

Craig, Sondra

From: Elsen, Nikki
Sent: Monday, June 12, 2023 7:15 AM
To: Craig, Sondra
Subject: FW: Park camping ordinance comment

From: Jesse <jesse.fanciulli@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, June 9, 2023 5:04 PM
To: ZZ Council Members <zzcouncilmembers@cityoflacrosse.org>
Subject: Park camping ordinance comment

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Dear members of La Crosse Council,

The issue of homelessness is a complex, sensitive and increasingly divisive one in our community. It is unfortunate that this seems to freeze constructive dialogue and action on solutions that serve more than just one portion of the community.

Myself and many others -- most of whom stay silent believing that speaking up is not worth the barrage of shaming that often follows -- are in favor of the park camping ordinance.

It is well documented that a fairly sizable proportion of unsheltered people are in need of treatment for mental illnesses and/or substance abuse problems. I would encourage council members to consider statistical research on the public safety issues created when groups of unsheltered people are encouraged to make camp in public areas such as La Crosse's parks. For example, consider the findings of this study published by the National Institutes of Health: "Mentally (ill) defendants had 40 times the rate of homelessness found in the general population, and 21 times the rate in the population of mentally ill persons in the city. The overall rate of criminal offenses was 35 times higher in the homeless mentally ill population than in the domiciled mentally ill population. The rate of violent crimes was 40 times higher and the rate of nonviolent crimes 27 times higher in the homeless population. Homeless defendants were significantly more likely to have been charged with victimizing strangers."

Link to study:<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/7641002/>

Areas such as our community parks in which the unsheltered establish camp become unwelcoming, and statistically less safe, for others especially our community's kids who should be able to enjoy the parks for their intended purpose. It concerns me that the focus of La Crosse city leaders has for some time been prioritizing the needs of one section of the community -- the unsheltered -- over others, particularly kids in our community who deserve safe, green public parks to play in. Please move forward with approving the ordinance that prohibits camping in public parks. Solutions to homelessness should not come at the expense of giving La Crosse kids safe public spaces in which to play.

Thanks,