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Larry Templeton was cited in an Aug. 3 raid by Santa Cruz police.

SANTA CRUZ

Homeless leader's city deal uncertain

CAMP PARADISE FOUNDER'S LEGAL FATE TIED UP IN MISCOMMUNICATIONS

By David L. Beck
Mercury News

Larry Templeton, founder and leader of the homeless Camp Paradise on the banks of the San Lorenzo River, had a deal Wednesday for eight hours of community service to wipe out the tickets he was given in an Aug. 3 raid by Santa Cruz police.

Then he didn't. Or did he?

No, he didn't, said City Attorney John Barisone, insisting that the other nine campers who still have tickets must also agree to the offer.

"It's an all-or-nothing deal." About 11 others have already accepted a previous city offer to drop their tickets if they left the camp.

Yes, he did, said Paul Sanford, attorney for the campers. "I believe that we have a deal in place" for Templeton, he said, "and I expect that the city will honor it."

Wednesday's round of miscommunications followed private city council discussions Tuesday of pending litigation.

The campers have a court date Nov. 19, as well as earlier pretrial

conferences, and the city was eager to avoid legal fees, Barisone said. There would be no point in cutting a deal with Templeton and still going to court with the other nine.

But Sanford said Assistant City Attorney Jennifer Pousho told him Tuesday the city would agree to a separate peace with Templeton. And she affirmed that agreement in two later telephone conversations, he said.

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Barisone said Sanford had "jumped to conclusions," but added that his "hasty" talk with his assistant between council sessions probably led to her misunderstanding of the council's intentions. But Barisone agreed that it's Pousho's case and said he had not talked directly to Sanford.

In the end, Sanford said, the council's intentions matter less than Pousho's promises on behalf of the city.

If it is a deal, it's a good one for Templeton. Two of his tickets were issued by California Fish and Game officers and carry potential fines of up to \$25,000 each.

But it's no help at all for the other nine campers, either individually or collectively. Eight hours of community service is the statutory alternative to a \$50 fine for the misdemeanor tickets, and they can cut that deal with the court anytime, either by pleading guilty or by going to trial and losing.

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