

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

One of our local problems is the large number of homeless people in our communities and what to do with them. The homeless problem has been with us for many years. It can't be wished away or swept under the rug so what's the solution? The only way to go is to try and reduce the number of homeless and that is not easy. The City of Eureka and all incorporated cities in Humboldt County are not equipped to take on the problem. The city emergency services do what they can plus their everyday duties to enforce basic laws and ordinances. There are faith based organizations that heroically tackle the problem every day. Some groups are better organized than others; some have access to more funding for whatever the reason. So what government agency is supposedly equipped to handle the homeless problem? Note that I said "equipped", not prepared. Did you ever hear of the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services? Yes, the county and the state both have these departments and are responsible for dealing with the problem. Yet the City of Eureka gets overly involved in the issue and, I believe, hinders solutions through their timidity and indecision, especially by two of the council members. Our cities provide basic police and fire protection, as they should, and that is supposed to include enforcement of camping ordinances and trespassing. We waste our time moving illegal campers from one area to another while the County continues with programs on a scale that is far less than what is necessary to deal with the homeless problem. The Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services is the largest organization within the county departments. They lease numerous buildings to accommodate their large force of employees. Positions in upper management are numerous and their salaries are more than adequate. They occupy all floors of the five story building, except the ground floor, located at Fifth and F Streets, formerly known as the "Professional Building". It seems to me that the monies actually spent for health and human services are only a small percentage of those funds spent on salaries and rent. The State of California appears to be minimally involved in fixing the homeless problem yet the governor is hell bent on spending millions if not billions of dollars on a high speed train to be located in the San Joaquin Valley. Incorporated cities should not take on the homeless problem which they are not equipped or prepared for. How many of you have contacted any county or state official about the homeless problem? If the average citizen does not speak up, you can expect the problem to get worse. I realize that homelessness is far flung and cannot be resolved overnight. I also believe that the problem should be placed on the shoulders of those charged with the responsibility if we are to move ahead.

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