

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Ticketing unhoused + shelter space

From: Emily Kulpaka

Sent: April 13, 2021 4:45 PM

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Subject: Ticketing unhoused + shelter space

Hi Folks,

Just want to check in, as someone who's on the ground level, with folks who have the ability to make change and might not be seeing what we see.

Saturday night, a member of our martial arts school reached out to me, as a couple had set up a tarp on their property, and they were uncomfortable but also wanted to ensure both parties were safe and cared for. They knew I'm comfortable navigating situations like this, and I was glad to pop over.

I arrived, spoke with the couple, confirmed they were interested in getting help with housing and shelter, brought them blankets/food/gloves from the box I keep in my car, and started calling.

I called (in no specific order here, but made calls based off of suggestions of other places to call, from the last place I called) :

YWCA

Social navigator

Native women's shelter

MISSION SERVICES (2 different lines)

Good Shepard (3 different lines)

Salvation Army

Barrett centre

COAST

Inasmuch house

Carol Anne's place

Non emergency police line

East end station

The privilege alone I hold in being able to make all those calls (internet, unlimited calls, power to charge my phone, English as a first language, respect from police) puts me miles ahead of the folks under the tarp, and yet, it got me nowhere. How are they suppose to navigate alone?

NONE of these facilities could provide a space Saturday night for a couple, or suggestions of space. One offered a space for the woman, but her partner would have to stay on the street.

How can we ask a couple to split up for the night, when we don't have any services to reconnect them in the morning? We're in the east end, the shelter she could go to isn't close. Can't just hand them a bus ticket any more. Can't send them into a library to call. Don't have a way to ensure the women staying at the shelter feel safe with a man waiting outside all night.

So the solution? Pack them up and move them to a park for the night, or let them stay. I worked with the home owners and unhoused couple to create a plan everyone felt safe (enough) with for the night, and popped back as the sun came up to get them on their way before the next day. They were kind, respectful, and understanding (but also, their demeanour doesn't make them any more deserving of resources than someone who's in a rough mental space) and had already packed up by the time I got there and spent the next night at a park.

This is NOT solutions. This is NOT enough resources. This is NOT my job, and I'm happy to help as a community member, but we live in a resource rich community, where my help shouldn't end up making a park someone's living room.

Sunday night, I was volunteering at the Hub, as I do most weekends. A young gentleman came in, rattled because he'd been ticketed for sleeping at city hall. He's a refugee, with limited English, and explained he understood city hall was closed so he didn't think he was interrupting anyone. And now his priority was finding the \$65 to pay the ticket so he didn't go to jail, despite the fact \$65 could provide him literal life changing resources.

So, to recap. There aren't spaces to sleep housed in the city. Even the police are suggesting to find a quiet spot away from houses to sleep. And the city is ticketing unhoused folks for sleeping in a space that isn't being used currently AND has ample security cameras if there's a problem. And the city is saying there are resources available for those who want them.

This is one weekend, and not in any way a change from the disparity we see any other weekend, but this week I'm feeling particularly exhausted and out of patience.

I understand change takes time, but I'm tired of hearing the city has the resources, that the police budget is needed in the way that it's allocated, and that unhoused folks are making a choice.

Do better. Bring hamilton forward, and respect all our community members by trying new things that foster equity.

Please just try something new.

Sincerely,

Emily Kulpaka