

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Citizen-led Community Meeting Re: Barton-Tiffany Temporary Outdoor Shelters

From: Agni Papageorgiou

Sent: Tuesday, October 22, 2024 11:46 AM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

Subject: Citizen-led Community Meeting Re: Barton-Tiffany Temporary Outdoor Shelters

Good morning,

I am writing to share my detailed notes from a citizen-led community meeting held on October 21, 2024 regarding the City's plan for temporary outdoor shelters on the Barton-Tiffany Lands. In the absence of consultation with residents by the City on its plan or opportunity to delegate before Council on the report, a group of concerned residents came together to organize the meeting to provide residents with the opportunity to delegate and ask questions. Flyers were distributed to the closest residents to the site and shared on social media and with stakeholders. Hamilton Police were invited and attended to hear residents and answer questions. The Mayor, Councillors from Ward 1 and 2, City staff, and Good Shepherd were also invited but declined to attend.

The attached provides documentation of the delegations presented at the meeting, as well as the question and answer period with police representatives. I ask that you please submit this to Council for consideration and response.

Here is a video recording of the meeting, which provides a full record of the discussion, for the record: <https://www.facebook.com/bertkelly.oucharek/posts/1112722127112092/>

Meeting attendees also provided written feedback both by hand and electronically. I have attached the handwritten feedback that was collected. Electronic records will be submitted by another resident.

Thank you,

Agni Papageorgiou

Ward 2 resident

Monday, October 21, 2024

Citizen-Led Community Meeting: Barton Tiffany Temporary Outdoor Shelter Site

MEETING NOTES

- **Moderator:** Mark
 - Resident volunteer
 - Explained format of meeting would be delegations followed by q and a. Also QR codes around room for residents to provide comments/questions in writing if they do not want to speak.
- **Speakers:** Police Superintendent Dave Hennick - Community Safety Division and Inspector Jim Callender for Central Division
 - Superintendent Hennick explained he is responsible for mental health, addiction, homeless, encampment, marine, etc.
 - Inspector Callender is responsible for crime in the division
 - Thankful to be invited to listen and will try to answer questions
- **Absent:** Mayor Horvath, Councillors Kroestch and Wilson, City staff and Good Shepherd representatives
- **Residents:** roughly 200 in attendance

Delegations: residents were invited to sign up to speak

Delegate 1 Kelly Oucharek

- Paper around the room is to write questions, plan to submit to city clerk
- Streaming on Facebook live and will submit to city
- Lifelong north end resident, nurse and mom
- Hoped to dedicate time for city to respond to questions, but choose not to attend
- Spoke about impact to Bayfront
- Lack of opportunity for residents to delegate before council on report
- Central Park and most of Pier 4 non-compliant with protocol, number in Bayfront also non-compliant
- City owns a lot of land that would offer a buffer between site and community
- City released list of sites - did not include Barton Tiffany

Note: Kelly will submit her full speaking notes to the City Clerk

Delegate 2: Jessica

- Lives in [REDACTED]
- We're living in middle of homeless crises, all have different concerns (property values, dogs barking, contamination of site, CN rail issues with housing, consistent city procedure). People want answers and leadership is not here to provide them.
- People want to know where will cabins be located, what about stolen property, we've seek with chop shops being broken down property is not returned.
- Others have questions about about metrics for the site, how to measure, how will the City qualify those who will live there (most needy? High functioning?)
- Hopeful we can have answers and our questions can be addressed

- Concerned about proximity to school - this site is not appropriate metres away from school. Many at school immigrants, don't speak English, distrust government, don't have a voice.
- Not here to beat down on vulnerable people, but don't feel they should be around children. Not safe for addicts, mentally ill to have kids, why would it be safe to place this site close to them. They deserve to have help to get up, supportive for helping them, but hoping the city will take into consideration the school in such close proximity. High needs, low barrier, not appropriate to be close to elementary school.

Delegate 3: Allyson Wenzowski

Resident read the following written statement:

Thank you all for attending this community information session.

My name is Allyson Wenzowski, I'm a resident of [REDACTED] for 13 years and am speaking briefly on the issue of environmental racism in regard to health.

