

October 26, 2022

Word Count: 227

Attention editors
and producers:

Cascade Commentaries are provided for reprint in newspapers and other publications, with credit given to author(s) and Cascade. Contact Cascade to arrange print or broadcast interviews on this commentary topic.

Please contact:

Cascade Policy Institute
4850 SW Scholls Ferry Rd.
Suite 103
Portland, Oregon 97225

Phone: (503) 242-0900
Fax: (503) 242-3822

www.cascadepolicy.org
info@cascadepolicy.org

4850 SW Scholls Ferry Road
Suite 103
Portland, Oregon 97225

t: 503.242.0900
f: 503.242.3822
info@cascadepolicy.org
www.cascadepolicy.org

QuickPoint! – Portland’s “Moon Shot” to Solve Homelessness: Lessons from Apollo 13

By Eric Fruits, Ph.D.

This week, Portland City Council is considering five resolutions dealing with homelessness and housing affordability. Mayor Ted Wheeler says these resolutions are a “moon shot” to solve the crisis. Like the original moon shot, the programs span a decade or more and will cost billions of dollars.

More accurately, this is the city’s Apollo 13 moment. “Portland, we have a problem.” It’s an urgent problem that needs a rapid response.

We can’t afford to wait a decade. We can’t rely on Multnomah County, Metro, the state, or the feds to ride to our rescue.

The Apollo 13 astronauts had to get out of their crisis quickly with the tools they had in their capsule. We’ve got to solve our crisis now with the tools we have.

We need to build shelter and sanctioned campsites now—before the worst winter weather sets in. If a natural disaster struck, we’d have FEMA trailers set up within weeks. We need to treat homelessness like the disaster it is.

Portland needs to pull out of the Joint Office of Homelessness and redeploy that \$45 million toward building and staffing low-cost shelters and sanctioned campsites.

Once we have sufficient shelter and campsites, we can enforce a camping ban without running afoul of recent court decisions.

We’ll never reach the moon, but we can avoid crashing. No one else is coming to help us.

Eric Fruits, Ph.D. is Vice President of Research at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon’s free market public policy research organization.