

Salem News You Don't Get in *The Salem News*

33 incidents involving homeless individuals in one week

WELCOME to another installment of Salem News You Don't Get in *The Salem News*. No offense to the local newspaper. Its editor determines what is published, as is his editorial right. And we do appreciate their coverage of the public meetings for the proposed Lifebridge expansion. But what about the Salem news we don't get to read about? We're seeing an increase in incidents involving homeless individuals in Salem, yet we're not reading about them in the paper. That's where we come in.

Those of us in the Greater Endicott Street Neighborhood Association (GESNA), which includes the streets surrounding the Lifebridge homeless shelter—and the neighborhoods surrounding ours—are looking at the potential expansion of Lifebridge with extreme apprehension. We are seeing ever more homeless people drawn to the shelter—more than the facility can accommodate—and with this increase in the homeless population, an increase in drug use, loitering, panhandling, and violence.

Looking at the police blotter for six days in March, specifically March 1-7, 2025, we see that 33 case incidents involving unhoused individuals were recorded. Many of the incidents took place at the Lifebridge shelter on Margin Street or the overflow shelter on Canal, but other locations of police response were The Witch City Mall, Steve's Market, Steve's Liquors, Life Alive Café, North Shore Bank, Domino's Pizza, the Lafayette Hotel, and several private homes.

As the police point out, being homeless is not a crime, but crimes small and large committed by those who have no permanent residence or who give the Lifebridge shelter as their address are included in this report.

Here's the categorization and number of incidents that took place March 1-7, 2025:

- **13 Undesirable/Unwanted Guests:** This term is shorthand for loitering. When a homeowner or renter, or the owner or manager of a business asks an uninvited person to leave the property, and that person does not leave, typically the police are called. The responding officers ask the uninvited person to leave, and the incident is written up. If it escalates, it could be noted as a Disturbance.
- **5 Disturbances:** Other types of disturbances might include loud verbal arguments, physical altercations, someone wandering in and out of traffic, or perhaps activity surrounding a drug deal.
- **1 Suspicious person:** This could be someone you see in your backyard, or someone seen trying to pry open a lock, or someone who appears to be where they do not belong—especially if the person doing the reporting is feeling in some way threatened.
- **3 Well Being checks:** Typically, the police are called when a sleeping person is too still, or not waking up, or seems to be having some type of mental/emotional episode.
- **6 Medical Aid emergencies:** Could be a fall that requires bandaging, someone

experiencing a diabetic event, a drug overdose. Often the person is delivered to Salem Hospital's Emergency Department.

- **5:** The remainder of the police actions include Larceny, Shoplifting, someone taken into Protective custody, and an Arrest warrant delivered.

Imagine any other group requiring 33 calls in a week! Imagine the police coming to your workplace 33 times in one week. Imagine your church. Imagine a small business or a big box store. Imagine the police coming to your neighborhood 33 times in one week! And these are only the incidents that are reported.

Many incidents go unreported. A shop owner may not want to attract negative attention. An individual may not want to re-experience the panic of a violent incident. Some incidents may seem small or merely inconvenient to a Salem resident (finding human excrement in their backyard, for instance, or having to repeatedly ask a person or group to move from their front steps), but there may be a pattern to someone's behavior that is only noticed if the police are able to follow it. However, the Salem Police cannot take an accurate measure of the crime in our city if you do not let them know.

The message, from Chief Miller on down is, "Call us." If you see something. If you experience something. If you are feeling threatened in any way, call 911.

Starting with this article, I will report on case Incidents involving our homeless population, looking at one week's worth of incidents each month. When possible, I'll offer the details of a particular incident. Over time, I hope to have interviews with some of our Downtown shop owners, as well as with members of the Salem Police Department.

My intention is not to demonize the homeless population—there are many good folks who work a 9-5 and rely on the shelter for a temporary helping hand—but to point out that crime committed by a transient homeless population, one that experiences mental illness and substance abuse in greater numbers than Salem's more stable population, puts us all at risk. And, not incidentally, all of us—homeowners, renters, shop owners, and shoppers—are paying for it. Who's covering the cost of all those police? We are, through taxes and higher property costs.

We want to see unhoused people helped, but Life-bridge should build within existing zoning laws. It is a fallacy to think that building a bigger facility will end homelessness in Salem. There will always be more people than available beds. A bigger facility will result in more crime in our city and a bigger drain on our modest resources. Other cities and towns must share this burden.

—*Joanne Mattera*

Member, Our Neighborhood, Our History,
a committee of the
Greater Endicott Street Neighborhood Association
March 2025

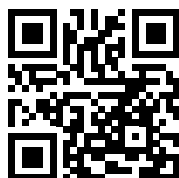
Additional Reading

- "Salem Police logged over 1600 "Homeless Incidents" in 2023"
<https://gesna-salem.com/blog/f/salem-police-logged-over-1600-homeless-incidents-in-2023>
- "Senior citizen accosted by two homeless men"
https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/79610166-405f-4f82-8cf8-098e13a7e299/interview_camarda_july2024.pdf

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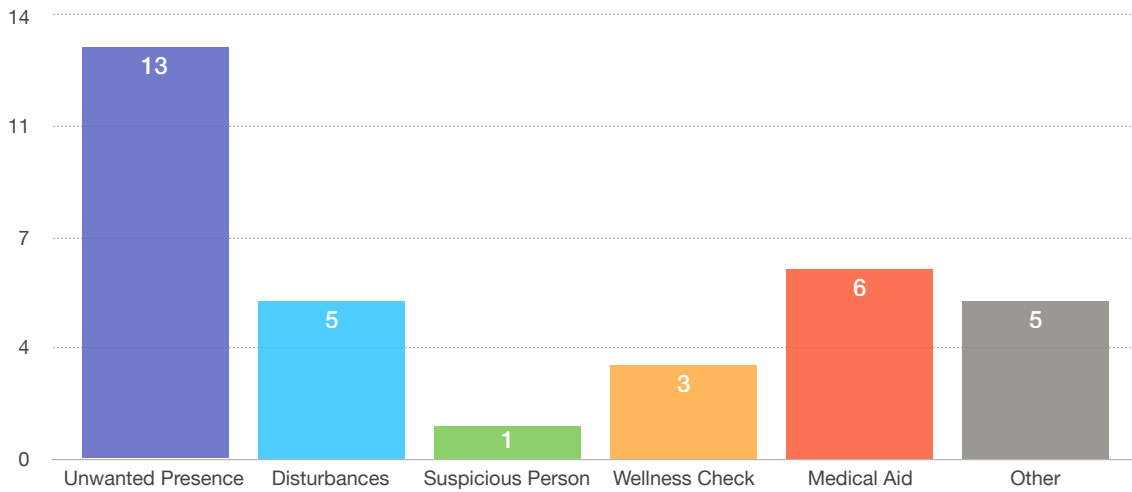


Incidents: March 1-7, 2025

TYPE	INCIDENT
Unwanted Presence	13
Disturbances	5
Suspicious Person	1
Wellness Check	3
Medical Aid	6
Other	5
TOTAL INCIDENTS	33
SOURCE: Salem Police Dept. Terms as used by SPD.	
Infograph courtesy GESNA/ONOH.	

OTHER INCIDENTS: Included Larceny, Shoplifting, Protective Custody, and Arrest Warrant.

INCIDENTS TOTAL 33: March 1-7, 2025



PERCENTAGE OF 33 INCIDENTS: March 1-7, 2025

