

Chico Police Sgt. Cesar Sandoval (wearing black mask) engages with homeless advocates and police personnel as city workers dismantle a homeless encampment near One Mile Recreation Area in Bidwell Park Tuesday (Jan. 11).

encampments—passed an ordinance Dec. 1 elevating the breaking of park rules to criminal offenses, a stepping stone to the sweeps that are now officially underway.

Police and park rangers have spent the last several weeks visiting camps and informing denizens about impending enforcement, but city officials have been vague about when this would begin or how it would be carried out. That became more clear when 72-hour eviction notices were issued to some campers in Lower Bidwell Park last Thursday (Jan. 7). Roughly half of the campers had moved out of the area by Tuesday morning.

Anticipating Tuesday's action, protesters began gathering at Bidwell Park's Cypress Street entrance at about 7:30 a.m. Roughly 50 people had shown up by 8 a.m., and about half moved to the horseshoe pits when city workers began breaking up the camps located there.

As the protesters gathered, Bryce Hodge was among a handful of campers breaking down their belongings near the park entrance in order to move before police and city workers arrived.

"I found a place right on the edge of town, but it's going to be a difficult move," Hodge said, explaining he has medical issues that have forced him to visit the hospital a half-dozen times in recent months. "It's especially confusing, because I was

Bryce Hodge breaks camp near the entrance to Bidwell Park where he's stayed for the last three months, just minutes before encampment sweeps started Tuesday morning.

told to move here three months ago when I was staying elsewhere.

"They pretty much corralled us in here, and now they're telling us we have to move but that we can be arrested for camping anywhere we go in city limits.

"I really don't know what I'm supposed to do," he added. "None of us do."

### 'Making problems worse'

While the conservatives on City Council have made apparent their objective to empty the encampments, Alex Brown and Scott Huber—the only left-leaning holdovers of the progressive-majority council—have remained steadfast in their stance that campers shouldn't be forced to move without the city providing alternatives.

Huber stood among the protesters Tuesday morning, carrying a sign reading, "NO EVICTIONS without SANCTIONED CAMPGROUND."

Interviewed Monday (Jan. 11), Brown voiced her opposition to moving campers. She criticized what she deemed a lack of transparency by city staff regarding how and when enforcement of camping laws would be carried out, saying that she—as well as service providers and advocates—have had to rely on information circulated by word of mouth after enforcement steps were already underway.

"City staff has been given vast deference on how to move forward with this action, and now they're implementing it in a big way without giving any information," she said. "The public has been completely excluded from the conversation regarding these actions and had to learn from rumors

NEWSLINES CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



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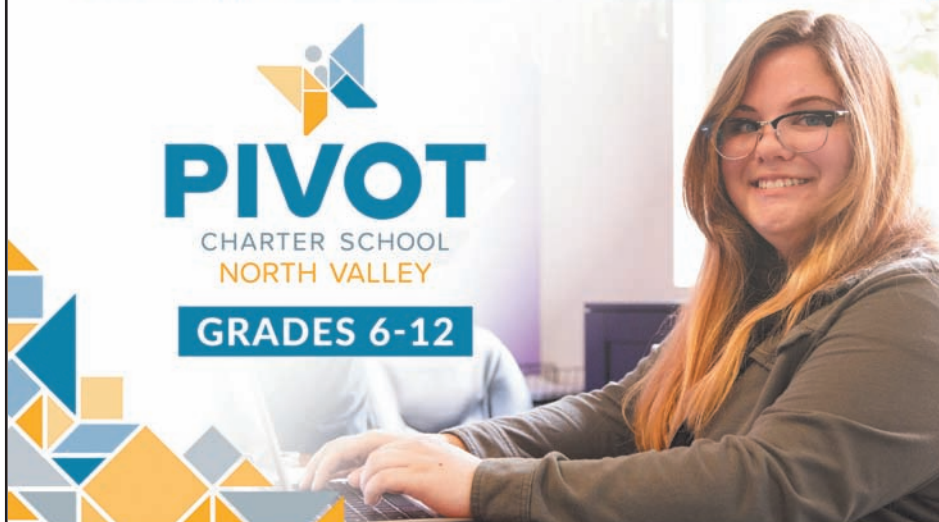
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