

BECOME A PART OF THE SOLUTION

Singing Christmas Carols, decorating the house, enjoying time with family and continuing on traditions is what the holidays should be about.

Sexual Violence is an issue most of us do not want to talk about, much less remember, during a time of year when Christmas lights twinkle and beautifully wrapped packages are everywhere!

You can be part of the solution by making the decision to "End Sexual Violence" by offering your personal time to volunteer or by donating resources or monetary gifts. You will make a difference!

When you think of giving this holiday season, please remember

Rape Crisis Intervention & Prevention

WE WISH YOU ALL A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS!



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erty; others have kicked renters out to cash in on the rise in home values. And with little to nothing available on the rental market, those who are priced out have been forced to leave the community.

It goes without saying that the lack of housing has also created a significant barrier for those already experiencing homelessness. Even if they are ready to move on from the streets or the shelter, there is simply nowhere for them to go.

In response to the crisis as a whole, Butte County and Chico have relaxed zoning regulations to provide for temporary housing projects, such as RV parks.

Another significant effort that impacts the housing market came over the summer. After more than two years of wrangling with developers and spending \$500,000 on a consultant, the Chico City Council updated development impact fees for the first time in more than a decade.

Months later, in October, the council revisited those fees, deciding to lower the cost for smaller units to incentivize a variety of housing sizes. It also reduced impact fees for accessory dwelling units by 50 percent and started discussions about further reducing them in the wake of the Camp Fire.

Chambers in chaos

Chico's City Council chambers have long been a place for passionate debate, but the contentiousness was taken to new heights in 2018 as local activists showed up in force on several hot-button issues, especially homelessness.

Under the leadership of Sean Morgan and Reanette Fillmer, then the mayor and vice mayor, respectively, the meetings often

devolved into name-calling and finger-wagging from the dais and shouting and clapping from the gallery.

In May, things came to a head when the panel was considering discussing a laundry list of items homeless-advocacy watchdogs say are discriminatory. Specifically, earlier closing times for city parks, renewing the sit/lie ordinance and creating penalties for wayward shopping carts.

During public comment, former Bidwell Park and Playground Commissioner Mark Herrera read a satirical speech that called an unspecified leader of the Chico First group a "human paraquat"—an expression from *The Big Lebowski* that essentially translates to "buzzkill." Morgan charged that the term rose to the level of a personal attack and ordered police to eject him. Herrera was handcuffed and subsequently arrested. After agreeing to take a breathalyzer test that found him to be over twice the legal limit for DUI, he was held overnight at the Butte County Jail. In October, he filed a civil lawsuit against the city in the U.S. Eastern District Court.

Also in October, activist Patrick Newman was escorted out of the chambers—again on Morgan's order. Newman—an advocate for the homeless and founder of Chico Friends on the Street—criticized sit/lie during public comment. Near the end of his speaking limit, he began to read an excerpt from *Martin v. City of Boise*, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision that has come to define the legality of sit/lie laws, acknowledging that he would continue "until this meeting is adjourned or I am removed from this building."

He was handcuffed briefly and released outside the chambers because he was being cooperative, Police Chief Mike O'Brien later told the CN&R. □

Chico police escort Patrick Newman out of a meeting.
PHOTO BY ASHIAH SCHARAGA

