

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

I had occasion to read the "My Word" column authored by Fourth district Humboldt County Supervisor Virginia Bass and published in the Times-Standard newspaper on March tenth. The article was titled 'County-city collaboration key in addressing homelessness'. It points out the historic meeting that recently took place between the County of Humboldt and the City of Eureka, historic because there has not been another meeting like it in at least fifteen years. A joint resolution resulted from the meeting and is a good starting point in working toward a common goal. I am amazed at the fifteen year lag between the two entities when it is so obvious that the shared common problem of homelessness dictates the need for timely city-county collaboration. The City of Eureka, along with all other incorporated cities within the County of Humboldt, provides basic services such as fire and police protection and public works but nowhere within the city structure can you find a department or a budget that includes health and human services. In other words, there is no city budget, staff or equipment to handle the homeless problem yet the problem exists big time. Who is charged with a budget, staff and equipment to handle health and human services (which includes homelessness?) It is the County, State and Federal governments. So, you have cities strapped with huge homeless populations without the resources to combat the problem and, in the case of Eureka, a lag of fifteen years between meetings with those charged with the problem. How many years has it been between meetings with the County of Humboldt and the cities of Arcata, Fortuna, Ferndale, Rio Dell, Blue Lake and Trinidad? The "My word" column also states that throughout California, county-city collaborations are being recognized as the best approach to the homeless problem. Also, State Senator McGuire and Assemblyman Wood recognize the problem and are moving toward including the State of California's cooperation with city and county entities. I guess my biggest question is why did it take so long to make a simple deduction as to the proper approach to take on the problem of homelessness? Supervisor Bass aptly states in her article "As we move forward we must focus all of our efforts and resources toward the goal of ending homelessness for each individual person that we can reach, instead of managing their homelessness." City of Eureka please note; moving homeless campsites from one area to another is a perfect example of managing homelessness. It solves nothing. The police department, caught in the middle, is to be admired for the way they are handling the homeless population. It is obvious that they have been placed in a position of managing the homeless which takes away from their other law enforcement duties. I would like to thank Supervisor Bass for her part in taking a realistic approach to the homeless problem.

Fred Nelson for community Comment