

was reallocated. Safe Space and the Torres Community Shelter received approximately \$190,000 of the HEAP funds in July to put toward a similar project. (Most of the Walmart Foundation's donation went to a Jesus Center project years from fruition.)

At first, the organizations looked into setting up a portable building on the Torres Shelter's property, but the cost just to put it in place was too high and it couldn't accommodate enough people, McLaughlin said.

They came close to securing other buildings, she continued, but more hurdles arose. A key factor has been that potential locations lack emergency sprinkler systems, a state requirement. Safe Space hoped to get a waiver via the city's shelter crisis declaration, McLaughlin said, but is unclear if that's a tenable path forward. The Chico Housing Action Team's planned tiny home community, Simplicity Village, was approved by the city under the same declaration, only to be held up in court.

Mayor Randall Stone, who volunteers for Safe Space as board treasurer, called the lawsuit a barrier to progress.

"The city has done everything within its power and authority to grant that emergency declaration and the only thing holding it up is that injunction," he said.

Schwab and McLaughlin added that, in their view, it has been tough to get everyone on the same page—homelessness remains controversial.

"The people that are hurt the most are the ones that are still the most vulnerable with no voices," Schwab said. "It's heartbreaking."

Nevertheless, Safe Space's leadership is determined to secure a permanent location. Like the model proposed for the Orange Street Shelter, the plan is for the facility to have case management, housing and employment resources, substance abuse counseling and support groups.

But its first priority is to make it through this season, which the shelter intends to conclude the morning of March 15. "It's just too hard to shut down the shelter and start it again, in terms of volunteers, in terms of flow," Schwab said. "Plus, we have 60 people a night—they're going to be traumatized when they find out they don't have shelter next week."

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