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**Olympia, WA - Nathaniel Jones opposes the scheduled closure of the 4th Avenue Bridge Camp until viable alternatives are identified and implemented.**

Olympia City Councilmember Nathaniel Jones has announced opposition to the proposed September 11 closure of a homeless encampment under the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Bridge. Jones, who has supported the closure of other downtown camps, says that the proposed clearance is counterproductive and in violation of the City's objectives. He says that the closure will push campers onto downtown streets and into neighborhood greenbelts.

The encampment of about 30 individuals formed under the bridge in January. At the time, City officials expressed confidence that the bridge camp would close quickly, after approved alternatives were opened. The City has met obstacles in implementing that plan and is now proposing to move the campers out into the community.

Jones says, "The planned closure just pushes people around, rather than managing a bad situation. It takes Olympia back to 'Whack-a-Mole' enforcement. There's no improvement, just repeated scuffles and police action." Jones says he wants the camp closed as quickly as possible through an **effective response**.

The City Council announced new approaches to managing the growing homeless crisis in May 2018 and declared a homeless emergency in July 2018. The City's actions have met with contentious opposition from some business interests and have found limited success. Homelessness and related impacts remain the top concern of community members.

No approved alternatives have been identified for the individuals in the camp. No additional mitigation sites. No expanded Salvation Army shelter. No warming center. "Until viable alternatives are identified," Jones says, "We cannot just keep pushing them around. **The cycle must end.**"

Councilmember Jones will be introducing a proposal to the City Council on Tuesday, September 10th, to pause this enforcement action until viable options are implemented.