

Community Emergency Requires Emergency Action

A Letter from Keith McHenry, co-founder of **Food Not Bombs**

We are in the midst of a Community Emergency.

Six month ago I suggested that the city of Santa Cruz should start preparing for the global economic crash. As I said at the time, it is not a matter of if but of when.

The possible magnitude of this crisis could quickly become catastrophic and require city action. This April hundreds of people in Santa Cruz will have their food stamps eliminated or severely reduced. This alone will result in additional people being forced to move to the streets. If thousands of housed people are ordered quarantine at home the loss of income for those who cannot work from home could force even more people to seek shelter in their vehicles, doorways and parks. As the global economy continues to fail thousands of our neighbors could join those already living outside. This could be a much more complex and difficult economic collapse than the Great Depression.

These are some of the proposals to consider.

- An ordinance to suspend all evictions.
- Immediate placement of 5 or more ADA compliant toilets and 10 or more standard toilets and hand washing stations.
- The construction of permanent toilets and showers to handle the anticipated increase in people forced to live without housing.
- Pass an ordinance letting homeowner shelter in place and a ban on foreclosures.
- A suspension of camping and trespassing laws and a plan to provide safe camping areas with an expectation of a doubling or more of those without housing.
- An organized plan to make sure everyone in our community has access to food, water, healthcare and sanitation.
- Frequent and aggressive public statements by the City Council, **Police Chief Mills, and City Manager Bernal** denouncing the hate speech against those who live outside including statements directed at the leadership of all local hate groups *like Santa Cruz United, Take Back Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz Neighbors.*

This is a time for our community to pull together and seek compassionate solutions to the crisis. The stress and chaos of a global economic collapse could result in civil unrest and the torrent of hate and suggestions of violence against those who live outside will not lower the tension.

Thanks for your consideration of these issues.