



Alton Gives Public Camping Ban Final Approval

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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ALTON - A ban on public camping within Alton city limits was given final approval by members of the City Council, who voted 6-1 to pass the item after months of debating and laying the item over.

Resident Sam Lloyd urged council members to vote for the new ordinance, stating inaction on Alton's homelessness issue could impact the city, its citizens, their home values, crime rates, and more.

"I encourage council members to vote for this ordinance, as such behavior could have a detrimental effect on the citizens of the city," Lloyd said. "Our parks and city property should be available to citizens and visitors, and should not be designated as temporary camping for the homeless. It was never the city's original intent or citizens' expectations of the use of the property.

"For citizens, their home values may deteriorate if campaign activity becomes acknowledgeable ... citizens may also be impacted on the rate of crime. A population of sheltered and homeless people, statistically, increases the crime rate ... If the population increases due to providing accommodations, then the Department may not be able to serve citizens in the community property."

The new version of the ordinance features notable changes from the old version, including much lower fines for first-time violations, lower fines for subsequent violations, and the ability to pay fines with either cash or community service.

The new version also requires at least a 24-hour written notice before any personal property is confiscated, unless the property is deemed a safety hazard to the public or environment. Dangerous items may be immediately confiscated and disposed of, while

otherwise safe items must be held for 30 days to allow for potential retrieval by their owner.

Amended language in the new ordinance also creates a framework for collaboration between local organizations and the Alton Police Department, wherein organizations are instructed to contact the department with any services they might have available, if those organizations are interested in helping the department with “humanely transitioning individuals from unauthorized encampments on public property to an environment consistent with City ordinances.”

City Council members passed the new public camping ban along a 6-1 vote with no further debate or discussion. Alderman Nate Keener cast the sole “no” vote.

For more detailed information about the changes in the new version of the public camping ban, see this [related story on Riverbender.com](#).

A full recording of the Alton City Council meeting is available at the top of this story, on the [Riverbender.com Facebook page](#), or on [Riverbender.com/video](#).