

by: Dime and Screw

When confronted with the disturbing lack of funding for vital programs and shelter, city officials in Eugene, Oregon wax poetic about budget short falls, insisting that they are doing their best, that there simply isn't funding for life-saving aid, such as CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On the Streets) or actual shelter, and according to councilor Alan Zelenka at the 2:11:40 time stamp of the city council meeting on April 14th, if we "had done our homework", we would realize that.

So let's follow the money. The numbers that follow are drawn from Eugene's own city budget, and what our city is spending our money on for the years **2023-2025:**

Sheltering programs: \$3,054,000(\$303,000 on youth shelter programs). For perspective, the Public Right-of-Way Surface Cleaning Program budget alone is more than twice that: \$8,718,000. The bi-annual budget for the Eugene Police patrol: \$82 million. The more difficult number to identify: How much is spent on the sweeps, or "clean up", of unhoused people and their camps instead of providing housing? To identify a conservative estimate, we combined the funds used for the displacement and cleanup of camps: the "Illicit Right of Way Activity Program" (\$1,191,000), the "Park Safety Program" (\$3,686,000), the "Public Right of Way Surface Cleaning" (\$8,718,000), adding up to a **\$13,595,000** sweep budget, roughly four times the amount spent on shelter programs.

Last April, a new city ordinance passed that gave EPD carte blanche to repossess any vehicle found parked overnight three times in ninety days. According to a city employee, this has a "complaint-based" application. Cars parked for 3+ days will be impounded when someone calls in a complaint, and/or upon the discretion of EPD, parking control officers, or community service specialists. Consider this in light of the "Parking and Curbside Program" being set at \$8,981,000. These numbers

don't account for all of the labor hours put forth by Eugene Police officers and Public Works employees whose jobs entail displacing and citing unhoused people.

**Note: we have reports that the three officers most often spotted at sweeps are Jackson Stramler, Lane Doggett, and Matthew Pizzola.*

While on the subject of numbers, let's consider what our local government is NOT investing in, other than the glaring lack of shelter. From 2022-2023, the EPD budget jumped more than \$10 million, an almost 20% increase from the year prior. And yet, CAH00TS has now been defunded, their contract severed. According to a 2024 NPR article, CAH00TS received less than 2% of the police budget, but took approximately 17% of the calls from police dispatch.

If the city and police department's only crimes were withholding aid and wasting our money, we'd end here. But in the past few years, the maltreatment of people living in extreme poverty has escalated. There are countless reports of belongings being stolen and destroyed, and there are now criminal citations being doled out en masse, not only to the unhoused but also to those distributing basic aid such as food and clothes.

In the past few months, the Eugene Police has threatened groups such as Neighbors Feeding Neighbors (formerly known as the Breakfast Brigade), and Food Not Bombs that provide free food in public spaces with citations.

Food Not Bombs states:

"Requiring a permit for our grassroots response to the crisis that the city has caused and continues to worsen is a blatant attempt to deflect responsibility for its failures to provide effective aid and assistance. The city has abandoned its constituents in need, instead prioritizing band-aid efforts that criminalize poverty and appease the rich investors, with

investment in funds for downtown “security”, hostile architecture masked as beautification projects, reduction of life-saving services like CAHOOTS, and increased police harassment of people just trying to survive on the streets.... Food Not Bombs exists because of the state’s neglect and unwillingness to address the crisis on our doorstep – we step in where the city has failed.”

According to a spokesperson for Stop the Sweeps Eugene, in 2025 alone at least ten community members bringing meals to unhoused camps have been given criminal trespass charges. One defendant facing charges said in a statement that,

“The safety of its unhoused constituents is not a priority to the local government. Those who provide the vital services that the city of Eugene refuses to—groups like Food Not Bombs, Neighbors Feeding Neighbors, and Barefoot Defenders, are targeted by the police and the courts because the city wants the unhoused, poor, and housing unstable to starve. They want them desperate and they want them to commit crimes, get caught, and go to jail.”

Between the numbers calculated (current budget allocations, rising criminal charges and sentences, etc.) and those that remain nebulous (worker pay spent on sweeps, public funds used for court and carceral systems, etc.), there are a few reasonable conclusions we can draw:

- There is always money for what is deemed valuable
- The criminalization of poverty is escalating and will lead to (more) mass incarceration
- The state has no intention of coming to the aid of those that need it most