My testimony and additional response to comments made at the March 20 Planning Commission meeting are attached and pasted below. Thank you for the opportunity to put these in the record for your consideration.

Elizabeth Maupin, M.Div.
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To the Sammamish Planning Commission

Related to my remarks at the public hearing:

I am concerned with the likely impact of a continuing pattern of restrictions on the duration and frequency of tent encampments by many Eastside municipalities. A pattern of 90 day stays was set early on. Although we have become accustomed to the pattern, no studies have been done to show that the pattern is necessary or desirable.

In practical terms there are some logistical issues:

Camps generally move on a Saturday. A week has 7 days and 90 is not a multiple of 7. For a Saturday to Saturday stay, the 90 days is effectively reduced to 84 days. Four times 84 days equals 336 days, or about one month shy of a year. Thus, an encampment needs to line up 5 hosts per year. With 2 encampments 10 sites would be required. If every municipality limited encampments in their jurisdiction to one per year, you would need 10 municipalities in the rotation. If some municipalities further limit the frequency by having an 18 month gap between encampments, the faith organizations in those jurisdictions would actually be in the rotation about once every two years. If municipalities switched from 90 days to 4 full months per site, we would need only 3 hosts per camp per year. Camps would be a little longer in one spot and have more time to plan their next move. There would be fewer “emergency moves” because the pool of possible sites would not be used up so quickly. Reducing or removing the frequency restrictions would also help us to avoid emergency moves.

The frequent moves and limitations on sites complicate the task of the camp organizers, frustrate the faith communities, and are wasteful of both financial and human resources. However, the frequent moves are most of all detrimental to the tent city residents. People who are trying to work their way out of homelessness often choose tent encampments over traditional shelter (even when that is available) because the encampments can: 1) accommodate a variety of work schedules, 2) give people a place to keep their tools and other belongings while they look for work and carry on other life activities during the day, 3) and assure them of a place to sleep every night. For these working folk, each move costs them about three days of work, and moves from one area of the county to another can cause job loss due to complicated bus rides or lack of adequate bus connections.

According to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, school children lose 4 to 6 months of academic progress with each move. (file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/Administrator/My%20Documents/Downloads/Homeless%20Children%20Education%20Act%20Short%202011.18.pdf)

Although we don’t have the same kind of research on adults, but the Holmes and Rahe stress scale scores a change of schools and a change of residence as equal stressors. (http://www.familyofmen.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/stress_scale.pdf) Stressors are associated with vulnerability to emotional distress and physical disease. Fewer moves would reduce negative impacts on income, employment, and mental and physical well-being, making it easier for people to get on their feet and back into housing.

Responding to issues raised by others at the public hearing:

Concerning property values:

In early October, residents of the Pearl District of Portland, Oregon were concerned about a negative impact on property values when the city relocated a homeless encampment from Chinatown to that area. (http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/10/6/portland-plan-torelocateentencitytensions.html)

In fact, real estate values continued to climb, going up by 6.4 % for 2013 and continuing in a positive direction. (http://www.zillow.com/pearl-district-portland-or/home-values/)

I asked local realtors about Sammamish sales in the area of Mary Queen of Peace Catholic Church and got this reply:

I show 3 sales at Redford Ranch over the last 6 months. Two most recent October 3rd and March of this year. No real difference in pricing. I do not think it is valid to say a residential area is damaged and values fall due to a temporary encampment.

Also in looking at market values of homes in the area, we continued to see short market times and continued growth in pricing in the areas around MQP. A few month window is not really feasible to establish much as many other variables impact small sample sizes such as holidays, weather, even condition and quality of different houses being compared.

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I have not found a neighborhood breakdown for Issaquah on property values, but observed that in the years (2007, 2010, 2011) that Tent City 4 was hosted property values for Issaquah rose or declined at about the same rate as in surrounding municipalities.

Concerning crime rates:

From the city of Redmond website
“Has there been an increase in crime where Tent Cities have been located?”
According to the police in King County, Seattle, Shoreline, Tukwila, Bothell, Kirkland, Bellevue and Woodinville, there has been no measurable increase of crime in neighborhoods anywhere near any Tent City. On May 21, 2004, the Seattle Times published an independent investigation which found that SHARE/WHEEL’s Tent Cities do not affect crime rates.” (http://www.redmond.gov/PlamsProjects/TentCity/TentCityFAQs)

Articles from Seattle Times bear out the statement above, http://seattletimes.com/html/eastsidenews/2001934985_tentcrime20m.html

Since there has been a suggestion that Mercer Island is the city most comparable to Sammamish, I also checked a log of all the calls on Mercer Island during their hosting of Tent City 4. This may be found at http://www.mercergov.org/files/MI%20TC.pdf Most entries document a walk through. Of the other 27 entries, few relate to bad behavior of TC4 residents during their stay: 3 or 4 incidents related to the bad behavior of Mercer Island residents, and two of these incidents were harassment of Tent City residents; 5 times the police responded to arrest people because of outstanding warrants discovered in the check-in process; 1 time they found persons who had been reported missing; 1 time they broke up a domestic dispute in camp; 1 wallet was reported missing by a camper and then found; 2 incidents of Tent City residents driving without a valid license; 1 person turned away for lack of a valid ID; a couple of unwanted people were refused entry and escorted away by the police; in 3 instances TC4 residents or former residents were found to be drunk in public; and in the remainder (complaints of graffiti, littering, or public drinking) there was no evidence that any tent city resident was the actual culprit.

I hope this help to put the unfortunate need for a drug sting operation in Sammamish into some perspective. I am sorry that we were not able to ask the officer about how Tent City 4 cooperated in the drug sting operation. I have the impression that the Tent City 4 residents in question had been evicted from the camp prior to their arrest. If that is so, it would confirm that Tent City was enforcing their code of conduct doing their best to remove those in violation of that code from the camp.

In summary, the two encampments on the Eastside provide a needed service, protecting the lives and property of people who have no housing, and allowing them an opportunity to have a social safety net while they get back on their feet. They have not significantly impacted property values or crime rates where they have been hosted, and the faith communities which stick their necks out to give them a place to be are performing a public service in a community where there is not enough affordable housing to prevent homelessness.

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To the Sammamish Planning Commission

From Elizabeth Maupin

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Exhibit #111