



Commissioner Nick Fish  
City of Portland

March 24, 2010

Charles Wilhoite  
Board Chair  
c/o Portland Business Alliance  
200 SW Market Street, Suite 150  
Portland, OR 97201

Re: Draft Camping Guidelines

Dear Charles:

Thank you for hosting me at your March 9, 2010 Board Meeting to discuss the draft homeless camping management guidelines. A copy of the most recent draft of the guidelines is attached.

As always, I appreciated the feedback and the constructive proposals for addressing homelessness in our community. Although we may disagree on some of the specifics, I appreciate the PBA's commitment to a respectful and open dialogue.

As I stated during my remarks, camping is not the answer to ending homelessness. Rather, it is, at best, an interim measure while we are building the housing and funding the services necessary for long-term solutions to this crisis.

To follow up our discussion I want to restate the core principles driving the draft guidelines:

1. Reduce the negative impacts of camping by promoting safety and sanitation.
2. Give the police the clarity needed for effective enforcement.
3. Emphasize the need for responsibility on behalf of campers.

These draft guidelines are the first attempt to place parameters on the camping that is currently occurring. These are not intended to encourage camping, but rather to regulate camping in a manner that sets clear expectations on behalf of the police and homeless campers.

I remain committed to supporting core funding for our City's safety net programs administered through the Portland Housing Bureau. We know that with funding for housing and supportive services we can help people transition from homelessness. I continue to focus on long-term solutions at the same time as we address homeless camping.

Below, I address a number of the questions and issues raised during the board meeting:

**Q. Why are you proposing new guidelines?**

The guidelines are being developed in response to a lawsuit challenging the City’s camping ordinance. In a similar lawsuit, the Court in Los Angeles struck down their camping ordinance (Jones v. City of Los Angeles). A copy of the decision is attached.

**Q. Do the guidelines change the existing law?**

No, the current guidelines would not change the existing law, but would rather give the Police clearer enforcement guidelines. Currently, neither the Multnomah County District Attorney nor the Portland Police are enforcing the camping ban. For example, there has been only one prosecution in recent history.

**Q. Would the guidelines allow camping downtown or in parks?**

Camping in parks is not allowed in the draft of my proposal. The existing Park’s closure rules would remain in effect. The intent of the current draft is to restrict camping in high-traffic areas which would include downtown sidewalks. We will continue to refine the language in the guidelines to clarify this intent.

**Q. Why allow camping when there are other alternatives?**

While there are other alternatives such as rent assistance, shelters and services, the demand for these services is greater than the available resources and services.

Here is our current data:

**Street Count** – The January 2009 (HUD requires a count every other year at the end of January - the next count is January 2011) One Night Street Count estimates that there are more than 1,600 unsheltered homeless people on any given night in our community.

**Shelter capacity** – Emergency Housing for People Experiencing Homelessness in Portland and Multnomah County Oregon 2009-2010

<b>Population</b>	<b>Year Round Beds</b>	<b>Winter Shelter Beds</b>	<b>Severe Weather Beds</b>
<b>Adults</b>	379	287	501
<b>Youth</b>	60	10	10
<b>Families</b>	137	140	Varies*
<b>Domestic Violence – families</b>	70	-	-
<b>Domestic Violence – Single women</b>	19	-	
<b>Total</b>	665	437	511

\*Motel vouchers accessed through Winter Shelter Line and some agencies, administered through Multnomah County.

Despite the capacity, all of the shelters are full. The men's and women's year- round shelters operated by Transition Projects, Inc. (TPI) have an eleven week waiting list. Similarly, the women's shelter run by Salvation Army has over a hundred person waiting list for their 52-bed capacity. The adult and family winter warming shelters have been operating at full capacity and rarely have openings.

My next steps are to continue to take feedback from the Police Bureau, my Council colleagues, and the community to help refine the guidelines. I hope to bring forward these guidelines for implementation in the near future.

We welcome your full participation as we move forward. Please feel free to contact me directly, or Daniel Ledezma in my office at 503.823.3607.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Fish". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nick" being more prominent than the last name "Fish".

Nick Fish

Enc:

[Draft Camping Guidelines](#)

[Jones vs. City of Los Angeles Part 1](#)

[Jones vs. City of Los Angeles Part 2](#)

[Jones vs. City of Los Angeles Part 3](#)

[Current Camping Ordinance](#)