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IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON
FOR THE COUNTY OF JOSEPHINE

DISABILITY RIGHTS OREGON, JEFFREY
DICKERSON, JANINE HARRIS,
GREGORY KIME, RICHARD MATTESON,
and CAROL SELPH,

No. 25CV
COMPLAINT FOR INJUNCTIVE AND
DECLARATORY RELIEF

Plaintiffs,

v.

CITY OF GRANTS PASS,

Defendant.

COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATORY AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF

The Plaintiffs allege as follows:

Introduction

1. Since August 2024, the city of Grants Pass has prohibited all unhoused people from camping or otherwise placing personal property, such as chairs, tarps, or tents, on any city property. A person who cannot find a safe place to lodge may only sleep at limited sites, at times and under conditions declared by the City Council through a resolution. Since August 2024, the Grants Pass City Council has required all unhoused people without shelter to lodge at one of two sites within the city. The campsites operated by the city concentrated large numbers of people in a single space not designed for human habitation. The properties routinely flooded and were physically inaccessible to people with disabilities.

1 2. After months of this treatment, the City Council of Grants Pass decided on January 7,
2 2025 to restrict camping even further. The City Council voted to close the larger of the two sites,
3 the J Street site. At the time of closure, city staff estimated that roughly 120 tents were on site at
4 the J Street campsite.

5 3. The City also decided to restrict the hours at the only remaining site for permitted
6 camping, the 7th Street location. This smaller site held roughly 30 tents at any one time and was
7 generally full. The City decided that the 7th Street location would be closed from 7:00am to
8 5:00pm.

9 4. Even though emptying the J Street campsite left hundreds of people suddenly with no
10 legal place to go in the middle of January, and the smaller 7th Street campsite would be unable to
11 absorb more than a tiny fraction of those individuals, the City made no other provision for where
12 homeless people could go, where they could sleep, where they could camp, or where they could
13 legally and safely leave their belongings.

14 5. Grants Pass now prohibits all people to sleep or to place any personal belongings that
15 might be deemed “camping materials” on any city property anywhere in the city of Grants Pass
16 after 5:00pm and before 7:00am, except for a small plot of land only large enough to hold less
17 than 20% of the tents of people who are currently homeless in Grants Pass. For about 80% of the
18 homeless people in Grants Pass, Grants Pass city code now makes it illegal for them to exist and
19 survive by virtue of their poverty and disabilities.

20 6. The city’s actions violate the law. 150 tents will not fit in a space that was full when
21 holding 30 tents. Instead of imposing regulations of camping that are “objectively reasonable as
22 to time, place and manner,” ORS 195.530(2), the city has chosen to use its authority to re-
23 criminalize being homeless in the guise of a time/place/manner restriction.

24 7. The city’s actions are also unreasonable and in violation of nondiscrimination law as they
25 unfairly target, impose a disparate impact on, and fail to accommodate people with disabilities.
26 People with certain physical disabilities, for instance, cannot pack up their belongings every
single morning, carry them around from 7:00am to 5:00pm and then set their tents and other

1 camping gear up again, even assuming they can find one of the rare camping spots on the 7th
2 Street site. The 7th Street site is also physically inaccessible to people who use wheelchairs and
3 have other disabilities. The 7th Street site has only loose gravel on its surface, with no accessible
4 routes through the site.

5 8. By foreclosing all access to all city property, except within the limits of a single small
6 site designated for camping, the city has prohibited homeless people from using safer, more
7 accessible, more dispersed campsites where people unable to find housing were previously able
8 to select campsites that were drier, more sheltered, more accessible, and safer. The sites the city
9 has designated for camping are crowded and frequently flooded with standing water.

10 9. Grants Pass's policy is one of intentional cruelty. The city is quite explicit about its aims.
11 It does not want to help people find housing. It does not want to support individuals or
12 organizations that work to connect unhoused residents with housing and other resources. It wants
13 to make being homeless in Grants Pass so unpleasant that people go elsewhere. Instead of
14 engaging in constructive action to help people who are poor and unable to find housing, or
15 refraining from actions that make it harder for homeless people to get into housing, the city sends
16 police officers out to cite and to threaten residents. Despite the presence of numerous elderly, ill,
17 and disabled people on site, the city increased its draconian restrictions in the dead of winter
18 leaving hundreds of people with no legal option for their continued survival.

19 10. As proof of its intent to erase all means by which homeless people could survive in
20 Grants Pass, on the same day the city created its harsh new scheme for prohibiting homelessness,
21 the city also rescinded the only grant money it had allotted for a low-barrier shelter. Although the
22 city council nominally stated that it had rescinded its funds because of the condition of the
23 building, the incoming mayor of Grants Pass had previously stated in November 2024 that: "The
24 community has come out numerous times. They don't want a low-barrier or no-barrier shelter."
25 The city has adopted a resolution prohibiting the very existence of the majority of homeless
26 people in Grants Pass. The city currently has no meaningful plan to provide shelter or otherwise
assist homeless people to find places to live. People have no place to legally go.

