

# Updated Alton Public Camping Ban Passes Committee

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter  
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ALTON - An updated version of the [Alton public camping ban](#) was given preliminary approval at [Monday's Committee of the Whole meeting](#). After being laid over for months of discussion and debate from community members, the item now goes to the City Council for full approval on Tuesday night.

The latest version of the ordinance, which would ban “unauthorized encampments” in Alton and the storage of personal property on public property, features notable changes from the first draft [introduced in September](#). The previous version’s fines of \$75 to \$750 for first-time violations have been changed to a maximum of \$100. Fines for subsequent violations went from \$500 to \$750 for each offense to a max of \$500 each.

All fines issued under the ordinance can now be satisfied by either cash payment or community service. The old ordinance gave “the court” the sole power to determine whether or not community service was an acceptable means of deterrence in each case, whereas the new ordinance allows it in all cases.

Changes were also made to the section regarding the confiscation of personal property. The old ordinance allowed personal property to be confiscated without warning regardless of whether the ordinance was violated. The new version requires a 24-hour written notice before the property being confiscated unless the property is an environmental or public health hazard. Property deemed publicly/environmentally hazardous may be immediately disposed of, while safe property must be held for 30 days for potential retrieval.

The new version of the ordinance also outlines a framework for the Alton Police Department to collaborate with other organizations to provide any services they have available. Part of the new language in the ordinance calls on “any public or private entities” interested in helping the department with “humanely transitioning individuals from unauthorized encampments on public property to an environment consistent with City ordinances” to contact the Department with a description of the services they can provide and their contact information.

During public comments, Peter Hough thanked those who collaborated on the new version of the ordinance for taking his advice. He was one of [22 public commenters during the committee meeting on Oct. 9, 2023](#), when he told city officials: “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

“Thanks for slowing down, thanks for finding a way to get there together, thanks for taking a vote for a bit of collaboration, trusting the process and trusting each other,” Hough said at the latest meeting. “Thanks especially to the two council members, Betsy and Nate , who participated in that collaboration process, and especially thanks to Chief Ford for engaging the work in good faith, honestly, openly, even when he was sick.

“You all made a decision on the kind of community you wanted to be ... not just amendments to a resolution, but hopefully one more step in a track record to being a different kind of community together.”

The item now goes to the City Council for a final vote on Tuesday, Nov. 21, 2023, at 6 p. m. - the meeting has been moved from its usual Wednesday date due to the Thanksgiving holiday. Tune in live at [Riverbender.com/video/live](https://riverbender.com/video/live) or on the [Riverbender.com](https://riverbender.com) Facebook page.

A full recording of the Alton Committee of the Whole meeting is available at the top of this story, on the [Riverbender.com](https://riverbender.com) Facebook page or on [Riverbender.com/video](https://riverbender.com/video).