

From: Andrew Tziatis [REDACTED]
Sent: June 18, 2024 10:52 AM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
Subject: Request to submit written letter for General Issues Meeting - June 19

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Good morning, while I cannot attend the General Issues Meeting tomorrow, I am hoping to have my written submission available for review and consideration regarding Encampments and the upcoming review of the existing protocol.

Dear Officials and Participants of the General Issues Committee, I am a resident of Delta West. While I understand that encampments and homelessness are city-wide issues, I am writing to express my urgent concern regarding the homeless encampments in Delta Park and Gage Park, and the significant impact they are having on my community.

Firstly, I want to acknowledge the intention of compassion and care that the Hamilton Encampment Protocol and Unsheltered Hamilton aim to provide for those experiencing homelessness. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that there is a need to re-evaluate what is included in the protocol and, more importantly, whether any of these guidelines are enforceable by any government body or the police. Many community members and I have personally experienced how Local Council, City Hall, Hamilton Police, and Unsheltered Hamilton point to each other, with none seemingly capable or willing to enforce the guidelines within the Encampment Protocol—even when the violations and broken laws are clear for all willing to look.

Homelessness is a complex issue, often resulting from a combination of factors such as economic hardship, mental health challenges, and a lack of affordable housing. The formation of encampments is a visible manifestation of these underlying issues, and addressing these challenges requires support from provincial and federal resources. However, I urge our Local Council to ensure that the rules, guidelines, and an enforceable framework put accountability and responsibility in the hands of a single group that can enforce them.

My community is asking for change by coming together as a collective. I invite you to read statements from Delta West residents and see that over 280 residents are willing to put their names behind a petition seeking change: [Petition Link](#). Key concerns in our area can be captured under the themes of Crime, Litter, and Public Safety.

Crime

Over the past year, especially over the last six months, crime in our community has escalated significantly. While each of these incidents has been reported to the police, the following examples illustrate what Delta West residents have had to endure:

- A neighbour on Rosslyn St S had personal items stolen from his vehicle. He confronted an individual in the Delta Park encampment who identified himself as the leader who maintained a logbook of stolen items from our neighbourhood. While some items were returned, it is deeply troubling that such organized crime is occurring and maintained under the current protocol.
- A neighbour on King St. experienced a break-in during daylight hours, where items were stolen from the home while their family and a service person were present. Such

incidents have understandably heightened fear for personal safety and the security of our properties.

- Over two evenings in May, more than 15 houses were targeted by thieves entering backyards to get into sheds, garages, and storage areas. Stolen items included tents, propane tanks, bikes, plants/planters, and tools. Some residents were able to retrieve stolen items from the Delta Park encampment and one thief was caught in progress—directly attributing these crimes to this group of individuals.
- On June 17, directly adjacent to the baseball diamonds in Gage Park where children as young as 3 years old were playing, a man attempting to stop an assault on an encampment resident was himself stabbed. This along with increasing violent crime events is shaking our community.

Litter

Litter and waste generated by the residents of the encampments are overwhelming our parks and neighbourhood. Within the encampment, litter presents an extremely dangerous situation for all right now and will have a residual impact as this garbage leaches into our local environment, undermining the efforts of our community to build and maintain a beautiful Delta West. Both Gage Park and Delta Park are becoming littered with garbage, including a very concerning amount of used needles, drug paraphernalia, and bodily waste. This not only compromises cleanliness and safety but also burdens taxpayers with risk and the absolute costs of cleanup, diminishing our ability to enjoy these public amenities. Examples illustrating what Delta West residents have had to deal with include:

- In May, after an evening of elevated activity, a bag containing a broken glass drug pipe, a blade/knife, and what appeared to be stolen electronics was found in front of a neighbour's home, a block from the encampment. While on city property, the neighbour had to clean up the items.
- Throughout the first half of the year, residents in Delta West have found human feces packed in bags or containers on their lawns and in/around Gage Park. Areas that should be enjoyed by all are increasingly being avoided by residents and visitors to our beautiful Gage Park.
- The amount of litter around encampments contradicts the Litter Management efforts initiated by Ninder Nann within Ward 3. While it appears that initial audits on this program are occurring, the impact it could have on our 2024 taxes to offset the cost of people and equipment will affect all of us in Hamilton.

Public Safety

Most importantly, dangerous situations attributed to the residents of the encampments within Gage Park and Delta Park have been reported. Examples illustrating what Delta West residents have had to deal with include:

- In one situation, a neighbour's daughter was verbally accosted while waiting for the bus on her way to school by a Delta Park encampment resident during what was thought to be a drug/mental health episode. The stress this put on our young community member resulted in a fear of walking to the bus, shopping at area businesses, and spending time enjoying Gage Park.
- There have been many situations where a couple residing in the encampments have either engaged in expletive-filled arguments or horrendous screaming episodes while walking through our community. These situations occur at all hours of the day, affecting our children as they walk home from school, play outside on weekends, or try to rest at night.

Proposed Actions

I propose the following actions to address this urgent issue:

1. **Enhanced Coordination with Police:** Ensure that police resources are adequately allocated to address the crime associated with the encampments, and ensure everyone abides by the law, and those not are being dealt with.
2. **Community Engagement and Transparency:** Hold regular town hall meetings with residents to update them on actions being taken and to gather feedback.
3. **Re-evaluation of the Encampment Protocol:** Reassess the current protocol to find a balance that includes enforceable guidelines that prioritize residents' quality of life and place ownership in one organization, not shared between multiple entities. Moreover, this revision for the protocol needs to clarify the definition of "shelter" - living in tents, left to deal with addiction and mental health crisis, and enabled to build a shadow order outside societal norms is not "compassion", it's inhumane.

I am seeking your leadership and support to resolve this matter effectively. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. It's no longer clear what the priorities of this council are as this situation has become worse for the majority on account of a very small minority.

Sincerely,
Andrew Tziatis