

From: [Bob](#)
To: [City County Homeless Issues Committee](#)
Cc: [Rhodes-Conway, Satya V.](#); [Parisi, Joseph](#); [All Alders](#); [county_board_recipients@countyofdane.com](#); [Crawley, Katie](#)
Subject: Homeless in Dane County
Date: Monday, May 17, 2021 2:04:57 PM

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I thank you for putting in the time and effort to help the homeless of our communities.

The question is, are we doing the best we can to help them?

What is having a home like? Is it just a place to get a good night's rest? Or is it not also a place that provides other opportunities during the day, like having meals and relaxing or other activities?

The recent effort seems to be focused on providing night sheltering, followed by being pushed out in the morning with no structured setting. Is this helpful or respectful to the human person?

If we, as a community, are wanting to continue with a "feel good" sense just because we have done the bare minimum, then we have accomplished that. However, what is happening under that plan? Homeless people end up sitting on a bench or in doorways, or on the ground. Or more often wondering around looking for food or money by standing on street corners or business entrances, waiting for people going in or out, and asking for money or food. This practice is not in any way helping them make progress to get out of their homeless condition.

The plan needs to change if we are serious about really helping our homeless.

Homelessness is not a dirty word. It is an unfortunate state some of our fellow human beings find themselves in. We cannot help them become homed without knowing what help they need.

Homelessness cannot be looked at with disgrace, shame, or pity. If that is the position we take, then the shame is on us.

I have found that if something is broke, I cannot do my best to fix or improve it unless I know what is broke. In this case, we cannot help the homeless with a one size fits all approach. We need to build a database of who needs help, and what help that person needs.

Every person who shows up at a shelter needs to be identified and triaged with the utmost of care and respect to determine the cause of their homeless state, and the services they may need to help them out of their homelessness. After their needs have been identified and entered in the database, some form of ID can be given. This ID could enable many services the person may need, such as transportation, food service, counseling, job search, safe sheltering due to mental challenges, reentry to shelters without the need for triage.

Tent camping in our parks is another factor to work with. The same type of triage needs to take place there. In human history, people have chosen to live off the land, which has become their home for the duration they are there. Many campgrounds serve those needs, but payment is required. The city needs to not provide free camping without having the camper demonstrate the need as a homeless community resident. Small houses are built, and land is available for that purpose. Our parks ought to be safe for our residents to use, especially in areas where many low-income residents live.

Another factor the community is dealing with concerns panhandling by people pretending to be homeless. Yes, this does exist. We must do what we can to help keep people safe from being badgered by people looking to support their drug or other needs by pretending to be homeless.

Documented examples of this are:

People outside of grocery stores asking shoppers for money to buy food, and when the shopper buys

the food and gives it to the panhandler who turns around and dumps in the trash or sets it off in a corner somewhere and goes back to asking for more money, food is not the need.

Other examples are panhandlers who deposit their collections into envelopes provided by a driver who stops at different locations to collect the monies collected, or panhandlers who walk a few blocks from their stand and get into a newer car or SUV at the end of the day.

I thank you for your consideration,

Bob Schaefer



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From: [molly ginsberg](#)
To: [City County Homeless Issues Committee](#)
Subject: Homeless Encampment Reindahl Park
Date: Monday, May 17, 2021 10:34:57 AM

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My name is Molly Ginsberg and I am a resident of the city of Madison. I am writing in support of any measure that prohibits or halts the closing of the encampment in Reindahl Park. Our houseless neighbors deserve a place to live. They are members of our community worthy of dignity and respect. This city has refused to make decisions on where to house people and denying them a place to live when you have failed to provide them with other options is truly egregious, unethical, and simply inhumane. Do better.

Sincerely,

Molly Ginsberg

From: [Scott Morrison Melman](#)
To: [City County Homeless Issues Committee](#)
Subject: Prohibiting the eviction of temporary encampments in Reindahl Park
Date: Monday, May 17, 2021 8:44:05 AM

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Dear Members of the City-County Homeless Issues Committee,

I am Scott Morrison Melman, living at 511 S Shore Dr in District 13. I'm writing to ask for your support for the Resolution Prohibiting the Eviction of Temporary Encampments in Reindahl Park during today's upcoming committee meeting. Most of the people living in Reindahl Park have only recently been displaced by the city from other encampments, many from McPike Park. They are being told they can resettle (for who knows how long) at Starkweather Park, where conditions are much worse. It is more mosquito prone, flood prone, and harder to access and navigate by disabled residents and emergency responders. Moving people from park to park is traumatizing and cruel; it contributes to mental health crises, sets back long term projects (one resident is attempting to establish a business), and breaks up communities. These people have it hard enough already, especially during the pandemic. It also drains city resources that could be spent building a long term support system for Madison's homeless community. And if the motion fails, the group of activists camping out at Reindahl who will not leave. We will continue to protecting our community members right to exist, whatever it takes.

I know all this because I'm one of those activists, and I've spent much of the last week at Reindahl Park talking to the people living here. They're just doing their best to survive, and they are reasonable and respectful. It's a big park, and they are occupying a small corner. They prefer neighborhood residents to use the park too, to ignore them or, preferably, to get to know them as neighbors and have a conversation about co-existence, instead of fearing them as others. The city needs to take care of its most vulnerable residents. And until that happens, it needs to at least let them be instead of forcing them out of sight. For some, it's a matter of life and death.

I'd be happy to talk more about this; my phone number is (609) 902-9052. I hope to speak at tonight's meeting. Thank you for your time. Please do the right thing and use your power to defend the powerless. The city is watching.

