



Letter to the Editor: Reopen Alton Parks

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So the Alton police threw me out of Rock Spring Park the other day. What was I doing? Walking alone in an empty park with my two dogs. What was my crime? I called the police chief and he confirmed all Alton parks are completely closed. To paraphrase the chief, I was recklessly endangering the public health. When I voiced my strong objection to his claim and said I planned to continue walking my dogs in Alton parks, he said if I did, he would personally write my citation.

After my chat with the chief, I did some research and found almost all municipal parks in the St. Louis metro area remain completely open, including St. Louis City. Closer to home, Godfrey, Wood River and Bethalto parks are all open. St Louis County is the only major municipality I'm aware of where the parks are closed (and citizens there are not happy about it).

The Alton city administration has a fiduciary duty to maintain our city parks for the benefit of its citizens. The city of Alton has failed miserably in this regard. During these difficult times where most public recreation is shut down, it's important to give people an outlet. Why can't a young couple cooped up with small children for the past month be allowed to take their children to a city park for a picnic on a beautiful spring day?

The response I get is that if we open the parks, masses of people will flock in and violate social distancing requirements. Really??? I have a lot more faith in our citizens than that! And, since the chief already has police stationed in these parks to keep people out, he could just as easily have them patrol the parks to enforce social distancing requirements.

I believe the city acted in a wrong-headed and heavy-handed manner with little regard for its citizens.

Bill Galbraith - Alton

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