

Letter To The Editor: Walker Questions The Transparency Of Plans To Build \$7 Million Homeless Shelter In Alton

by Brant Walker
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Letter To The Editor:

ALTON - Like many of my fellow Altonians, I was shocked to read on March 12, 2024, that there were plans to build a \$7 million homeless shelter in the 500 block of Alby Street. While including money from several sources, this proposal reportedly also includes over \$1 million toward construction costs to be paid by the City of Alton. Such

a large, unauthorized commitment of taxpayer funds by the current administration without transparency begs several questions.

How long has this plan been in development? Why has there been no public discussion, public hearing, or open debate? Were any of the aldermen or alderwomen aware of this plan when it was being developed? Did anyone contact residents and businesses in the area seeking their input? Will there be a public hearing on the zoning before the Planning Commission or will the City move forward without answering any of these questions?

The political sleight of hand with little public knowledge would likely have been approved as the County Board meeting on March 20, 2024, had word not gotten out. The vote has now been postponed until April 2, 2024. Concerned citizens should attend the County Board meeting to ask all the relevant questions and raise any objections they have to a project with so many unknowns and a commitment of such a significant amount of taxpayer dollars.

While we are sympathetic to individuals who face economic hardship beyond their control and those who face the challenges of mental illness and substance, nowhere is it written that Alton should be a host city for more homeless. With our limited resources, we should be working to address our immediate homeless issues, not promoting solutions that would exacerbate that problem and further strain city resources and services.

This proposal raises legitimate questions concerning public safety and sanitation that would affect the neighborhood, including residents, businesses, churches, and students and faculty at nearby Marquette Catholic High School.

A plan this impactful to any neighborhood demands much greater scrutiny and opportunity for public input. This proposal, no matter how well-intended, does little to help Alton as a whole, especially given the current administration's lack of transparency surrounding it. The City Council must act to allow our residents to be heard before the proposed development proceeds any further.

Brant Walker of Alton

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