Best,
Scott

From: [Pearl .](#)
To: [City County Homeless Issues Committee](#)
Subject: Thank you!
Date: Sunday, May 16, 2021 11:41:24 PM

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I have an experienced perspective as a social worker who worked in mental health and transitional housing for thirteen years as well as with other unhoused populations living outside. I want to thank this committee for passing the motion to ask the mayor to halt the eviction at Reindahl Park for at least 30 days and committing to coming up with better solutions. I also want to personally thank the alders and committee members who I witnessed at the park in the past two weeks listening to the people living within Reindahl Park. I had hoped that these connections could be made sooner but I hope they are lasting. Many of you also witnessed the current and most recent use of the park by gardeners, athletes, children, and parents, and community members which has demonstrated that this conflict between various park users is greatly exaggerated. As we know, this isn't just an issue that was once McPike Park, now Reindahl Park, but there are also a number of other homeless encampments around the city. Prior, this was a city-county building issue, a capital issue, a state street problem, and will continue as we ban certain populations from living in specific parts of our city instead of looking at the root causes of the complex problems that put this population in the circumstances they are in.

The current suggestions are that the people living at Reindahl should move to the Starkweather marsh or live on the streets during the day and warehouse themselves in the shelter at night. These have always been options but suggesting them to a population that has for a variety of reasons decided these are not good possibilities for them is not a solution. And neither is suggesting that outreach workers enforce eviction bans and move people into unsafe and dangerous situations and areas that would no longer be accessible to those trying to secure their safety and stability.

As the housing eviction ban is lifted and we see another influx of our homeless population, we need to keep encampments stable and communities intact while the city comes up with better long-term solutions which fit the complex and unique issues of this population.

We need to bring everyone to the table and listen to those that have lived experiences as they know what their needs are better than anyone else. If shelters, transitional housing, and "affordable housing" for some, was the solution, we wouldn't have people sleeping outside during the polar vortex in Wisconsin. Many of the ideas that I have heard this population suggest are similar to other established alternatives in other cities around the U.S. and worldwide.

We need to change our mindsets of what we think or once thought, as we know institutions don't work, and neither does a one size fits all solution. I believe that this is a good first step for Madison to do what is right and be a model for other cities.

If anyone has questions or would like to talk further, I'm more than welcome to meet with you and share my experiences.

Thank you,

PEARL

she/her/hers

"Be the change you wish to see in the world" - Mahatma Gandhi

From: [Dan Fitch](#)
To: [City County Homeless Issues Committee](#)
Subject: Homelessness in the parks
Date: Saturday, May 15, 2021 6:47:19 PM

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Howdy all!

Concerning Agenda Item 7 on Monday's agenda, I am in favor of prohibiting the eviction of folks from Reindahl Park. I am strongly against evicting anyone from any city parks until we have a solution for truly housing the homeless.

I realize that this has been stalled for a long time, but we have to do better as a city. Continuing to criminalize homelessness is not a solution.

I'm way more than willing to pay more in taxes to get people housed, but I think we should consider where our existing money is going in the budget. Police? Golf? Giving people homes is way more important than a lot of stuff, in my opinion. I know this is all very complex, but it's just such a damn shame how housing and development work when capital is calling the shots.

Thanks
Dan Fitch
1032 E Gorham

From: [Steve Verburg](#)
To: [City County Homeless Issues Committee](#)
Subject: Please vote to prohibit the eviction of temporary encampments in Reindahl Park.
Date: Monday, May 17, 2021 4:52:02 PM

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Members of the CITY-COUNTY HOMELESS ISSUES COMMITTEE:

I writing to urge you to vote to approve the action item on your agenda recommending that the city prohibit the eviction of homeless men, women and children from city parks.

Last winter I observed the encampment at Reindahl Park several times. I am not acquainted with any of the individuals who have been camping in the park, but in the past I have known Madison residents who were homeless and who camped in undeveloped green spaces as a matter of preference over the indoor shelters that existed at the time. I don't believe these individuals are doing harm to themselves or others. Certainly, they are doing no harm or creating any inconvenience that compares to the harm done by a social-economic-medical system that creates ever-worsening inequality and that leaves hundreds of Madison residents without reliable shelter.

Given the inability of the city and county to provide an adequate safety net, and given the fact that a deadly pandemic lingers despite progress in vaccination, the city should continue to allow temporary encampments as a small but necessary humanitarian measure.

Additionally, the committee should strongly urge the Madison Common Council to immediately reconsider its inhumane rejection of the proposed men's shelter.

These two actions by your committee could reduce to some extent the unnecessary harm the city and county have done to some of the most vulnerable among us through the long-term failure to ensure that all of us have access to safe and stable shelter.

It may be the very least we can do to allow a few people to camp in public parks.

But it's better than doing nothing at all.

If it's the most we can do today, let's do it, and then commit to doing better tomorrow.

Thanks for considering my request that you approve the eviction prohibition and urge the Common Council to take immediate action on the men's shelter.

Sincerely,

Steve Verburg
Aldermanic District 16
Madison, Wisconsin

From: [Joan D.](#)
To: [City County Homeless Issues Committee](#)
Subject: I am writing
Date: Monday, May 17, 2021 5:43:19 PM

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to let you know that I fully support the proposed resolution that would prohibit the eviction of the homeless from Reindahl Park until a fully-accessible site and/or shelter is found. Starkweather is not an accessible site.

The city has treated these citizens very poorly - declining to approve a men's shelter at a not-perfect but better than nothing location, and repeatedly moving this group from one park to another.

We as a community must do better by these folks. We must start by not evicting them from Reindahl Park. Then we must immediately find and approve an accessible shelter. In order to do that, the city must recognize that the city is short on services at any proposed location and work to address that first.

Joan Downs
765 West Washington Ave.
Madison, WI 53715-1486