According to the David Suzuki Foundation

Environmental racism occurs in Canada and around the world. It's a facet of environmental injustice, and happens when development, policies or practices intentionally or unintentionally result in more pollution or health risks in Indigenous and racialized (or marginalized) communities. We also see it in patterns of unequal access to environmental benefits like clean water and air and proximity to parks. Environmental racism has serious impacts on health and well-being.

Some recent examples of environmental racism in Hamilton

- Spectator Code Red series revealed a life expectancy **that is 21 years shorter in the north end compared to the city's most affluent neighbourhoods. – a difference of 21 years in average age of death, in communities just five minutes apart – Code Red was written in 2010.**
- Residents living in in L8L, L8H and L8V have double the risk of developing an extreme response to infection called sepsis that can be deadly.

“The major finding related to this study is really the fact that among our socially and physically disadvantaged neighbourhoods, we have about 17 per cent of the population living there and about twice the number of individuals coming into the hospital with sepsis **and twice the number of individuals that are dying from sepsis from these neighbourhoods,**

The highest rate of sepsis in Hamilton was in L8L.

You might be asking: What is Sepsis?

Sepsis occurs when your immune system has a dangerous reaction to an infection. It causes extensive inflammation throughout your body that can lead to tissue damage, organ failure and even death. Many different kinds of infections can trigger sepsis, which is a medical emergency. The quicker you receive treatment, the better your outcome will be. (Cleveland Clinic)

- **People living in L8L suffer some of the worst population level health outcomes in the country,**” Dr. Brian McKenna, lead physician of the Hamilton Family Health Team (HFHT), said.
- The city officially has decided to house the unhoused on the heavily contaminated Rheem property (barton tiffany). L8L has a large working-class population and many recent immigrants. For many in L8L English is not their first language. Many work multiple jobs to make ends meet. Due to language barriers, and time constraints, many in the area may not have the resources to advocate. Hess Street public school is less than 1 km away from the proposed sanctioned site.

Ask yourself:

- What is the average life expectancy for folks living in Westdale, Dundas, Ancaster, etc.?
- What is the rate of sepsis in these locations?
- Would the city decide to put temporary tiny home shelters and/or allow tents in parks such as Victoria Park, Churchill Park, Dundas Driving Park, Dundas Valley Trail Centre, etc.?

References

<https://davidsuzuki.org/expert-article/environmental-racism-what-is-it-and-what-can-we-do-about-it/>

https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/which-hamilton-neighbourhoods-have-double-the-risk-of-developing-a-deadly-response-to-infection/article_7c8d5daf-aa93-58a3-aa7b-f0a9121fe915.html

https://thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/new-north-end-health-clinic-looks-to-reduce-some-of-the-worst-population-health-outcomes/article_a017da37-72aa-5075-9f10-d0d186ba1e17.html

Delegate 4: Ellaline D

- lives on [REDACTED] across from the site and current encampment
- have to take turns calling in fire calls, watching night and day
- See open drug use, fights, public defecation, urination, including on gate in front of her home
- Have had to buy cameras - first time in 30 years
- Unacceptable responses from Councillor, most recent was on weekend following large fire at encampment site (15m high flames). Responded thanks for letting me know, I came down to the site and talked to them and they seem to be doing ok, hopefully when new site is set up will improve. In mean time all will try to manage.
- Since Feb 10 2023, over 18 months, we have been seeking assistance, for those across the street and nearby
- As a senior with a disability, afraid to be outside at night. Have lost freedom, sense of security
- Kitchener people will share their experience with the sanctioned site there
- Completely unacceptable - have never experienced such a lack of transparency, responsiveness from councillor over 30 years in north end

Delegator 5: Ryan Furlong

Moderator read the following written statement on behalf of the resident:

Resident of Strathcona Neighbourhood, Ward 1

Dear Friends and Neighbours,

Our city faces a crisis, one that threatens not only our safety but our trust in the very institutions sworn to protect us. Our elected officials, entrusted with ensuring the wellbeing of our community, have failed us. The consequences of this failure are clear: crime is on the rise, our neighborhoods are less safe, and the dignity of our streets is eroding.

Every one of us knows someone grappling with the hardships of addiction, mental health issues, or homelessness. I've personally lost several friends to substance abuse in just a few years. The lack of housing, shelters, and rehabilitation programs in Hamilton is straining our ability to care for our own. We are now absorbing an influx of people from other municipalities who seek help that our community is no longer equipped to provide.

