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Washougal WA 98671

Clark County Code Enforcement
Clark County Community Development
Code Enforcement
1300 Franklin Street
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Vancouver WA 98660

Subject: Clark County Code Enforcement request and report of illegal activity

I am hereby requesting action on the part of Clark County against 9 property owners in Washougal, as well as The City of Washougal. The code enforcement and illegal activity pertains to:

9.05.150 Unlawful obstruction.

9.05.290 Exclusion from parks.

9.05.320 Prosecution for violation.

Definition:

Squatter Definition: **a person who unlawfully occupies an uninhabited building or unused land.**

Will use the term squatters throughout for the Gifford Place property owners, not as a pejorative, but as a shorthand. A set of plat maps for the property owners in the encroachment area from Clark County are included in this package.

City: City of Washougal officers and Council Members

Mable Kerr Park 4600 Gifford Pl, Washougal, WA 98671 has not been maintained by the City of Washougal for years. The exact inception of the abandonment is undefined but at least since 2019.

Violation of 9.05.150 Unlawful obstruction. 9.05.290 Exclusion from parks.

9 squatters all located on 45th Court have maintained 4 acres of the Park for their own benefit. These squatters have barricaded the 4 acres at the Gifford Place trail head with trees, wood debris and the maintenance of a blackberry briar as well as other noxious weeds around the area. Inside the area the squatters have erected a 100 foot vinyl fence across the Park, various sheds and shelters, play equipment and at least one above ground pool. Lawn furniture, a gibbet, other ornamental and landscaping elements are throughout the 4 acre area.

In addition, members of the group of Squatters have verbally threatened, called 911 to report, flown drones over various people who have entered the 4 acres of the Park they are occupying. Threats

and verbal assault have been directed not only against the general public, but against employees of the City of Washougal.

Violation of 9.05.320 Prosecution for violation.

The City of Washougal took no action to remedy these violations of **9.05.150 Unlawful obstruction. And 9.05.290 Exclusion from parks.** However, In August of 2024 the City revoked the volunteer permission to work at the Gifford Place Trailhead and instead identified a 6 foot wide perimeter on the side of a trail in the Park they could work in, effectively banning the group from doing any work in the Park. On 8-30-2024, the City formally terminated the Adopt a Park program for Mable Kerr Park Only.

The City of Washougal has in fact protected the interests of the squatters at every turn, and disregarded their duty to remedy the encroachments, barriers, exclusions and verbal assaults in the Park. No code violations or exclusions have been sent to any of the squatters.

Supporting narrative

In March of 2024, a group of Washougal residents requested permission from the City of Washougal to clean up the Park. The City granted limited permission to use hand tools only to clean up the extensive wood debris, and noxious weeds in the Park. Subsequently, the group adopted the Park as the kerrpark2024.com group. The url points to a web site with a chronological and illustrative account of the efforts of kerrpark2024.com.

Kerrpark2024.com concentrated most of their efforts at the Gifford Place trailhead, eventually clearing approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre of noxious weeds and wood debris with hand tools alone. The Group made many requests for the City to maintain the cleared area, since without regular mowing, the noxious weeds would grow back. The City instructed the Washougal Works Department NOT to mow the cleared area.

As the volunteer's work progressed the squatters began to pile up large logs and wood debris between their 4 acre area of occupation and the volunteers cleared area. The volunteers noted this to the City and also informed the City of the activity in the encroachment. The volunteers attended a number of City Council meetings, providing supportive information and photographic evidence of the need to keep the weeds cleared and of the squatters in the Park. The volunteers presented copies of a PowerPoint with photos of the activity in the squatter area at one meeting. The City did not respond with any action to this information.

In June 2024 the volunteers planned a Sleeping Beauty event in Mable Kerr Park, and on June 22, 2024, came to make sure the site was clear for the event. One volunteer cleared some blackberry canes away from an opening in the blackberry bramble.

Kayla Nesta accosted this person and called the Washougal Police, who responded. The call report is included in the package. Ms. Nesta indicated to the volunteer and to the Police that she didn't want anybody to see the area of the Park in squatter control because they might see her children playing there. The call report closes with: No Crime. This is of course not strictly accurate.

On July 29, 2024, two individuals were walking in the Park, and strolled into the open area controlled by the Squatters. Todd Young called the police to report that someone was in the part of

the Park he owned. He claimed that he has adverse possession of part of the Park. The Washougal Police responded, interviewed Mr. Young, as well as the couple, described as WM red short, and WF Pink shirt. Call report also notes that the Volunteers were in the Park at the time of the 911 call. Police closed the call again reporting “no crime”. Which is not precisely accurate.

On 8-21-2024 the City provided the volunteers with a map restricting the area they could work in to specifically Exclude the squatter area. Map attached.

On 8-30-2024 the City Sent a communication containing the following:

“ Due to numerous competing interests, this park will be removed from the program until further notice.”

Formally ending any volunteer opportunity to clean up Mable Kerr Park. Also leaving the Squatters to continue their adverse occupation of 4 acres of public land in Washougal unimpeded.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours,

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Copy:
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Washougal City Manager David Scott
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Washougal Chief of Police Wendi Steinbronn
1320 A St, Washougal, WA 98671

Attachments

45th Court Property Owners list and Clark County Map
8-21-24 Mable Kerr Park Work Ban Map City of Washougal
6-22-2024 911 Call Report
7-27-2024 911 Call Record
8-15-2024 Barriers at Park Entrance
Squatter wood debris Barrier
Vinyl fence and structures in Park

Note: for additional photographic evidence, see timeline and photos of 2024 squatter activity at kerrpark2024.com