May 14th, 2024

To: Members of General Issues Committee
From: Herb Wodehouse – Chair International Village BIA
CC: Susie Braithwaite – Executive Director International Village BIA
RE: Additional Encampment Protocol Considerations, Appendix "A" to Report HSC24020/PED24080/PW24030

Dear Members of Council (General Issues Committee):

Regarding the encampment protocol, International Village BIA would like to make recommendations and give feedback based on our experience surrounding the encampment protocol that was implemented in August 2023.

1. Regarding the removal and relocation of non-compliant encampments, there needs to be faster timelines surrounding Hamilton Police Services and City of Hamilton enforcement. Often, we are waiting several days to have non-compliant encampments removed from locations within our BIA such as Ferguson Station that is not a place where encampments are allowed under the protocol. This causes a snowball effect of attracting more non-compliant encampments to those spaces. Considering that there are special events and activations being planned by the BIA, community members and the City of Hamilton's Economic Development Department for Ferguson Station this spring and summer, a more timely and effective approach to removing non-compliant encampments is urgently needed.

2. Exemption of Wellington Park as an allowed location for encampments. Dodsworth & Brown Funeral Home as well as other surrounding businesses in that area of the BIA have been negatively impacted by the encampment at Wellington Park at the entranceway to our downtown. The funeral home has lost an overwhelming number of funeral services due to the issues they are dealing with daily from the encampments. This includes safety concerns, propane tank usage, garbage and debris, human waste and overall uncleanliness of the park. The loss of business is not sustainable for the funeral home. The negative impacts of trying to manage this encampment right out front of their business has had on both their staff and patrons is stifling including mental health and trauma responses. Funeral homes are meant to be a place for mourning the loss of loved ones and the goal of creating Wellington Park was to offer a safe space for grieving families to use as a respite during funeral services. Other surrounding business and property owners in that area have expressed concerns about attracting and sustaining tenants as well as safety and cleanliness of the area due to the constant issues arising from the Wellington Park encampment.

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3. Better solutions for cleanliness surrounding encampments needs to be implemented. Temporary public washrooms and/or receptacles and constant garbage and debris pick-up needs to be increased as business and property owners in surrounding areas to encampments are faced with cleaning up human waste and debris from their storefronts and properties daily. This is negatively affecting their business operations and mental health. BIA members pay extra money to an annual levy because they are located within a BIA with justified expectations that there are increased service levels for cleanliness and safety. We need more supports to deal with these growing issues.

While the BIA understands that there is a need for encampments due to the lack of housing in Hamilton and the current economic climate, we hope that the City of Hamilton will also understand that the impacts encampments have in Business Improvement Areas is complicated and has a negative affect on the operations and income of small businesses who are currently struggling in Downtown Hamilton due to the current and ongoing challenges at their doorsteps. This is especially true post-pandemic. The BIA staff resources are being drained as they attempt to mitigate the daily impacts, and any support we can receive from the City of Hamilton to manage these issues would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Herb Wodehouse
Chair- International Village BIA
Cc: Susie Braithwaite, Executive Director

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