

Craig, Sondra

From: Carol Zehms <czehms2016@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 5, 2024 12:18 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Cc: Dennis Smalley
Subject: Resolution 24-1075

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La Crosse City Council Members,

I write this email in hopes that you will reconsider passing this resolution to allow camping on the Isle Le Plume Island, specifically within the two parks that border the Municipal Harbor. I am a houseboat owner renting slip D28. From the last time the homeless were gathered and encamped in Houska Park, I have experienced unbelievable crimes, displays of disrespect, and felt such insecurity, abuse, and harassment on my own property, my houseboat. I will supply you with a listing of concerns and instances that I personally have experienced when the homeless were camping in Houska Park.

1. I had an LP tank stolen from my gas grill on the front of my houseboat. Chains were secure across each boat entrance.
2. I found used syringes with needles on the front deck of my houseboat.
3. I found used syringes with needles in the grassy areas where we take the dogs to the bathroom and along Hood Street.
4. I witnessed homeless people walking up and down the docks during the day, appearing to "case" what they may return for later. At night I witnessed homeless people walking the docks at 2:30am and 4:30am so incoherent they didn't know where they were when asked.
5. I often witnessed homeless people on the docks in surrounding areas (grassy areas, cement walk-ways, docks), so inebriated and/or high on drugs that they could barely walk. When on the docks this certainly becomes a drowning and/or injury hazzard.
6. When homeless people walk the docks during the night, they are often loud and boisterous. This makes sleeping on the houseboat almost impossible.
7. I witnessed homeless people wandering on and off houseboats and pontoon boats.
8. I cannot walk my dog, especially after dark, for fear I will be confronted by a homeless person. In broad daylight, a homeless person confronted me after I suggested he sit in the shade on an extremely hot day. I was called vile names, towered over physically, and sworn at by this individual. I called 911 to have an officer come to escort the homeless person away from the bathhouse area. I cannot have my dog go to the bathroom on the docks or on my houseboat!
9. I saw homeless people badger marina patrons for the door codes to enter the bathhouse. The bathhouse has been entered by homeless people who stayed inside on the main floor of the facility. Going into the bathhouse was not possible, as their belongings were all over the floors. This meant I could not use the washing/drying machines, toilets, and showers that I paid for with my harbor membership.
10. When walking my dog on Hood Street and within the point park area, I was verbally abused with cursing and extremely foul language. This was just passing by on the opposite side of the street, not provoking the individual in any way. I experienced similar behavior when walking on harbor pathways to the boats and to the parking lot.
11. I experienced homeless people blocking walkways to the bathhouse rolling their carts of belongings in the way of getting the doors open. They watch to see what codes you put in to open the doors.
12. Harbor patrons had cars vandalized and broken into in the parking lot.

13. Harbor patrons' boats in storage in the parking lot and in the back storage area were broken into and actually lived in by homeless people when taken out of the water. They take food, clothing, and supplies from the boats, and often leave used syringes with used needles and broken crack pipes behind.

The Municipal Harbor is not a locked secure location. Anyone can walk down the hill on Hood Street and get to Dock A; Anyone can walk down the landing from the parking lot to get to Dock D; and Anyone can walk past the bath house to any of the four docks in the harbor.

With all of these instances to consider, having the homeless population living/camping in the park areas around Houska Park is extremely dangerous physically and emotionally to patrons who pay to use this area AND is extremely dangerous to young people who are learning appropriate social behavior as they grow up. The actions taken by the homeless campers cost boat owners money to replace items, gas, and LP tanks. I use the marina as my "vacation get away." I don't feel safe even on my own boat. I feel the need to have a handgun in order to protect myself. This is not what most people do when they go on vacation. The marina often has transient boaters who travel the Mississippi River dock in the marina. This is not the way to advertise La Crosse to our tourists and visitors. Putting the homeless people on the Isle of Le Plume park areas is not the answer; it's a copout to simply "hide" the problem from the city center.

Sincerely asking for you reconsideration to passing Resolution 24-1075,

Carol Bernau
Municipal Harbor Patron
Dock D 28