

City Council Crapshow Ignored Winter Homeless Needs

Many items that came up at the last Santa Cruz City Council meeting of the year were worth defeating or delaying. They impacted folks outside either directly or indirectly. Vital ones like winter storage and shelter for those outside and an end to the sweeps. Action to stop ALPR (license plate/facial recognition) snooping promised to be at this Council meeting weeks ago were NOT there. Surveillance devices, of course, particularly impact the more vulnerable unhoused folks, especially undocumented workers. They face getting recorded, data-based, and punished for their visible presence in the community. Their communities face regular raids and are regularly torn apart at Coral St., in the Pogonip, on the Levee, under bridges, and elsewhere.

Don't go to Council meetings with the notion that Council, the staff, or the City Manager meaningfully care to listen to you. Instead, speak to the entire community since the meeting is televised and archived. Some members of the public and others on distant media—not the Council—are your real audience. They are the ones who might prompt the Council to act.

Here is my sense of the nonsense that the Council rubberstamped before it tucked in its tail and headed for Xmas vacation for six weeks. As well as what was not on the Agenda, but should have been.

Portapotty-Sized Oral Communication Period

(for items missing from the Agenda that should be there),

That's most everything including:

- +++ meaningful local police accountability and review;;**
- +++ transferring funding from overarming our cops to real social services;**
- +++ restoring Coral St. mail, bathroom, resting services slated to shut down in March;**
- +++ helping to restore MHCAN to life;**
- +++ funding immediate walk-in emergency shelter for winter;**
- +++ serious vacancy fines for keeping properties vacant for investment;**
- +++ stopping the intensifying homeless sweeps funded by City Mangler Matt Huffaker;**

Huffaker, the City Manager and highest paid official, is sometimes known as the City Mangler. He works with a compliant City Council, and "No Kings but King...er...Mayor" Fred Keeley to continue the regular theft and destruction of homeless tents, blankets, and other property. This gang presides over the isolation and destruction of homeless communities while maintaining a pretense of "adequate shelter" and the even more unlikely "Pathway to Housing".

In the past, members of the public had the right to single out individual items for public comment, staff report, Council discussion, and Council vote. Not so now under Keeley's Council. In a move to exclude much public testimony, City Council and more recently the Supervisors ruled that only they should have the power to flag an item for public discussion if on the Consent Agenda—where most items are. Only if a Councilmember of King Keeley's Court flags an item will you be able to hear a staff report, give longer public testimony, and have the item voted on individually. Instead, at this Council meeting, several dozen items were rubberstamped with only the shadow of public

input.

The agenda is mostly made up of items to be rubberstamped by City Council, set down by staff beforehand. Public Comment is choked back to a tiny 2 minute allowance for the total mass of all 26 items as a group (including Consent and Consent Public Hearing Item).

For a verbal analysis of many of the following items, go to <https://www1.huffsantacruz.org/lost/1%20FRSC%2012-7-25.mp3> (30 minutes into the audio file) These Agenda items--the ones I found discussed—were ## 10, 11, 12,13, 16, 17, &18 + Consent Public Hearing Items ##31, 32, & 35, + Appeal #36

RUBBERSTAMPED AGENDA ITEMS (Read them and weep).

#10 \$\$\$\$Slush fund for the "All in the Family" City Attorney's Office.

#11 More chatter rather than funding or action on current and coming cuts in homeless services.

#12 More battery storage without specifying whether dangerous lithium batteries involved.

#13 \$\$ for more "Outreach", without providing housing or services to those directly affected.

#16 \$ for phony, ineffectual, and non-transparent-"police review".

#17 Likely cutbacks in City Commissions more power for the staff & City Mangler.

#18 More crowd control devices for dealing with public anger when folks have had enough.

#31 Law criminalizing holding up protest signs, or "help wanted" signs on medians.

#32 Law allowing the seizure of "abandoned" vendors' food, crafts, and goods.

#33 Law sweeping away homes-on-wheels under cover of "street cleaning".

#36 Staff recommends removing two Coast Redwood trees at 401 Ingalls St. (Less green shade for all; \$\$ for someone)

Folks were allowed 2 minutes before their mike was shut off. On item #11 (restoring funding for Housing Matters) Keeley cut off speaker James speaking about a corrupt system. James was sharply criticizing the powerful City Manager Matt Huffaker. Keeley rushed to Huffaker's defense by interrupting James and threatening him. Not by waiting until James had finished his 2 minute speech responding with an opposing argument. A clear violation of the Public Meetings (Brown Act) Law and an example of Keeley's knee-jerk bullying manner once uncomfortable lines are crossed. The following speakers were rushed through and rudely hurriedly moved to and from the microphone in military fashion.