

From: Cathy Ball
Sent: 4/13/2021 5:38:19 PM
To: "Esther Manheimer" <esthermanheimer@avlouncil.com>
Cc: "Jeff Joyce" <jeffbjoyce7@gmail.com>, "roderick simmons" <rsimmons@ashevillenc.gov>, "councilgroup" <AshevilleNCCouncil@ashevillenc.gov>, "Debra Campbell" <dcampbell@ashevillenc.gov>, "Robert Stevenson" <robert@homewardboundwnc.org>
Subject: Re: Aston Park

Attachments: [image001.jpg](#), [image002.jpg](#), [image003.jpg](#)

Confirmed.

Cathy D. Ball, PE
Assistant City Manager
City of Asheville
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On Tue, Apr 13, 2021 at 3:16 PM <esthermanheimer@avlouncil.com> wrote:

Jeff - Thank you for continuing to keep us apprised of the situation at Aston Park. Yes, it is my understanding that the seven day notice was provided on Friday, but Cathy can confirm.

Thank you,

Esther



Esther Manheimer

Mayor, City of Asheville

P.O. Box 7148

Asheville, NC 28802

phone 828.259.5604

esthermanheimer@avlouncil.com

From: Jeff Joyce <jeffbjoyce7@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2021 2:28 PM
To: esthermanheimer@avlouncil.com; Cathy Ball <cball@ashevillenc.gov>; roderick simmons <rsimmons@ashevillenc.gov>; councilgroup <AshevilleNCCouncil@ashevillenc.gov>; Debra Campbell <dcampbell@ashevillenc.gov>; Robert Stevenson <robert@homewardboundwnc.org>
Subject: Re: Aston Park

To All, Please understand that I know you are tired of receiving emails from me, but know that I am far more tired of sending them. I was informed through members of the tennis community that articles in the Citizen Times and a news story on WLOS over the weekend stated that the City has given the 7 day eviction notice to the Aston Campers. Could you confirm that is correct? I have an ATA Board meeting this evening and would like to update them on the status.

Sunday afternoon, I took a picture of a father and his 2 children playing on the kid's court. Take a look at all the blankets hanging on the nets. And all the tents surrounding the court. Not a very wholesome environment.

Also, view the one tent that is in front of the storage shed. The camper had his tent tied to the door handle. I spoke with the camper on Sunday and Monday and informed him that he had to move his tent, as staff needed to get into the building. He finally moved it on Monday.



A much more dangerous issue is the next picture. Staff picked up over 25 needles in the area around the kid's court on Monday. Yes, all of these were picked up Monday and all from around the Kid's court. The City is very fortunate that no one stepped on a needle.



This is a disaster waiting to happen. I hope that we have not waited too long to take the appropriate action.

I look forward to hearing from someone.

Jeff Joyce

Asheville Tennis Association

On Fri, Apr 9, 2021 at 11:50 AM Jeff Joyce <jeffbjoyce7@gmail.com> wrote:

Mayor, thank you for your response. The Tennis Community would also like to see what the plan is regarding Aston Park. There have been several concerns expressed to Tennis Center staff asking what is going to happen.

I was appalled when I read John Boyle's column this morning with the quote "Another camp site, in Aston Park. . . . will not be removed, Ball said, because problems beyond trespassing had not been reported". This statement is simply inaccurate and false, and hopefully misquoted. <https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2021/04/09/answer-man-homeless-encampments-proliferating-city-action-coming/7122312002/>

I personally started making you aware of the situation on March 2, when the camp was under the porch with 6 tents. Here is one quote from that particular email.

"Not only is there a safety issue but a public health issue. The Staff that has been working there over the winter months has shared that they come to work with used tampons greeting them at the Pro Shop door, urination on the walls of the building, and even feces at the entrance"

This type of behavior has continued even with the camp in the upper part of the park.

It was very disheartening to read this article, especially after I sent you all an email on Wednesday of this week dealing with this issue. Maybe the timing was just bad, but we have tried to warn you about the drug use as witnessed by needles in the park, to public urination, and on Tuesday night the police were called to Aston Park about an assault with a baseball bat. If these criminal activities are the reason for moving homeless camps, then why is Aston Park the exception?

Here is part of an email I sent on March 30.

