

Elsen, Nikki

From: Kevin Hundt <kevinhundt0@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 11, 2023 3:05 PM
To: Dickinson, Tamra; Goggin, Erin; Janssen, Barb; Sleznikow, Larry; Hameister, Jenasea; Kahlow, Chris; Kiel, Mac; Mindel, Mackenzie; Schwarz, Rebecca; Trost, Jennifer; Happel, Douglas; Neumann, Mark; ZZ City Clerk External
Subject: In support of 23-0673 as amended

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I believe that adding the language allowing an emergency camping location fulfills the City's immediate basic obligation by providing an answer to the question of where homeless people can go. Obviously this doesn't solve all the problems, but it would be step 1. An emergency location would take a lot of stress off homeless individuals (which by itself will probably put many of them on firm enough footing to get out of their predicament on their own), and ensure that social workers are able to reach them reliably. I am reminded of the story told by the police officer at the Parks Board meeting in May, of having to assist a social worker to locate a homeless individual; if there was a single designated camping area, that problem would be resolved, freeing up that officer to perform other tasks.

The questions of the precise language in 23-0763 are miniscule. The amended version is clear about what constitutes camping, and it shouldn't be too much trouble for the city government to simply list the inventory of its properties as unavailable for camping except for the emergency location (if such a list isn't already on the city website, it should be anyway if only for transparency). No law is perfectly worded, so as long as the intent is clear, don't worry too much about it. The City Attorney wrote it, so it's fine.

As for other issues of phrasing, Chief Kudron was directly asked at J&A what parts of the amended version he didn't like, and he twice failed to give an answer (this exchange begins at 1:14:10 in the meeting video). A good answer would have been in the form of "In part X, the part that says 'X Y Z' was better phrased in the original reason because of reasons A B C.". Instead he simply reiterated that he preferred the original version. The reasonable conclusion is that he doesn't actually have any specific objections to the amended version. I won't speculate at this time about what his actual objections might be.

Assuming 23-0763 is passed with the allowance for an emergency camping location, the Mayor in coordination with the Council, Homeless Coordinator, and Parks should move to immediately declare a housing emergency and designate a camping location under the operational direction of the Homeless Coordinator. This emergency campsite will need to be supplied with sufficient toilet facilities, and preferably showering and dining areas- I have heard a rumor that organizations which provide food have done so sporadically so as to avoid establishing a regular schedule which might cause them to be ticketed; having a long-term (as I said at J&A, probably at least two years) sanctioned camping area would obviously mean a lot of meals being eaten there.

If we want to be really serious about this, the best way to implement a long-term emergency camp might be to completely regularize the operation, with military-style quonset tents set in an organized grid with assigned residents. This would greatly reduce the disordered appearance of previous camps that rubber-neckers often complain about, and might instill a sense of order that would let both participants and observers know that we are finally doing something. Maybe this is something the WI National Guard could set up, as they probably have the relevant equipment and experience.

As I said at J&A, everyone is in agreement that people need to stop camping in parks and in parking ramps. Unfortunately, we are not going to solve any problems by simply making it illegal to be homeless. I sympathize

with the people who wrote in and spoke in support of the original version of 23-0673, many of whom have complaints which are legitimately harrowing. By designating an emergency camping location, we can get homeless people out of the parks and parking ramps, reducing the amount of such encounters and allowing parks to be used for recreational purposes. I believe that 23-0673 in the amended form, although not solving everything immediately, provides both supporters and opponents with what they want, and urge the Council to implement it.

If you have any further questions or want any clarification, I am available by email or phone any time.

Kevin Hundt