

Craig, Sondra

From: Elsen, Nikki
Sent: Monday, June 19, 2023 7:26 AM
To: Craig, Sondra
Subject: FW: Homeless camping in city parks or on city property

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From: Valerie Fenske <vfenske@live.com>
Sent: Friday, June 16, 2023 1:28 PM
To: ZZ Council Members <zzcouncilmembers@cityoflacrosse.org>; Elsen, Nikki <elsenn@cityoflacrosse.org>
Subject: Homeless camping in city parks or on city property

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Hello,

I am writing in support of a complete ban on camping in city parks by anyone - sheltered or unsheltered. The parks are built and maintained by taxpayer money and as a taxpaying citizen I feel my opinion should be considered. Under no circumstances should a taxpayer feel unsafe or intimidated by those currently camping in city parks or otherwise panhandling near those parks or on city sidewalks. At a birthday gathering in the Weigent-Hogan neighborhood this past weekend several neighbors said they won't go downtown or near Cameron Park due to the "vagrants". Where they used to enjoy the Farmer's Market on Friday and Saturday, they are no longer interested in going.

I am not completely heartless to situations that have led to folks not having housing whether it be addiction, job loss, alcoholism, mental illness, etc. In my view, for many of them it appears to be a way of life and not a short-term hardship. There is certainly help available to those who need or want a helping hand. I've seen homeless counts that range from 80 (WIZM) to 250 (CouleeCap). Even if it's 250, that is .005% of the city's total population. Regardless of the count, La Crosse has a population of over 51,000 citizens, many of whom vote and pay a high property tax and who should certainly get more time and attention from their City Council and city staff. I'm stunned at the time and effort spent on a such a small number of folks, including hiring a full-time Homeless Coordinator. That position, along with other staff members who deal with this situation daily - Police and Parks to name two departments - isn't time or money well spent. The City Council should be more focused on those of us who contribute to them being in office and whose taxes maintain and improve the parks that we want to enjoy without harassment and panhandling.

I urge a complete ban on camping in city parks unless it's a designated campground with hookups, water and shower facilities.

Obviously if a solution to homelessness were easy, this issue would have been solved nationally long ago. ARPA funds should be spent on the other eligible needs it was intended for - like affordable or free childcare to assist those who are the working poor who simply need a helping hand. Even if there were only

250 kids who need free childcare that would be money well spent as it looks to the future of the community rather than trying to solve what is apparently an unsolvable issue.

Thank you for reading this and considering my opinion,

Valerie Fenske
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