PARTIES

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11. Plaintiff Disability Rights Oregon is an independent nonprofit corporation and the statewide Protection and Advocacy System for the state of Oregon. It is designated by federal law and state law to represent and to advocate for people with disabilities throughout Oregon. 42 U.S.C. § 15041, *et seq.*; 42 U.S.C. § 10801, *et seq.*; 29 U.S.C. § 794e; ORS 192.517. It is incorporated in the state of Oregon. Its primary offices are in Portland, Oregon.

12. Jeffrey Dickerson is a 57-year-old man. He resides in Grants Pass, Oregon, as he has since he arrived at the age of one, other than time living in Klamath Falls. He is homeless and has no fixed address. He resided at the 7th Street camp until it began to close during daytime hours.

13. Jeffrey worked in construction until he had an aneurysm in 2006 and could no longer work as a result. He was homeless for many years after his aneurysm. He was able to move in with a friend in 2014 and, later, rented rooms around Grants Pass until the owner of his last apartment sold the building in early 2024. Since then, Jeffrey has been homeless again, unable to save enough money to pay the first month’s rent, last month’s rent, and security deposit required for any rental. Given his limited social security payment and the difficult housing market, he has been unable to find housing. He has sought help from HUD and other social services but is on waiting lists for services with no idea of when he might find assistance.

14. Jeffrey also has neuropathy in his extremities—a loss of feeling and control over his hands and feet—that makes it hard to walk, to handle items, or to otherwise use his hands and feet. He previously used a cane to get around, but his cane was stolen. He found it hard to move around on the gravel at the 7th Street camp and fell down on multiple occasions. He has great difficulty even getting out of his tent to access the bathroom because of the loose gravel on the site.

15. The partial closure of the 7th Street camp creates insurmountable problems for Jeffrey. Because of his neuropathy, taking down his tent every morning, packing up all his belongings, carrying them around all day, returning to 7th Street at 5:00pm, setting his tent back up, and

1 performing all the other manual tasks associated with this process would be extraordinarily
2 difficult or impossible for him.

3 16. Janine Harris is a 57-year-old woman who resides in Grants Pass, Oregon. She is
4 homeless with no fixed address. She lived in the J Street campsite until it closed. She has been
5 cited and fined for violating the challenged ordinances.

6 17. Janine's mother struck her in the head with a cast iron skillet when Ms. Harris was a girl.
7 Following extreme physical abuse by her mother, Janine experiences PTSD, depression, and
8 anxiety. She also has vertigo, migraines, and arthritis in her hips and knees. She often uses a cane
9 to get around because of her arthritis and other pain. Sometimes her mental health symptoms are
10 so strong that she cannot get out of bed in the morning. Sometimes her migraines are so strong
11 that she needs to rest in a dark, quiet place until they go away. She cannot stay at the Gospel
12 Rescue Mission because of her disabilities and because the Mission prohibits all dogs, including
13 service animals.

14 18. Gregory Kime is a 66-year-old man who resides in Grants Pass, Oregon. He has lived in
15 southern Oregon for 23 years. He is homeless and has no fixed address. He is a veteran of the
16 U.S. Army. He has been repeatedly cited for violating Grants Pass laws regarding camping,
17 including the present ordinance. He resided at the J Street camp for five months until it was
18 closed.

19 19. Gregory experienced a stroke a couple of years ago and has partial paralysis on one side
20 of his body. After his stroke, he noticed he experienced greater memory loss and irritability. He
21 also has asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, hammer toe on both feet, lung disease,
22 heart disease, and arthritis in his knees and back. He has gotten frostbite and hypothermia while
23 homeless. He cannot reside at the Gospel Rescue Mission because the Mission would force him
24 to live separately from his partner of 38 years and because of his disabilities.

25 20. Richard Matteson is an adult male in his 40s. He resides in Grants Pass, Oregon. He has
26 no fixed address and is homeless. He resided in the 7th Street camp until it was closed in January
2025.

1 21. Richard has a serious mobility impairment as a result of a fall. He used a wheelchair to
2 get around for four years until he regained the ability to walk eight or nine months before the
3 filing of this complaint. Moving around, carrying items, walking long distances, and other basic
4 mobility tasks can be very difficult for him.

5 22. Because of the poor conditions in the camp and the cold, wet weather of the fall and
6 winter, Richard was hospitalized twice since August 2024 with hypothermia. The Grants Pass
7 police seized all his belongings when he was hospitalized in January 2025. He cannot reside at
8 the Gospel Rescue Mission because of his disabilities.

9 23. Carol Selph is a 62-year-old woman who resides in Grants Pass. She has lived in southern
10 Oregon for 23 years. She is homeless and has no fixed address.

11 24. Carol has several disabilities. She uses a wheelchair to get around because one of her legs
12 ends at the knee. Her prosthetic leg was thrown away following her eviction from a camping site.
13 In her wheelchair, she found it difficult and unpleasant to negotiate the rocky surfaces of the J
14 Street camp.

15 25. Defendant City of Grants Pass is a municipal corporation in the state of Oregon, located
16 in Josephine County. It is a local government entity.