In response, our council has bypassed public consultation and unilaterally approved an 80-bed temporary shelter at Barton-Tiffany. We have seen this before, with the proposed shelter on Strachan Street, where the results were devastating, leading to an erosion of trust between the people and their government.

For two years, illegal encampments at Dundurn Park and the sacred Indigenous burial ground at the Ancaster Assize site have plagued our neighbourhood. Repeated complaints

have been met with inaction, and the situation has grown critical. On a daily basis, our parks and streets are littered with used needles and crack pipes. Residents of these encampments engage in open drug use in front of children, brandish weapons, set fire to toxic substances, and scatter their rubbish without any regard for the safety of the community or the environment.

We are no longer safe in our own community. Residents are routinely harassed and threatened. I was personally confronted by an individual claiming to have a firearm, while my children stood nearby. In Dundurn Kitchen Garden, a man openly smoked crack at the children's craft tables while concealing a butcher knife. Another incident involved a man from the Victoria Park encampment throwing an axe at a tree while children walked home from school nearby.

These encampments are not mere shelters for the displaced. They have become, in many instances, centers of crime and violence—growing unchecked by city officials, police, or encampment teams. Despite their illegal status, no action has been taken to remove them. Let us be clear: We, as citizens, have a right to safety, and we have a right to be heard. The council's decision to approve this temporary shelter without public input is a violation of those rights.

For four months, Maureen Wilson, our elected representative, has been notified of the escalating dangers posed by these encampments, yet no substantive action has been taken. The Hamilton Police have even warned us that the occupants of these encampments are "often armed with weapons and historically prone to violence." Placing 80 more individuals in close proximity to our homes, our schools, and our parks will escalate this crisis further. If any harm comes to the residents of this community as a result of the city's negligence, the grounds for legal action will be clear. We are taxpayers, facing rising levies and declining property values, and yet our safety and wellbeing are dismissed. We demand immediate action.

Our urgent calls for help, made since June 6th, have gone unanswered. The proposed tiny home project at Barton-Tiffany has been pushed forward without consultation, transparency, or the slightest consideration of our concerns. The alternative sites previously proposed by the city, such as Confederation Park, must be reinstated as viable options, and the Barton-Tiffany property must be taken off the table for good. This is not just a failure of leadership—it is an abandonment of duty.

Let us not be passive in the face of this growing threat. Dear neighbours, there is an influx of crime and chaos coming to our streets. We cannot sit idly by and wait for help that isn't coming. The cavalry is not on its way. It is up to each of us, united, to stop this project in its tracks and demand real solutions to the issues plaguing our city.

We have a voice. We have a right to safety. We must act now.

Warmest regards,
Ryan Furlong

Delegate 6: Pamela Garnder

- This is a bible my mothers - read a quote 17 kings verse 5
- There is something happening here, if you don't know what it is can't make a decision
- We're setting precedent with this and trying to haggle over nickels and dimes, who's going to count stolen goods, how much drug use is covering
- Here to haggle over price, but if you don't think we're setting precedence for setting up concentration camps in our country you're missing something

Delegate 7: Elizabeth Ward

- Have lived in central neighbourhood for 40 years, retired nurse, worked for mental health and addictions for 35 years
- Have had conversations with Cameron where he's said they are more scared of you, than you them - found that insulting
- Most with mental illness not violent, but those with serious illness that is untreated can be extremely dangerous (eg. Psychosis).
- Concern is that provincial govt is responsible for mental health and addictions. We have a premier that does not care about health care.
- We need to focus on standing up to province to say this is wrong to citizens of this community and to the mentally ill.

