

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Jenna Ferries <jenna.ferries@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 1, 2024 2:51 PM  
**To:** Happel, Douglas  
**Cc:** Elsen, Nikki; Craig, Sondra  
**Subject:** Proposed Overnight Encampment Site at Erickson Park

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Dear Mr. Happel,

May I please submit to you a concern I have with an issue that will be on the upcoming Common Council agenda?

I was shocked to read about the proposal set to go before the La Crosse Common Council on August 8 meant to address overnight shelter needs of the unhoused, in which Erickson Park is named as one of the proposed outdoor sites. While I agree that solutions are necessary, I feel strongly that placement of such an encampment would be highly inappropriate directly adjacent to an elementary school.

It is unfair to generalize about all unhoused individuals contributing to unsafe conditions within such encampments, but among my concerns are issues outlined in the proposal itself including: "ensuring the safety of both the shelter residents and surrounding community can necessitate hiring security personnel," "when homeless persons leave their location and garbage, abandoned property, and hazardous or infectious materials are left behind," "from past experiences of encampment clean up at Cameron Park, Houska Park, Isle la Plume and River Point District, contractors and staff clean sites with heavy machinery and hand-pick to clear out small items such as plastic detritus and needles" and other references being "based on significant past experiences."

I don't know if the Council-person's proposal was based on the possibility of Spence being closed as a school, but obviously that referendum has not yet passed, and if it does, the timeline of a new school being constructed does not coincide with the City's need for an immediate solution for housing needs to be addressed. While I do appreciate that this proposal better addresses what the Salvation Army had previously highlighted as concerns beyond simply placing people in consolidated areas for shelter, such as access to social services, emergency services, security, mental health resources and drug/alcohol counseling, please ensure that your selection of future sites are made without adversely affecting the youngest and most vulnerable in our community!

Thank you,  
Jenna Ferries  
CC: City Clerk; Deputy City Clerk