17 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

18 26. Oregon circuit courts are courts of general jurisdiction, with subject matter jurisdiction to
19 hear any matter not otherwise reserved to another court’s exclusive jurisdiction. Or. Const. Art.
20 VII, § 9.

21 27. The circuit court for Josephine County has personal jurisdiction over the defendant, and
22 venue in Josephine County is proper, as the facts of the matter arise in Josephine County and the
23 defendant is located in Josephine County. ORS 14.030; ORS 14.050; ORS 14.080; Or. R. Civ.
24 Pro. 4.

25 28. An action to enforce certain rights of homeless people must specifically be brought in the
26 “circuit court of the county in which the city that enacted the law is located.” ORS 195.530(4).

CLAIMS FOR RELIEF

1 Claim I: Objectively Unreasonable Regulation of Homeless Camping Under ORS 195.530

2 29. Plaintiffs incorporate paragraphs 1 through 126.

3 30. Oregon state law provides that a city that “regulates the acts of sitting, lying, sleeping, or
4 keeping warm and dry outdoors on public property that is open to the public must be objectively
5 reasonable as to time place and manner, with regards to persons experiencing homelessness.”
6 ORS 195.530(2).

7 31. Oregon law vests people experiencing homelessness with the right to bring suit to protect
8 their rights under this statute. ORS 195.530(4). Whether a city’s regulation of homeless camping
9 is “objectively reasonable” is “determined based on the totality of the circumstances, including
10 but not limited to, the impact of the law on persons experiencing homelessness.” ORS
11 195.530(5). The city of Grants Pass’s law, in all of its various forms since August 7, 2024 and in
12 its current form, regarding camping is not and has not been “objectively reasonable.”

13 32. The time, place, and manner standards of the City’s policy do not permit people who are
14 homeless any reasonable means to keep themselves warm and dry, nor any reasonable place or
15 means to sleep. The City’s policy is objectively unreasonable as to people who are homeless
16 generally and as to homeless people with disabilities.

17 33. The City acted to restrict homeless camping in a manner that it knew or should have
18 known would leave insufficient opportunity for people who are homeless to find a place to sleep
19 or to stay warm and dry, especially people with disabilities.

20 34. Plaintiffs gave specific notice to the City more than 90 days before filing of this
21 complaint of their intent to bring an action and are entitled to attorney’s fees. ORS 195.530(6).

22 35. The City’s laws and practices regulate sleeping and keeping warm and dry in a manner
23 that is objectively unreasonable, in violation of ORS 195.530.

24 Claim II: Violation of Oregon State Non-Discrimination Law (ORS 659A.142)

25 36. Plaintiffs incorporate paragraphs 1 through 126.

26 37. Under Oregon state law, a place of public accommodation may not discriminate against a
person with a disability. ORS 659A.142(4).

1 38. A place of public accommodation for this purpose includes any service provided by a
2 public body or any “place that is open to the public and owned or maintained by a public body,”
3 regardless of whether the place or service has any commercial purpose. ORS 659A.400(1).

4 39. Oregon’s nondiscrimination laws are read to be coextensive with the federal Americans
5 with Disabilities Act wherever possible. ORS 659A.143. Because Oregon law is coextensive
6 with and interpreted to be consistent with federal law wherever feasible, citation to federal law is
7 necessary. Plaintiffs do not raise a separate claim under federal law, however.

8 40. The Americans with Disabilities Act provides that disability discrimination takes many
9 forms, including intentional denial of services to a person based on their disabilities, siting
10 services in an inaccessible place, failure to remove physical barriers, failure to provide effective
11 communication to people with disabilities affecting their communication, delegation of tasks to
12 another body that engages in disability discrimination, using criteria and methods of
13 administration that tend to deprive people with disabilities of equal opportunity to benefit from a
14 service, and a refusal to provide reasonable accommodations. 42 U.S.C. § 12132; 42 U.S.C. §
15 12182; 42 U.S.C. § 12183; 28 C.F.R. § 35.130; 28 C.F.R. § 35.149; 28 C.F.R. § 35.150; 28
16 C.F.R. § 35.151; 28 C.F.R. § 36.201; 28 C.F.R. § 36.204; 28 C.F.R. § 36.304; 28 C.F.R. §
17 36.401.

18 41. The City has discriminated against people with disabilities by imposing standards for
19 participation in its camping program that require people to move themselves and their own
20 belongings frequently and for no good purpose. People with physical disabilities affecting their
21 movement or chronic illnesses that make frequent lifting, carrying, and walking distances
22 difficult or impossible have been and will be cited and prosecuted for violating city ordinances
23 regarding camping. People with physical disabilities, mental illnesses, and medical conditions
24 that affect their ability to get up every single day early in the morning and remain outside of a
25 tent in public—including people with migraines, people who take medications that make them
26 drowsy, and other similar conditions—will be excluded from the 7th Street camp by the reduced
schedule, requiring all people to leave every day at 7:00am.

