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NEWSLINES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

that “if you take out humane side of it,” prevention saves money. It costs \$90,000 to treat a person with Hepatitis C during their lifetime; \$450,000 for someone with HIV.

Most members of the public spoke in favor, including neighbors of one of NVHRC’s proposed sites. NVHRC founding member Siana Sonoquie said the group is “really listening to the feedback of the community.” The organization already has been collecting used syringes and training agencies and the general public on how to use the overdose-reversing drug Narcan.

Those against were concerned about safety and increased litter. Public Health pointed out that studies have shown such programs do not increase needle litter in communities. The department will make the same presentation before the Butte County Board of Supervisors later this month. Miller recommended the city also reach out to NVHRC for more information about its proposal.

Many members of the public also addressed the council on the need for 24-hour public restrooms at the outset of the meeting, during business from the floor. In response, Orme said that the city would install two portable units downtown this week, one at the Transit Center and another at Depot Park. Both will be accessible 24 hours a day.

The council approved such an installation in this year’s budget cycle, with the intent to provide safe, sanitary places for the public—especially homeless individuals—to relieve themselves.

So why the delay? The Public Works Department’s facilities manager, the project lead, recently left, Erik Gustafson, director of operations and maintenance, told the CN&R.

As she advocated for the restrooms, Chico resident Nancy Wirtz put her money where her mouth was: she handed the city clerk a \$10,000 check to support the effort. She told the council that people on the streets deserve to be treated with the same respect as the housed.

“Honestly, if you want good citizens, you have to treat people as citizens,” she said. “And that includes giving them bathrooms when they need it.”

—ASHIAH SCHARAGA
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