

Craig, Sondra

From: Robert Cooper <rjccoooper@gmail.com>
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To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Resolution 24-1068

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Members of LaCrosse Common Council,

I write to you today in response to Resolution 24-1068. I have had the occasion to experience the unsheltered population in LaCrosse from several different vantage points. I have been in the encampments and other shelters on multiple occasions during my employment and have had numerous conversations with them. My wife has been the victim of verbal and emotional abuse at the hands of unsheltered individuals while shopping in local stores, and I have a cousin that is a member of the unsheltered community and has been for most of his adult life, probably for 30 years or more. He is, through his own admission, responsible for the circumstances that led him to this situation, He is not an addict or alcoholic and does not live in the encampments out of concern for his own wellbeing but he does survive without causing issues for others. I have great sympathy and concern for the unsheltered population in LaCrosse. I have that sympathy because of the complete and total lack of any vision of this Council. The items that you are proposing are all worthless. These proposed solutions are just a way for you to make it look like you are doing something to help when you are just using the unsheltered community as Pawns moving them from place to place, actually putting them at risk providing them with inhuman living conditions. The largest issue that most of these individuals face is mental disease or illness. I believe that the severe drug problem in the unsheltered community is because of an opportunity for the dealers to prey on these individuals . What is needed is a real treatment facility for them to live where they can receive the care and medications that they need. Teach them the basics of living on their own and has rules and regulations for them to follow and with proper help maybe some can return to society as productive members. Until that happens most of these individuals are going to continue the path that they are on, never be employable and without any hope of improvement. Understandable that this all-costs money. I honestly do not feel that the citizens of LaCrosse would object to spending a considerable amount of money to provide a facility for these individuals if it was done right and for our citizens. Also understand that this is our money that you are playing with and not yours. The 2024 city budget is something like \$72,000,000. With a population of 52,000 that is about \$1,385 per resident. Your proposal just for security for the 260 individuals is about \$2,885 per person. Along with other cost associated with this issue I would not hesitate to say that this will end up costing closer to \$5000 or more per individual. In reality this is probably not even a City of LaCrosse issue. Most of the unsheltered population are not from LaCrosse. It is the responsibility of City government to provide its citizens with clean water, sewage and trash disposal, maintain city facilities such as parks. Address zoning and building regulations and promote the city's economic development along with providing law enforcement, public transportation and fire protection. Going through the list of departments, the city does not even have a department that is responsible for this situation. It should be left to the County, State or Federal agencies to

provide relief. I have used the words most and majority often. I understand that not all of the unsheltered are in the same situation and that there are exceptions to everything.

In summary, I feel that this proposal should be voted down. The citizens of LaCrosse have been held hostage by a very small portion of people that are for the most part here for the benefits. They have no sense of respect for other people, or laws or much of anything else. Until the Council is ready to seriously address the real issues in this situation you should “cut bait” and stop all services and turn this over to the agencies that are equipped to do so. If there is nothing here for them, they will move on. PLEASE GIVE US OUR CITY BACK.

Bob Cooper

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LaCrosse