as identified by this ordinance.**

**12.01.140** – This can and should be enforced. Residents have been encouraged to report any public urination and/or defecation to law enforcement.

### **Ideas for Potential Changes to Existing Ordinances**

Staff have started an analysis of other jurisdictions in the tri-county area to determine if Goleta's code sections can better address impacts caused by RVs. As discussed above, there have been substantial public health and safety impacts on the public caused by RVs. Staff has been meanwhile working towards bolstering options for shelter and affordable housing in the community.

A large vehicle ordinance update is feasible and the City is currently working on an update which will help resolve enforcement concerns.

### **Other Potential Remedies**

In addition to changing or creating new ordinances, there may be other ways to control the parking of and living in RVs and other vehicles on public streets.

- **Consider a new or amended ordinance related to oversize vehicles** – Other jurisdictions (Lompoc, Hawaiian Gardens) have prohibited the parking of oversize vehicles in particular or all locations in city limits, and at certain or all hours for reasons including, but not limited to damage to streets, visibility for traffic flow, parking availability, environmental hazards, debris and trash accumulation, and other nuisances. These types of ordinances are often limited to vehicles of certain sizes and weights. Exceptions are made regarding specified uses (governmental or business) or residential permits. As discussed above, any ordinance update will address health and safety impacts caused by RVs.

- **Safe Parking Programs** – as discussed on September 25, 2023 - New Beginnings Counseling Center’s (NBCC) Safe Parking program is a national evidence-based model that is quite successful at moving people from living in their vehicles to permanent housing through a combination of rental support, housing navigation, and the provision of quiet, safe lots for people to live in during their transition time.
  - The City’s support of Safe Parking included \$11,989 in CDBG funding for FY 22/23. In FY 23/24, NBCC was given \$10,000 in City Grants funding.
  - Safe Parking operates their program on City-owned lots, and at least one church site in undisclosed locations.
  - At the previous meeting, Committee members directed staff to meet with Safe Parking and determine what incentives might be used to fill existing lots, and to find daytime lots that might be used for people who are resistant to moving their vehicles during the day. Staff has requested a proposal from the Safe Parking program and continues to look at possible private, public, and nonprofit-owned locations for additional parking.
- **Creating No Parking Zones** – The City of Goleta could consider an outright prohibition of large vehicle parking as discussed above. Such signage could be posted on Phelps and Pacific Oaks.
  - **Challenge:** Unless an area is red, yellow or white curbed, vehicles with disabled parking placards/license plates are exempt from most public parking restrictions, including residential parking permit programs<sup>1</sup>.
- **Red Curbing** – This solution would eliminate all on street parking in the affected areas.
  - **Challenge:** These sites are used by visitors to Girsh Park and the Ellwood Mesa, and by overflow parking for residents in the area. Eliminating parking may have unintended negative consequences.
- **Striping** – One remedy would be to create a striping system on Pacific Oaks that would allow some vehicles to park and not others. For example, a vehicle that could not fit in a regular diagonal striping system on a street could be cited.
- **Barriers/Fencing on Phelps** – In order to eliminate the parking free-for-all on the undeveloped portion of Phelps, the City could construct barriers or install fencing to restrict parking to parallel only, thus limiting the ability of RVs to safely park at all (the street would become too narrow).
- **Creation of RV Parks** – Assuming some RV campers can pay some amount per night, the City could create or contract out a Goleta RV Park that is below market.
  - **Challenge:** Finding land, an operator, and determining the correct pricing to make this work as a deterrent or attractive alternative to parking on public streets.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/vehicle-registration/license-plates-decals-and-placards/disabled-person-parking-placards-plates/>

## **Summary**

People living in their vehicles is clearly a growing problem in our region and in numerous other communities across the state. For many people, living in a vehicle is the first refuge from exorbitant rents, intimate partner violence, failed living situations, disability, and lost jobs. Any accommodation or support for people in this situation must be weighed against the need for public safety and the mutual enjoyment of the amenities and beauty of our community.

Given the universal nature of ordinances prohibiting the sleeping in vehicles in virtually every city in the tri-county region, cities place a high priority in stopping this behavior. Currently, enforcing such ordinances carries legal risk. A legal solution, that both honors case law like Boise, but adheres to the spirit of existing law provides a balanced approach. Staff will work with the City Attorney to either amend existing germane ordinances or create a new ordinance that is enforceable.

Similarly, finding the potential means, staffing, location, and incentives to establish a safe parking program for RVs and other vehicles that is an attractive alternative to living on the streets is a critical component to solving this problem. Staff will return to the Homelessness Issues Standing Committee in the near future with the costs and timeline for implementing a more robust Goleta Safe Parking Program.

## **Potential Next Steps**

- Leave current ordinances and practices in place. Develop additional programs to increase contacts and outreach with those experiencing vehicular homelessness which connects those individuals to services.
- Pursue potential ordinance amendments or regulations to create greater enforcement tools.
- Evaluate other safe parking locations and identify other locations in the City where RVs may park without creating the same significant impacts.