Delegate 8 - Robert Weber

- have lived on Crooks St for 30 years
- Location, location location - home values will drop, insurance will increase, car insurance will skyrocket
- We'll be losing money, city is not proposing to do anything - say we stand up to city for something - reduce property taxes

Delegate 9: Stacey Easton

- I don't like being here, didn't like being at Benneto a year ago
- I didn't feel safe, have to tried to figure out how to be
- Don't own a house, much more likely to be homeless and unhoused. Much closer to the ppl in encampments than anywhere else.
- Way people in encampments described makes them unsafe
- Was at Benneto and they said we want it at Barton and Tiffany, now you don't want it. We don't like poor people and don't want them near us
- See people talking about armed vigilante gangs going after homeless people
- Yes drug use is unpleasant, but if we don't want safe injection sites, what do we want.
- Hear people say they don't want people sh*tting in their properties, but don't want bathrooms - if they don't have anywhere to live where will they sh*t
- People who are citizens don't have anywhere to live - hear people with property and privilege talking about rounding people up. Ive never heard an unhoused person in these spaces
- Im f** if I lose my housing - I've lived in subsidized housing for 3 years
- Most people rent in this ward.
- 9059663552 - call me to talk
- Long history of people of colour and disabled people being killed by police - makes me feel unsafe for them to be in the room

Delegate 10: Frank Soberg

- This is a plug for two campaigns - stopthecrises.ca solvethecrises.ca
- 2 campaigns for the province - suggest we get involved now
- City is working on a plan, it will take time, let's pivot in the meantime

- At big city mayors meeting in August unveiled campaign. Polled group for familiarity with solvethecrises.ca - no hands for submitting comments
- Asked group to inform province on not only grievances but suggestions and ideas

Delegate 11: Ben Geraedts

- I live [REDACTED] have lived there for 3.5 years
- Most of us have direct lived experience of challenging experience outside our door.
- Was an encampment outside this building for close to a year
- Saw 1 tent, then grew to 5, and quickly went from peaceful to violent and unsafe (fights, chop shop)
- When that first tent was set up, maybe I was naive, thought people need places to live and shelter, emergency services will keep us safe
- Have seen over last year failure to keep us safe
- Saw stabbing and dog attack, took year for person to be removed (until encampment protocol put in case), dog was also allowed to stay
- Was extremely mild winter last winter, called emergency services about smoke from under tarp (fire)
- 80 person site - makes me extremely nervous, that in attempts to minimize contact between police and those at low barrier site, won't take long before a fire could kill dozens very quickly.
- Terrified that the rush to put this in place will result in serious harm.

Delegate 12: Wayne Poirier

- 51, spent last 15 months unhoused
- Have phd
- Acknowledged sovereign territory of haudenosaune
- We are talking about the wrong issue, we're talking about unhoused, I lived at 184 Hess St
- Trauma started with pandemic - lost business, home
- Openly gay
- took in 26 during the pandemic - Why couldn't I house someone in a trailer in my driveway
- What was it like for 4 yr old aria see belonging thrown in dumpster
- Need to pay attention
- Where are the unhoused, the Indigenous?
-

Delegate 13: Michelle Kollee

- how do I or my daughter or my husband protect ourselves when we're out and we're approached by a dog off-lease, or a person walking around with a weapon, stick, etc.?
- What am I allowed to walk around with to keep me safe? My husband has told me its no longer safe to walk outside.

- I was assaulted by a dog today and when we went back to see if the dog had been taken care of, the encampment resident came at me.
- Police hands are tied and full - please tell me what I can do to keep safe

Police Response to Delegations

- started by saying thank you to residents for invitation
- We have role to keep bylaw safe - they don't get to all sites in time but have increased staffing to be more responsive to resident concerns re: sites
- Adherence to protocol does not
- Courts have made it abundantly clear that responsibility to provide housing is on municipality - has come through several cases to establish acceptable treatment of human being and where they are allowed to survive - can set up a tent
- On private property - easy - if someone there we will come and remove for trespassing
- If on city land, different, charter applies. City responsible for providing housing, if they can't bylaw or police can't remove them.
- Have a social navigator, rapid response, recently development rapid intervention support team. Difficulty is police have become a default service provider for all those who can't - involved where we shouldn't have a role - being homeless is not a crime. In addition to that we're guardians of public safety
- Over 50 shootings this year. We're doing our part.
- A few people have talked about open drug use - when we first started policing 25 years ago we would arrest you. It used to be criminal for possession of substances. Still is, but with intro of bill c-5, now requires police to consider taking no action, give warning, or give referral for support. This the first barrier. If we meet that criteria then there's a policy and procedure that makes crown look at case and if does not impact public safety (e.g. school) then won't prosecute.
- Great majority of officers on front line only have 3 years experience. St Joe's has stepped up to help us in work to address portion of open drug use in the community
- We are the police for everyone - unhoused and housed - make a point of getting out and speaking to unhoused as well.
- Where there are unsanctioned sites have seen increased lower level crime, and homicide in some cases.
- Many people in our city a pay cheque away from being homeless themselves, constantly reminded what level of service people want from their police
- Have our assurances we will respond to concerns - response looks different because of demand. Have seen shift since covid, things are getting back to normal, but still work to be done

Questions and Answer Period

Residents were invited to line up and ask questions of the two police officers present.

