

BMX managed camp timeline

Here's a timeline of events connected to the planned managed camp near the city of Corvallis's BMX Track in Corvallis.

March 19, 2020: The Men's Shelter closes for overnight shelter service earlier than planned in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. It reopens the next day as the Hygiene Center to support people camping in the area. Most residents of the shelter establish camp sites in the area near the BMX Track.

Early April 2020: The city-county Emergency Operations Center approves support for portable toilets and trash service to the camp near the BMX Track. The service has continued since April 2020.

April 22, 2020: Shawn Collins, the executive director of Unity Shelter, and Brad Smith, the board president of Corvallis Housing First, meet with City Manager Mark Shepard and Mayor Biff Traber to discuss camping in the BMX area and solutions going forward. A request is made to allow staff members at the Men's Shelter to establish defined camp spaces and to create a more managed camping experience. Due to the site's location within park property, liability questions and City Charter issues, the request is viewed as unworkable and denied. City officials recommend an informal collaboration with the Parks & Recreation Department and the Police Department.

April to November 2020: Conditions degrade in park. Shelter staff members, who have no authority at the camp site, are unable to effectively manage the behavior of campers. Efforts focus on keeping the area as clean as possible but are limited. Conversations with city councilors and others in the community highlight the need to do something different and press the issue of whether city parks can be used in this way in a pandemic.

Nov. 16, 2020: A proposal is made during the community comments section of a City Council meeting to establish a managed camp at the BMX site.

Dec. 7, 2020: A formal proposal is presented to the City Council to establish a managed camp. The council approves the proposal.

Dec. 21, 2020: Unity Shelter makes an Initial contact with HUB International (formerly Barker-Uerlings Insurance) to seek insurance for camp operations.

Dec. 24, 2020: City officials grant an initial floodplain development permit to allow infrastructure work to proceed.

January 2021: Infrastructure begins to be placed for the camp site, including fencing, platforms for tents, and an office structure.

February 2021: Nonprofits Insurance Alliance (Unity Shelter’s primary insurance provider) declines to insure operations of the managed camp, citing “loss trends” for these kinds of operations. Discussions are held with city officials to update them on the status of the managed camp project and to seek assistance.

March 8, 2021: HUB International informs Unity Shelter officials that additional attempts with other underwriters have failed to produce any firm willing to insure operations.

March 9, 2021: The Unity Shelter Board of Directors provides direction and support for closing the BMX effort, and shifting to efforts to extend the season at the Men’s Shelter. (The Men’s Shelter, per its usual practice, was set to close for the season at the end of March.) Board members express their desire to continue work over the long term to support camping as a housing alternative.