

Alton Overnight Warming Centers Volunteer Asks City Council For ARPA Funds To Support Alton Homeless Population

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
December 27 2022 10:01 AM





ALTON - Tyler Dreith, an Alton resident, business owner, and volunteer at Alton's Overnight Warming Centers, asked the Alton City Council to commit some of their American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding toward supporting the city's homeless population at the council's December 21, 2022 meeting.

"We need the City of Alton to come up with some kind of plan to address homelessness in our community. We need a commitment," Dreith said. "We need a commitment of either time, people, a plan of action, or funds. As of right now, we have none of this from the City of Alton, which is kind of discouraging."

Dreith added that past administrations in Alton's government made promises that were never kept, and the current administration is doing nothing to help by using ARPA funds solely for themselves.

"About four years ago, the administration at that time promised a Homelessness Task Force ... that was never seen through," he said. "It's just unacceptable, listening tonight about the budget - and I agree, infrastructure's important, we need HVAC systems, we need to keep these buildings warm, we need to keep Police building warm - but we need to keep our own unsheltered guests warm as well, and right now we have zero dollars going towards the different organizations that are helping keep people alive. Without Overnight Warming Centers in Alton, people would be dying on the streets."

Overnight Warming Centers provides shelter to those who need it on nights when the temperature is 28 degrees or lower - but as Dreith pointed out in the meeting, they also provide much more. Citing statistics from the past year, he noted rising trends in both the number of Alton-area unhoused and the demand for Overnight Warming Centers' services.

"Last year, we activated on a total of 30 nights. We connected with 80 different guests last year - 32 of those guests were new, so we're seeing the trend going up with people being unhoused in our community," he said. "We served 986 more meals last year, we distributed 550 bus tokens, and we did a lot more."

Dreith said Overnight Warming Centers has a "negative" balance of funds earlier this week, and while they were able to achieve a positive balance by Wednesday, he said this ARPA funding presents a great opportunity for the city to provide more stable support to its unhoused population. He said he isn't asking the city to fund the organization entirely, just partially, and that ARPA funds can in fact be used for this purpose per the [Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\) website](#).

While the City Council was unable to take any immediate action at the meeting, Mayor David Goins asked Dreith to send him a link to the HUD website for further consideration, and Alderwoman Carolyn MacAfee suggested he reach out to an individual with Alton Township in the meantime to put a funding request on their agenda for early January.

Dreith added that individuals can donate directly to the Alton Overnight Warming Centers [online via this link](#), or they can visit the organization's [Facebook page](#), which also includes a [link to sign up as a volunteer](#).

A full recording of the City Council meeting is available below; Dreith begins speaking during the Public Comment section at 39:48.