1 42. The City thus selected criteria and methods of administration of its camping program that
2 tended to discriminate against people with disabilities. ORS 659A.142(4); 42 U.S.C. § 12132;
3 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(1)(D); 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(b)(3); 28 C.F.R. § 36.204. The City's program
4 tended to exclude or offer a less substantial benefit, or deny the full and equal enjoyment of the
5 benefit of the camping program to individuals with disabilities than individuals without
6 disabilities. ORS 659A.142(4); 42 U.S.C. § 12132; 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(1)(A); 28 C.F.R. §
7 35.130(b)(1)(i)-(b)(1)(iii); 28 C.F.R. § 36.201. The commentary at the City Council's meetings,
8 from both some council members and from the general public, evidence extreme hostility to
9 people with disabilities, such as those with mental illnesses and those recovering from addiction,
10 indicating an intent to discriminate and deliberate indifference to the needs of people with
11 disabilities.

12 43. Even when the City was specifically notified that imposing burdens of carrying gear,
13 frequently making and breaking down camps, and frequent moves violated the law, and a
14 reasonable accommodation was requested, the City refused all reasonable accommodations to
15 reduce the burden of frequent moving, packing, and making and breaking down camps on
16 homeless people with disabilities. ORS 659A.142(4); 42 U.S.C. § 12132; 42 U.S.C. §
17 12182(b)(2)(A)(ii); 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(b)(7); 28 C.F.R. § 36.302. Instead, the city continued to
18 make new policies that increased the burdens on people with disabilities.

19 44. The City selected sites for its camping program that were not physically accessible to
20 people with disabilities. ORS 659A.142(4); 42 U.S.C. § 12132; 42 U.S.C. § 12182; 28 C.F.R. §
21 35.130(b)(3).

22 45. The City altered the J Street and 7th Street sites in preparation for their use, giving rise to
23 an obligation to make the facilities fully accessible. ORS 659A.142(4); 42 U.S.C. § 12132; 42
24 U.S.C. § 12183; 28 C.F.R. § 35.151; 28 C.F.R. § 36.402.

25 46. As part of the obligations of any alteration or new construction, the City was required to
26 have accessible paths of travel throughout the premises altered, including specifically an
accessible route to and from an accessible restroom and an accessible route to and from the point

1 of entry and exit, connecting to the place of primary function, i.e. the campsites. ORS
2 659A.142(4); 42 U.S.C. § 12132; 42 U.S.C. § 12183; 28 C.F.R. § 35.151(b)(4); 28 C.F.R. §
3 36.403.

4 47. An accessible path of travel, as defined through federal standards incorporated into the
5 ADA, requires that the surface in question be “stable, firm and slip-resistant.” 28 C.F.R. §
6 35.151(c); 28 C.F.R. § 36.406; Access Board, 302.1; ADAAG 302.1; ADAAG 403.2. A gravel
7 or soil surface does not qualify as stable, unless specially treated to maintain stability and
8 firmness. Access Board, 302.1.

9 48. In the alternative, even in the absence of a qualifying alteration, the City was required to
10 remove barriers in its existing facilities and to ensure that its program of camping was, taken as a
11 whole, accessible to people with disabilities. ORS 659A.142(4); 42 U.S.C. § 12132; 42 U.S.C. §
12 12183; 28 C.F.R. § 35.149; 28 C.F.R. § 35.150; 28 C.F.R. § 36.304.

13 49. Under either analysis, the lack of accessible routes to and from points of entry and the
14 primary campgrounds and the lack of accessible routes to and from the accessible restroom
15 prevented physical access to the camping sites and to the benefits of the camping program for
16 people with disabilities in violation of the state nondiscrimination statute. ORS 659A.142(4).

17 50. The City’s administration of its camping program, including its methods of providing
18 notice, allowing challenges to citations and exclusionary orders, and its methods of
19 communication with people who are homeless do not afford effective communication, use
20 methods of administration that tend to deny people with disabilities an equal opportunity to
21 benefit from the City’s limited protections for the rights of homeless people. The City does not
22 provide accessible means to let people who are homeless the ability to know what is expected of
23 them, to challenge the City’s determinations, and to communicate with the City. The city’s
24 methods of administration discriminate against people with disabilities, as does the City’s refusal
25 to provide reasonable accommodations to people with disabilities in the context of the camping
26 program. ORS 659A.142(4); 42 U.S.C. § 12132; 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(1)(D); 42 U.S.C. §

1 12182(b)(2)(A)(ii); 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(b)(3); 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(b)(7); 28 C.F.R. § 36.204; 28
2 C.F.R. § 36.302.

3 **FACTS**

4 *Passage of the August 7, 2024 Ordinance and Resolution*

5 51. Following the United States Supreme Court’s decision in *Johnson v. Grants Pass*, the
6 City of Grants Pass amended its city code in August 2024 to prohibit all camping on city
7 property except where permitted by special emergency declaration of the city manager or as
8 regulated per a City Council resolution setting conditions for such camping. Grants Pass City
9 Code 5.61.030(A).