Resident 1

- **Q:** have every sympathy for those who are homeless, have almost been there myself, why is putting them on a contaminated site the first choice? Why put them in an area where there was oil and radiation. Why would you put your most vulnerable

people on that site? Worry about who will be on the site. The lovely couple I talked to in park? Not on a contaminated site. Think its going to become a giant city wide slum. Why are you putting them in a high traffic zone to go train, for little kids to go to school? People you are proposing to put there are scared. What can we do to keep us safe? We are not all millionaires - there are many in this room living on senior pay checks - if this area loses value, or insurance and taxes go up we won't be able to afford our homes. Asked for response to earlier questions about what we can do to keep safe.

- **A:** Hamilton police was not involved in site selection or provided opportunity to provide input. Everyone deserves right to be safe in city. If you have a weapon on you, even a stick for protection, you are committing a crime. Have a priority response system - call the police.

Resident 2: no question, but shared thoughts:

- 1 - Think everyone agrees homeless situation is not great.
- 2- housing prices increase - insane
- 3- lets focus on solutions
- 4 - when solutions come up, lets think about them. Already living on contaminated site
- 5 - open drug use - don't do it
- 6 - stop stealing our shit
- 7- needs for the homeless - can't be lumped together. Range of issues is wide - some have mental health, some unemployed, can't just have one solution

Resident 3

Q - you mentioned data and stats about increase in crime with unsanctioned encampments, do you have those? And how that would compare with sanctioned site? Is there some way of quantifying potential for reduction in crime with sanctioned site

A - don't have the data but have seen it first hand. Every month we push out data to city, each councillor. If looking for specific data we can mine it for you. Would be interested in hearing from Waterloo region about experience with sites in Kitchener. Difference is services are provided there, so expectation there wouldn't be same issues as unsanctioned site but don't have data

Resident 4

Q - ive lived on barton for about year, I've never seen so much crime in my life. I don't feel safe. Had someone in my backyard tell me they are an out of control murderer. I try not to interact - they plug chargers into my house, look in my window, my fiancé was chased by a dog today. A lot of people own their homes and are losing thousands. Is it possible to have police patrol area?

A - we are already out patrolling, but as you can see more encampments than police.

Pulled up data, in last 7 days, in division 1 had 700 calls for service. What we need from you is for you to report issues to talk to police so they know here to deploy resources. If you don't report stolen propane tank etc, then I don't know and can't consider in deployment as hot spot. I'm balancing a lot, but I get it. We are 24/7

Q - less than a month ago had someone pounding on door to come in - seems to become worse in winter. What can I do to feel safe and protect myself? Police don't come fast enough

A - Call the police. Criminal code of Canada permits you to protect yourself, but you are not permitted to carry a weapon. Protection has to be reasonable force.

Resident 5

Q- did you say police were not consulted? Are you going to expand service in area?

A- have ongoing partnerships with city, but were not consulted or given opportunity to comment on report. Have put offer too city to provide support in development of sanctioned site - ready to be invited to table. Don't see police at site in Kitchener everyday. Site will be operated by Good Shepherd - they will be controlling food services, etc.

Resident 6

Q - live on barton west, in last 4 years have talked to 300 ppl in encampments. I think we can all agree we'll be safer if everyone has access to housing.

A lot of people in encampments don't want to move to this site because contaminated. A lot of ppl were at site behind city hall and told could be moved. Why can't we spend money on housing?

A - responsibility lays squarely on municipality. When city has enough housing then will no longer require encampment/shelter protocol. City needs to, by law, have a low barrier site. Question is where the site is.

