

Letter To The Editor: Alton Resident Provides His Views On Proposed Hope House Changes

by Mike Drake

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Letter to the Editor:

The Salvation Army has changed their choice of location for their “Hope House,” a 40+ bed facility to house those who have been displaced from their homes for various reasons, in other words, homeless. The original plan was to construct the building next to the Salvation Army building on Alby, on the site of the old Booth House, now razed.

Petitions against that location were circulated getting hundreds of signatures, plus residents of that area came out in droves to speak out against this location at a recent meeting. They related their experiences with those staying at the Booth House. There was a great deal of littering, trespassing, sleeping in neighboring yards, drinking, drug use, breaking into cars, just to name a few of the activities that could be expected with a facility TWICE the size of the Booth House. That pushback swayed the Salvation Army's decision to pick a different location.

The proposed new location is on or just off Oakwood, an area desperately trying to rejuvenate. There are nearby strip malls housing many businesses including Oakwood Plaza, and Alton Center Circle, which is undergoing a massive redevelopment, to the extent of a passage of a recent 1% sales tax assessment to assist with their project. Troy Hughes worked tirelessly to open his "We're Outside" BBQ restaurant there. Have these businesses owners, who have nothing to gain but everything to lose, been asked what they think of this idea? 4th Ward council member Rosie Brown says she has a "big heart" and thinks this Hope House would be a blessed addition to her ward. Does she think her constituents and nearby property owners support this just because she does? Does she think the nearby business owners share her enthusiasm? Several neighbors have already spoken out against this at the City Council meeting of April 10. The neighbors obviously think this is a bad idea and I hope they remember what she is trying to do when voting in the next election.

Alderman Ray Strebel questioned Salvation Army board member Travis Widman, making the very valid point that Alton is in the northwest corner of Madison County. If this facility is so needed, why not put it in the center of the county where it makes more sense? No satisfactory answer was given. Could that answer be that the other communities have said no! No one can deny we already have a homeless problem in Alton, so they want to bring in forty more! Why is Alton always the dumping ground for this type of project? We need to start saying no more.

There is a meeting hosted by Alderwoman Brown to further discuss this problem, 6 p. m., Thursday, April 18, at the Salvation Army, 525 Alby St. Alton. Please consider attending to say No!

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Alton

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