10 52. The “only locations where it is lawful to place camping materials, or store camping
11 materials for any period of time on City property are those locations designated by the City
12 Council.” Grants Pass City Code 5.61.030(B). Any person camping on city property in violations
13 of the terms of the Code is subject to forcible removal. Grants Pass City Code 5.61.050.

14 53. Any person camping on city property in violation of the terms of the Code is subject to a
15 fine of \$50, as well as any non-incarcerative penalty permitted by ORS 153.008. Grants Pass
16 City Code 5.61.070.

17 54. “Camping” means maintaining a “campsite” on city property for more than 24 hours.
18 Grants Pass City Code 5.61.010(A). A “campsite” is any place on city property where camping
19 materials are placed. Grants Pass City Code 5.61.010(B).

20 55. “Camping materials” include “but are not limited to, tents, huts awnings, lean-tos, chairs,
21 tarps, portable stoves, and/or other collections of personal property that are or reasonably appear
22 to be arranged and/or used as accommodations to camp. . . .” Grants Pass City Code 5.61.010(C).

23 56. In summary, the cumulative effect of the new Grants Pass ordinances would prohibit any
24 person from placing any personal property that could conceivably be used for the purpose of
25 camping on the ground anywhere on city property, regardless of whether the person is actually
26 camping at that location.

1 57. The ordinances cumulatively would prohibit a person from pitching a tent or even leaving
2 a backpack or a crate containing a tent or a sleeping bag on city property for any period of time,
3 except as explicitly permitted by City Council resolution.

4 58. At the August 7, 2024 meeting of the Grants Pass City Council, these changes were
5 adopted following presentations by staff.

6 59. A draft version of the ordinance proposed at a July 2024 workshop proposed that
7 camping be permitted at *eight* different sites around the city: the J Street site; Kesterson; Ogle;
8 Tussing; Croxton; Martin; Stansfield; and Baker. The city manager described that as a “small
9 list,” created by eliminating all park sites with playground equipment or otherwise specific to
10 children.

11 60. The city council rejected the staff proposal for eight different sites. At the August 7, 2024
12 meeting considered five different sites, a proposal which the city quickly whittled down to two
13 sites at the council meeting. The Council considered essentially only the factors affecting the city
14 and the general public in disqualifying other sites, largely disregarding the challenges associated
15 with concentrating large numbers of people who are homeless into two sites.

16 61. The history of development of the ordinance clearly targets homeless people specifically.
17 The City Manager, at a workshop in July 2024 developing these ordinances, indicated that the
18 proposed ordinance would allow the city, for instance, to allow desirable parties to camp in
19 municipal parks, giving as an example past permission issued to Cycle Oregon.

20 63. The atmosphere of the August 7 meeting was filled with commentary from the public,
21 largely vilifying the homeless, cultivating an atmosphere of fear, and promoting stereotypes
22 associated with disabilities like mental illness.

23 64. The materials prepared for the council on August 7 stated that staff had communicated
24 with the Rogue Retreat and the city of Ashland, other southern Oregon communities that had
25 created dedicated campsites for homeless people. Staff reported that “both [Ashland and Rogue
26 Retreat] had commented on seeing a lot of older adults and adults with disabilities.”

1 65. At no point did any staff or City Council members take meaningful consideration of how,
2 if at all, people with disabilities might need accommodation in this process, beyond indicating
3 that the portable toilets provided should be ADA compliant. No provisions of the ordinance or
4 other city action discussed reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities, examined
5 how people with disabilities would move around or within the campsite, considered how people
6 with disabilities would move between campsites, or how they would move their belongings.

7 66. Ultimately, the City approved a resolution that only permitted the use of two camp sites,
8 the J Street site and the 6th Street site, and only for 72 hours at a time. After the expiration of the
9 time allotted for staying at each site, people would be required to move themselves and their
10 belongings from the current site to the other site. The two sites are approximately one mile apart
11 from one another, and no public transportation routes connect them.

12 *Initial Enforcement of the Ordinance*

13 67. The City began to enforce its ordinance as soon as the federal injunction from *Johnson v.*
14 *Grants Pass* was lifted. People were relegated to the two campsites designated by the Council.
15 People who failed to move from campsite to campsite were cited and, in some cases, charged
16 with criminal trespass.

17 68. The City revised the resolution governing when and where people could reside several
18 times in the course of the initial months.

19 69. On September 18, 2024, the City extended the time to remain at either the 6th Street or J
20 Street campsite to one week.

21 70. On October 2, 2024, the City closed the 6th Street location to camping and opened the
22 7th Street location to camping. The duration of permissible use remained up to one week.

23 71. The 7th Street location, at 712 NE 7th Street is small, roughly estimated at 140 feet by 80
24 feet, was the site of a former exterminator shop. It was estimated to be 40% smaller than the 6th
25 Street location. Like the 6th Street location, the 7th Street location is approximately a mile from
26 the site at J Street. The City had the structure on the property demolished to use it for this

1 purpose. The site borders the Grants Pass Department of Public Safety offices at 724 NE 7th
2 Street on its northern edge.