Q - last year city reported would take 8M for housing - 4M would provide rent for 100 people. Given police are overtasked, is this the best use of funds

A - over 25 years in police service have seen police boundary increase significantly with same officers, answer is complex. As city grows, so will police. Asked same question to city about paying rent for individuals. Professionals at camh and other experts say that will not work, individuals need wrap around services.

Resident 7

Q - personally all for increasing funding for police. Need to vote. Putting people in house not solution, need supports. Going forward will there be a one point of contact for us? Currently get set all over for each issues

A - no we don't have that. Have heard same frustrations at council and have developed a 3 page list of numbers and where to call. That info has been shared with councillors. We'll put it on the police website.

Resident 8

Q - you said you've gotten 700 calls this past week - I drive around a lot - Ive seen a cop car at Jackson square everyday because there's a construction site. Wouldn't that person be better placed at Tiffany and Barton.

A - Common question. Officers at construction site, film sites, are on paid duty, not working for division at time. Option for paid duty at site, someone would need to pay for it. Would be very expensive.

Resident 9

Q - Asked about vigilantism

A - We have not seen vigilantism you have spoken about. Our standard of care is the same for each of you.

Resident 10

Q- Does police report crime in area to insurance companies each year. My insurance was 77\$/month without any tickets.

A- Insurance will do their own data mining based on publicly available police data. The police does not share its data directly with other entities.

Resident 11

Q- Can we get together as a community and find our way. We the people have the right to make a decision on how the our money is used. I've worked in psychiatry, robbed, broken my hand, almost raped on the street when a taxi driver stopped to help me. I won't walk the streets anymore because it's not safe. Third world countries have paid people to protect their areas. I think we can step up and find a better way.

Resident 12

Q - We recently became aware busses of homeless being brought in from TO, Milton, Burlington. Ive seen it first hand.

A - have heard that a lot but a recent article found not accurate. My team has encountered those on streets who have come to Hamilton for services. Have also heard from city that we have people that leave.

Resident 13

Q - Were you consulted on encampment protocol? Any idea what your role will be on this site?

A - our team provided input from our perspective, some not as early as we would have liked. Think our role will be the same as on other sites. Understand site will be fenced off, controlled, and operated by good shepherd. We not be there unless there's an issue

Q - do you have thoughts on where this should be located? That would mitigate concerns and serve those in needed. Confederation Park seems like a good site.

A - a bit of a loaded question. I'm not a housing expert, and haven't done the work. Two in Waterloo near waste management and industrial area. Neither are near residential site. We really need to do follow up work as police to see what results have been from other sanctioned sites. Counter argument is access to services, but those should be provided at site.

Resident 14

Q - People were shipped to Hamilton and Thunder Bay. Ive been on a greyhound bus with many homeless with 100\$ saying ill be back in a week. Pls don't dismiss our comments. I've experienced being on bus with them. Will you bill city of Toronto for providing services?

A- I did acknowledge its happening. To my knowledge, have not seen or had busloads of people reported to us.

Resident 15

Q - there was a question about police plans that people outside are safe. In my work as a homeless outreach work, working in encampments, know they have had fires set, boiling water, rocks thrown on them. There's people here asking about carrying weapons, that is really scary and upsetting. I don't think enforcement is the way to deal with this. City's own business survey references public lynchings.

A - we work hard to keep the city safe. Our members work tirelessly to build long standing relationships with those who haven't historical had a relationship with police. Holds true for unhoused population team. See everyday with social navigation team.

Resident 16

Q - Im the homeless landlord you've seen in the media. My question is around policing. I understand both sides. Has to be consequences for actions, deterrents to keep our community safe, you can't just say I have mental health issues and do anything. I haven't received support from our police services. Ive made 911 calls, they aren't answered. Individuals occupying my home cut gas line. I called and police didn't come from 4pm - 11pm. Enbridge determined line was cut. Why don't police come when we call 911? Why does it take so long? I had to pay for private security. I had an eviction order and was told it was a civil issue. If no one will advocate for me I will advocate for myself. Since eviction my house has been trespassed several times

A - if trespasser has left, then falls down on priority list for response. As you fall down priority response list, will take more time. Not the answer everyone wants to hear, we want to respond quickly because we know that each individual call is important to you. Not delaying it for any other purpose - we just can't get there.