

From: Lauren Stickels
Sent: 4/19/2021 3:56:34 PM
To: "cball@ashevillenc.gov" <cball@ashevillenc.gov>, "dcampbell@ashevillenc.gov" <dcampbell@ashevillenc.gov>, "esthermanheimer@ashevillecouncil.com" <esthermanheimer@ashevillecouncil.com>
Cc:
Subject: Stop camp evictions now

Good afternoon,

In the past few weeks, myself and others have been in communication with our unhoused neighbors here in Asheville. I have heard stories of how some of these folks have come to be without housing, why some of them are unable to secure housing and jobs, as well as their wishes to have safe and secure places to camp, being that at this time this is a feasible option for them.

On Saturday of this past week, myself and my six-year-old daughter watched as over 20 armed Asheville city police officers marched into the encampment at Aston Park and forcibly removed the remaining residents there. My six-year-old understands the fundamental reasons for which people become homeless, remain homeless, struggle with mental illness and drug addiction, as well as how our city has failed to provide these people with accessible healthcare, food security, and safe spaces to sleep. These facts seem to be lost on you, and if not, you are simply monsters.

The public at large, who have not taken the time to personally visit these unhoused folks, are relying on the narrative and decisions handed down by Asheville City Council and local media, as to why it's necessary to remove these people from their campsites. You know as well as I do that the reasons for removal are not based in safety of the Asheville community at large. You pander to the wealthy gentrifiers who move to Asheville daily, as well as those who's fear of our homeless population outweighs their compassion.

Myself and my family ask that you immediately put a stop to these evictions and instead redirect money from policing encampments, to providing sanitation services as well as mental health and health care to these people.

We further ask that you come up with a comprehensive plan to build low barrier shelters for those who are not ready to confront their drug addiction as well as work with local organizations to provide outreach, especially in the way of mental health care, substance use, and food security. Furthermore, shelters without ties to religious organizations are needed immediately.

Not only are the adults watching you closely as you terrorize and rip people from their safe sleeping spaces, but the kids are watching too. By continuing to side with the tourism industry and developers, you are building a wall that will be even more difficult to tear down in the future, which I can assure you that despite the difficulty, the younger generation will do, as they see your decisions as violent and inhumane.

Your time in office is limited, your voices will be stifled, and your actions thwarted if you choose to continue this mass removal of humans from safety.

Sincerely,

Lauren