3 72. Under Grants Pass law, campsites must be confined to an eight-foot by eight-foot space.
4 Grants Pass City Code 6.46.040(A). At least six feet of space must separate each campsite from
5 the next. Grants Pass City Code 6.46.040(B). A buffer zone of 20 feet must extend from a
6 sidewalk and the nearest property line. Grants Pass City Code 6.46.041(B).

7 73. Considering Grants Pass law, no more than 30 campsites could be legally placed in the
8 7th Street site. It was fenced with a single entry-exit point onto 7th Street.

9 74. According to the contract with the contractor who demolished the structure at 7th Street,
10 the city ordered the contractor to fill the site and level it with compacted “3/4” minus gravel”
11 after the demolition, with a topcoat of decomposed granite.

12 75. The J street campsite, at 755 SE J Street, was considerably larger than the 7th street site,
13 in a roughly wedge-shaped orientation. The northern boundary facing the railroad tracks was
14 roughly 280 feet long, while the western border ran almost 600 feet between the railroad tracks
15 and the Redwood Highway. A fence tracking the Redwood Highway defined a curving line
16 running roughly southeast. In total, the surface area for camping at the J street site was roughly
17 eight or nine times larger than the 7th Street site.

18 76. The surface area of the J street campsite was loose gravel and dirt. It had a single point of
19 entry and exit onto J Street, being otherwise entirely enclosed by fencing. The J Street site was
20 awaiting construction of a water treatment plant, but construction is not scheduled to begin until
21 May 2025.

22 77. Grants Pass placed one single-use portable toilet deemed ADA compliant at the J Street
23 site and one at the 7th Street site. It otherwise made limited changes—fencing and preparation of
24 the site—to make it usable for camping.

25 78. Within the J Street and 7th Street campsites, no accessible routes existed, either
26 connecting the campsites to the limited entry-exit points or to the supposedly ADA compliant

1 toilets. No surface within either campsite met the standard of smoothness or “stable, firm, and
2 slip-resistant” required by law.

3 79. People with disabilities who use mobility devices, such as wheelchairs, often found
4 themselves struggling to traverse the uneven ground, requiring assistance to make it even a short
5 distance within the campsites.

6 80. As the weather in the fall and winter became worse, the flat, gravel and dirt surfaces of
7 the two campsites, lacking any drainage, collected water in large pools.

8 81. People who were prohibited from living anywhere else were forced to camp in standing
9 water, in cold fall and winter weather.

10 82. Several people were transported to the hospital from the two camps with hypothermia
11 during the fall and winter of 2024-2025.

12 83. People with disabilities, in particular, struggled as the sites chosen by Grants Pass filled
13 with rainwater in the fall and winter. As there were no accessible routes to travel to the only
14 toilet or to the exit, people with disabilities found themselves stranded in their tents. They were
15 unable to leave the campsite to get warm or dry and sometimes unable to get to the toilet in a
16 timely manner. People with disabilities were among those most susceptible to hypothermia in the
17 fall and winter months.

18 84. As the sites filled with water in the fall and winter months, the city’s concentration of
19 large numbers of people in limited space with no infrastructure or support from the city led to
20 serious public health issues.

21 85. No running water was available at either site, making simple handwashing impossible. A
22 person would have to leave the site and return regularly just to get drinking water.

23 86. Not only did the city provide no drainage at either site, it prohibited people from digging
24 small trenches to divert rainwater away from their tents. It also prohibited people from using
25 simple materials, like old pallets, to lift their tents out of standing water. The nominal
26 explanation offered by Grants Pass for prohibiting the use of such pallets was to prevent a fire
hazard, even in the middle of pools of standing water in the wet autumn weather.

1 87. As the fall progressed into winter, basic sanitation at the sites, particularly the J Street
2 site, declined quickly.

3 *Options for Shelter in Grants Pass*

4 88. Other than camping on city property, no meaningful alternatives to homelessness exist.
5 The city lacks a low-barrier or no-barrier shelter. The city has no public housing and no real plan
6 to move people out of homelessness.

7 89. The city’s notices to people, when ordering them to move on, direct them only to a
8 handful of local resources: the Gospel Rescue Mission shelter, United Community Action
9 Network (UCAN), Fisko Family House, Women’s Crisis Support, and Hearts with a Mission.

10 90. Most of those services, while they may offer some services associate with homelessness,
11 do not actually provide direct shelter services or offer only very limited beds. UCAN, for
12 instance, may assist people with “move-in costs,” but does not have beds for immediate use.

13 91. Other settings have very limited beds that are specific to a particular group of people.
14 Women’s Crisis Support has shelter space only for 13 women and their children, associated with
15 domestic violence services, not homeless services. Hearts with a Mission operates a shelter for
16 youth aged 10-17 only, as well as a four-bed facility for 18-21 year olds.

17 92. For men aged 21 or older, or for anyone not able to find a bed at these two shelters, the
18 only other immediate shelter option is the Gospel Rescue Mission. While the Rescue Mission is a
19 unique resource for a population that otherwise has no access to housing, its policies and
20 practices render it functionally unavailable to a large number of people.

