

# Homeless camp to get portable toilets

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The City of Salem is paying to put six portable toilets and hand-washing stations at a homeless encampment near the ARCHES Project, a downtown social services provider.

Salem was on the verge of declaring the encampment at the corner of Union and Commercial streets NE — at one point estimated to hold about 60 people and dozens of tents — a public health nuisance this week. That move would have made city staff notify the homeless they needed to leave within a set amount of time.

But the city's health officer, Brady Rogers, decided against issuing a declaration after seeing conditions had improved at the camp since his visits in November. ARCHES recently hauled about 1,200 lbs. of garbage away from the site, according to the city.

"Conditions are still bad there," Rogers said Wednesday.

Some campers moved away, spots had been vacated where once there were tents and less garbage was present, he said. Camping there long-term is "not a tenable solution."

Rogers said he hopes everyone will find somewhere to go. "I have no idea where," he said.

It's only a matter of time before something "awful" happens, Rogers said.

The City Council on Monday approved a ban against camping on public right of way, public sidewalks and public property. The ban won't become effective until Dec. 16 and may force campers to leave the ARCHES spot anyways. City officials are considering

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**Anthony Stevens, who has been living in front of ARCHES for a few weeks, throws trash cleared from the camp into a dumpster on Commercial Street in Salem on Wednesday.** MADELEINE COOK/STATESMAN JOURNAL

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setting aside some city property for homeless camping.

“We are providing sanitation services in the meantime to protect the health of the public, both campers and those passing by,” said city spokeswoman Kathy Ursprung.

City and social service representatives met Tuesday at the city’s Urban Development Department office, down the street from ARCHES. Deputy Police Chief Skip Miller, Urban Development Director Kristin Retherford and Rogers came to the meeting with Jim-

my Jones, executive director of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency, which oversees ARCHES.

“We asked what we would need not to be deemed a public nuisance,” Jones said.

Rogers told the Statesman Journal his biggest concerns were feces, urine and garbage on the property. He said he asked Jones to commit to emptying a dumpster daily; it’s been “overflowing.”

Powers sent a memo Tuesday saying he approved city money to be used for the facilities. Ursprung said she did not have cost estimates.

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