On Tue, Mar 30, 2021 at 8:43 AM Jeff Joyce <jeffbjoyce7@gmail.com> wrote:

Good Morning Cathy, I read with great interest the article in the paper concerning the movement of the camp located on Cherry Street. The reasons given for the movement of the camp appear to be the same as what we have continuously shared about the campers at Aston Park. Drug Use, Needles, Trash, Public Urination, Behavior Issues, etc. The only one that was not included was a Gun, but I can assure you that the only thing that has not happened is that someone has threatened a staff person (yet) with a gun.

I was working Saturday when all of a sudden a man was urinating on the side of the building. I asked him why he was doing that on the side of the building, and he stated that he had to go somewhere. I said that there were acres of parkland with lots of trees and I did not understand why he had to pee on the building. His response - that I should quit trying to understand.

Saturday, there were 6 tents in the park. Yesterday, it had grown to 12+.

Yesterday morning (Thursday), I counted **21** tents in the Park. Seven of those were surrounding the Kid's Tennis Court, the picture which I shared Wednesday.

The concern is that the city is waiting for something bad to happen prior to moving the Camp. It would be terribly unfortunate to be reactive rather than proactive.

Respectfully,

Jeff Joyce

On Wed, Apr 7, 2021 at 12:38 PM <esthermanheimer@avlcouncil.com> wrote:

I am looping in the manager.

Cathy - can you tell us what the plan is regarding Aston Park? I have seen several communications but if you could update us, that would be great.

Thank you,

Esther



Esther Manheimer

Mayor, City of Asheville

P.O. Box 7148

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phone 828.259.5604

esthermanheimer@avlcouncil.com

From: Jeff Joyce <jeffbjoyce7@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, April 7, 2021 11:28 AM

To: Cathy Ball <cball@ashevillenc.gov>; roderick simmons <rsimmons@ashevillenc.gov>; councilgroup <AshevilleNCCouncil@ashevillenc.gov>

Subject: Aston Park

Attached is a picture of a family campsite that set up next to the Kid's Tennis Court at the Aston Park Tennis Center. This is extremely concerning to the tennis community, as this makes the Kid's court simply unusable. It also is a safety concern for many of the tennis players that frequent Aston Park. In the short term, could this group be moved to the upper part of the park where the other tents are located?

The Asheville Tennis Association has signed an agreement for 2021 to offer tennis programming at the Tennis Center. The vast majority of these programs are for the youth of the community. The ATA is very concerned about the safety at the Park. There have been several issues at the beginning of the season, including these bullet points.

- 2 of the adults in the tent pictured were cursing loudly (several F bombs) at each other on Easter Sunday morning.
- There are 3 children living in the tent that are allowed to run wild through the area adjacent to the tennis courts.
- Last night, the police were called to deal with an assault with a baseball bat in the park.
- Litter is a constant issue throughout the park.
- Used needles have been constantly picked up over the past 2 months.
- A City of Asheville flyer has been shared that lists Aston Park as a "No Hassle Camp Option".
- Urine clean-up on the sides of the building.

The ATA delayed the start of any programming until the month of May due to the situation at the Park. We felt it best to allow the Park Staff and the City to take the month of April to deal with the situation and have a successful opening. We have scheduled clinics starting the week of May 3. These include youth clinics, Try Tennis for both Juniors and Adults, and Junior Team Tennis.

During the month of April, there are other programs for youth scheduled at Aston Park. The Asheville Middle School tennis team holds their practices and matches at Aston. Carolina Day holds their home matches at Aston Park. Hanger Hall is holding clinics for girls from their school at Aston Park. These are programs that highlight the Tennis Center to the parents of these youth of our community.

During the summer, we have programs planned for the underserved kids of Asheville. The ATA is working with Parks and Recreation to send tennis instructors to the Playground Program 16 times over the span of the program. We will be sending instructors to Walton St., Stephens Lee, Shiloh, Montford, Malvern Hills, Burton St., and the Therapeutic Programs at Oakley and West Asheville. We will be conducting a Saturday morning program at Aston Park for underserved children.

Parks are designed to improve the quality of life for the citizens and visitors to the community. Not to live in. The ATA just wants to have a safe, wholesome atmosphere for our youth. The Camps that are being allowed do not offer that atmosphere.

The ATA asks that the City take the appropriate measures before a serious incident occurs. With all the incidents that have taken place throughout the country over the past month, we should all be concerned that it may be a matter of time before one happens in Asheville.

Respectfully,

Jeff Joyce, on behalf of the
Asheville Tennis Association