21 93. The Gospel Rescue Mission has specific policies that prevent people with disabilities
22 from benefitting from their services. For instance, the shelter explicitly bans service animals “for
23 liability reasons,” in direct violation of the law. The shelter also rejects residents unable to work
24 and has expelled people because of their medical needs, like a person who experiences seizures.

25 94. The Rescue Mission guidelines tell residents that “you must be able to care for yourself
26 while staying at the Mission. . . . If you have serious or chronic medical or mental issues that
prevent you from participating in daily Mission life, you may not be able to stay at the Mission.”

1 95. Other residents are barred by Rescue Mission policies, such as the prohibition on
2 transgender people, the requirement to attend religious services, or the Mission’s rigorous
3 behavioral rules—policies often very difficult to comply with for people experiencing a mental
4 illness, traumatic brain injury, neurological damage, or recovering from an addiction.

5 96. Mission residents may not smoke or otherwise consume nicotine, on or off Mission
6 property. They may not drink or take any drugs, on or off Mission property. They may not
7 socialize with members of the opposite sex except at Mission-sponsored events, with sexual
8 relationships entirely prohibited, on or off Mission property. Residents must attend a “church
9 approved by Mission staff” every Sunday. Staying beyond 30 days at the Rescue Mission
10 requires an extensive application showing, among other things that the person has 100% chapel
11 attendance, a good attitude, and gets up at 5:30am every day.

12 97. The Fisko Family Center/Faith House is a women’s only home operated by the Gospel
13 Rescue Mission. Admission requires first that a woman first acquire residency at the Gospel
14 Rescue Mission and be a candidate in good standing for 120 days, have more than \$3500 in
15 savings, owns a vehicle, and have maintained employment for 60 days or more.

16 98. For a large portion of homeless people in Grants Pass, their disabilities, their age, and
17 their sex will permanently exclude them from every single option for shelter in the city. Even for
18 homeless people without disabilities, for homeless women, or for homeless youth, the handful of
19 beds theoretically available to them may be occupied. Even when a bed is actually available, any
20 given person may not qualify or be able to comply with the rules for disability-related reasons or
21 for other reasons, or they may have been previously rejected from the shelter.

22 99. Private housing in Grants Pass is extremely scarce, with few openings. People already
23 homeless, particularly if they experience disabilities, have great difficulty finding housing.
24 Grants Pass needs thousands more units of low-income housing to meet the existing need. Social
25 service providers find it extremely difficult to find private housing for people currently homeless.

26 100. The city of Grants Pass and the Josephine County Housing Authority operate no public
housing whatever. The city receives substantial “Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

1 funding” from the federal government which it routinely fails to spend, usually reserving the
2 maximum for its own internal “administrative” use but spending little on homeless-related
3 services.

4 101. Other than city property, there are no other public or private sites to camp in Grants Pass.
5 Little state, federal, or county property exists within the city, none of it suitable for camping on.
6 Grants Pass prohibits camping on all roads, sidewalks, and property abutting those facilities,
7 regardless of whether they are state, federal, county, or city facilities. Grants Pass Code 5.61.020.

8 *Changes in Grants Pass Policy as of January 2025*

9 102. In the November 2024 elections, a new mayor and four new city council members were
10 elected, essentially all of whom had run on a law-and-order platform, specifically oriented
11 around cracking down on the homeless. The newly-elected mayor and city council members took
12 their seats on January 6, 2025.

13 103. Instead of waiting for the next regularly scheduled city council meeting, the city council
14 declared an “emergency” meeting for January 7 at which meeting it substantially altered its
15 policies.

16 104. The resolution adopted at the January 7 meeting closed the J Street camp. In the course of
17 the debate regarding closing the camp, one city council member called the J Street site a
18 “horrible pit,” saying it was “unconscionable to me to allow people to live there [at the J Street
19 site] like that” and that “wherever they go is better than where they are now.” Nevertheless, the
20 city council closed the site without either announcing a new site where people could camp or
21 removing the prohibitions on camping elsewhere.

22 105. After an original proposal to have *eight* sites for camping in July 2024, the city of Grants
23 Pass whittled the number of permissible sites for camping to five, then two, then finally to a
24 single site obviously inadequate for the purpose.

25 106. Having limited the permissible sites for camping to a single inadequate site, the City
26 Council further limited the permissible times to camp on that single site to the overnight period
from 5:00pm to 7:00am.

1 107. The City Council’s decision on January 7, 2025 was guided by no evidence, no findings,
2 and no plausible explanation for the adequacy, propriety, or reasonability of the action.

3 108. The city’s attorney appeared at the hearing and stated that the Council’s action was too
4 hasty for him to recommend it, stating that he “would not be comfortable with any changes made
5 tonight. And that’s just strictly from a risk management perspective.” The city manager similarly
6 advised the council against proceeding on the January 7 resolution.

7 109. The City Council acted in an objectively unreasonable manner and without relying on
8 any rational basis to approve its policy.

9 110. The City Council shrank beyond any reasonable threshold the availability of any option
10 for legal camping or other legal means of staying safe, warm, and dry for people who are
11 homeless.

12 111. The City Council ordered one of the only two sites for legal camping closed in the middle
13 of January, in the middle of bitterly cold weather, without any regard for where people would
14 live.

15 112. The passage of this change to city policy posed obvious risks of harm or death to
16 homeless people, who would now either be forced to remain in the inadequate, inaccessible 7th
17 Street site, if they could find one of the limited spaces, or left to camp illegally and be subject to
18 penalties and removal at any point.

19 113. In addition, this change was objectively unreasonable as to the interests of the remaining
20 citizens of Grants Pass. Forcing people who are homeless into illegal camping would merely
21 create new and different secondary harms. Forcing people to leave the 7th Street campsite
22 between 7:00am and 5:00pm will result in large numbers of people walking through the
23 downtown area, carrying all their belongings, with no place they can legally stop or stay or use
24 the bathroom.

25 114. Grants Pass’s policy is based, not on logic, but on wishful thinking that people who are
26 homeless will just disappear somehow. Even as dissenting members of the Council and the
public asked perfectly reasonable questions about where people ejected from the J Street camp

1 would sleep at night or where people temporarily removed from the 7th Street camp, the Council
2 provided no answers, just a vague promise that the Council is “doing something” and “will have
3 solutions.”

4 *Plaintiffs’ Efforts to Address These Issues and Inaccessibility of Remedial Efforts*

5 115. On September 13, 2024, Disability Rights Oregon sent a letter to the chief of police and
6 city attorney asking the city to stop enforcing its policy as to certain homeless individuals with
7 disabilities who were physically unable to move themselves and their property between
8 campsites, as a reasonable accommodation.

9 116. On September 18, 2024, DRO presented this letter to the mayor and city council as a
10 whole, offering testimony at that hearing. DRO offered to discuss the question with the city but,
11 other than a brief call from the City Attorney to confirm the receipt of the letter, the city never
12 responded.

13 117. On October 3, 2024, Disability Rights Oregon sent a letter to the chief of police and the
14 city attorney notifying the city that its policies were objectively unreasonable and that DRO was
15 providing notice opening the 90-day time period identified in ORS 195.530(6). The city did not
16 respond at all to this overture. DRO sent a further email on November 12 offering to discuss its
17 concerns.

18 118. Despite all of these efforts by DRO, the city did not engage at all with DRO to discuss
19 these concerns at any point between September 2024 and January 2025.

20 119. Other avenues for relief from the burdens of city policy are inadequate for people with
21 disabilities.

22 120. City policy makes no provision for accommodations of disabilities in this process.
23 Homeless people with disabilities receive no notice or any process for obtaining a reasonable
24 accommodation.

25 121. People who receive a notice to remove their campsite, notices of park exclusion, or a
26 citation receive notices in writing only. No accessible means of notice are provided to people
who are blind or low-vision.

1 122. People who are notified of a park exclusion by Grants Pass resulting from alleged
2 prohibited camping may only contest the order by in-person submission of a written request to
3 the City Manager within two business days of the citation.

4 123. A person who is physically unable to walk to the City Manager's office and present their
5 objection in the two-day timeframe has no recourse to contest the citation. Grants Pass Code
6 6.46.355. The history of enforcement indicates that no reasonable accommodation are extended
7 in this process.

8 124. The city attorney indicated in conversation that any reasonable accommodations extended
9 to homeless people in the process of law enforcement engagement are purely in the discretion of
10 the individual officer.

11 125. Throughout Grants Pass's enforcement of law against homeless people in their use of city
12 property for camping purposes, Grants Pass has indicated absolute indifference to the well-being
13 of homeless people, especially homeless people with disabilities.

14 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

15 126. In consideration of these violations of law, the plaintiffs hereby request that this Court
16 grant the following relief:

17 a. a declaratory judgment stating that Grants Pass's camping ordinances and city
18 policies violate ORS 195.530 and are objectively unreasonable;

19 b. a declaratory judgment stating that Grants Pass's ordinances, policies, and
20 practices violate ORS 659A.142 by discriminating against people with disabilities;

21 c. a temporary restraining order, preliminary injunction and permanent injunction
22 prohibiting the city from enforcing its current ordinances—Grants Pass City Code 5.61.010,
23 5.61.030, 5.61.050, 5.61.070—and current policies as to homeless individuals;

24 d. a permanent injunction requiring Grants Pass to adopt, to publicize, and to adhere
25 to a policy of nondiscrimination towards people with disabilities in the context of services for
26 homeless people and the regulation of camping by homeless people;

- 1 e. a permanent injunction prohibiting Grants Pass from adopting new ordinances
2 regulating camping or sleeping by homeless people that are not objectively reasonable in scope;
3 f. an award of reasonable costs, expenses, and attorney’s fees;
4 g. such other and further legal and equitable relief as this Court deems just and
5 proper.

6

7 Dated this 30th of January, 2025.

8

s/ Thomas Stenson

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