

Council Chambers
Special Meeting
June 16th, 2022
4:00pm

Council met in special session with six of the nine members in attendance: A. Phillips, G. Phillips, Preston, Henderson, Fairrow and Mr. Proehl, who arrived late.

Ms. Henderson moved to excuse Ms. Park from the meeting, Greg Phillips seconded. All members in attendance voted "yea" and Ms. Park was excused.

Mr. Fairrow moved to excuse Ms. Payne from the meeting, Mr. Anthony Phillips seconded. All members in attendance voted "yea" and Ms. Payne was excused.

Mr. Greg Phillips moved to excuse Mr. Proehl from the meeting, Mr. Anthony Phillips seconded. Voting yea were members A. Phillips, G. Phillips, and Fairrow. Voting 'no' were members Preston and Henderson. Mr. Proehl was excused.

Mr. Greg Phillips moved to excuse Ms. Nickerson from the meeting, Anthony Phillips seconded. Members voting "yea" were A. Phillips, G. Phillips, Fairrow. Members voting "no" were Preston and Henderson. Ms. Nickerson was excused.

Ms. Preston led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Ms. Preston shared the purpose of the meeting was to hear items #1-14 which were first reads on the previous meeting agenda (June 13th) which were considered null and void due to a time issue. She also shared that the only discussion that can take place would be concerning items on the Special Meeting agenda.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

There were no committee reports.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:

Councilwoman Preston informed the audience of Council Rule 22, limiting each speaker to a 5-minute presentation with a total limitation of 15 minutes per any single subject.

Peg Beekman, 16 S. Walnut Street,: "City of Chillicothe Council, Mayor Feeney and other City Officials, I am Peg Beekman and I here today, representing the Walnut Street United Methodist Church located at 16 S. Walnut Street. We, WSUMC, have had open doors and arms for the homeless of our city for the past 5 years. We have fed them, clothed them, provided tents, backpacks and, perhaps most importantly, we have listened, hugged them, loved them and prayed for and with them. We were extremely surprised to learn of this ordinance that was attempted to be pushed through Council without the knowledge of most of us who work with the homeless. I, personally, worked for 32 years with local governments in Highland County, and I knew there had to be a section, your Section 2, of the ordinance,

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overwhelming mental health issues and many time substance abuse issues area secondary be cause these folks try to self-medicate. They are unable to maintain independent living and handle their own affairs. At one time, Ross County had two mental health homes for those people who could not maintain independent living. Both are now closed which has left the folks who resided in them homeless. They have no place to go so are left to live on the street and homeless camps and the homeless shelter. To arrest people because of mental illness and homelessness through no fault of their own is crime against humanity and against God. I feel the energy and effort being exerted trying to get this legislation passed can be better focused on solutions for our community. Solutions are being discussed by some members of the faith community to start a 'community first village'. We ask that you do not consider this legislation as being a solution to the homeless problem. The penal system in not life changing. Finding solutions that can ultimately produce life changes are the only solution to this problem. That will include us all working together to make connections with people and treating them with respect as we would hope we would be treated by others if we were in their shoes."

Dr. Stacy Saunders-Adams, 3220 Cattail Road, "As one of the directors of First Capital Cornerstone of Change and one of the co-directors of The Ross County Recovery and Outreach Center, I have the opportunity to serve the folks that we are talking about tonight. I'm sure every person that is here with us this evening is going to say the same thing. That's not exactly the angle I am going to take because we have already heard that one." Ms. Saunders-Adams goes on to say the language in the ordinance that stands out to her is "that we will charge those who are unable to secure free services with criminal trespass." She shares that if people choose to not access the free service for whatever reason that then they are going to be charged. She shares that she finds that that kind of language puts people in a difficult position. Many folks have trouble proving their homelessness given what is outlined in the ordinance. She goes on to share about the dorm style housing that is available and how it can trigger many negative things for those who try to utilize it. The last point Ms. Saunders-Adams makes is the fiscal implications. She asked if the city has considered the fiscal implications and if the city has done a fiscal impact analysis as to what this language in the ordinance will mean financially. She makes the statement that there is not enough capacity in the jail or the free resources within the city to respond the unique needs of the people in the community.

Sandra McCallister, 128 Stoneridge Court, Ms. McCallister shared that she is a member of the United Methodist Church and has been asked to pray for different members of the homeless community: one in particular, is a gentleman that has gone to a detox facility and rehab- so he is homeless and looking for a place to stay. Her concern is that if he were to be arrested and be charged with a felony- he could not get a job. She shared that she believes those who are homeless need grace, help and to be listened to.

Julie Bolen, Ross County Community Action; Attached is the statement from Ms. Bolen.

READING AND PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION:

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An Ordinance accepting and appropriating funds in the amount of \$1,301.20 for police overtime.
Ms. Preston declared this item would move to the next agenda.

An Ordinance accepting and appropriating funds in the amount of \$1,468.99 for the Police Department uniforms and body armor. Ms. Preston declared this item would move to the next agenda.

An Ordinance accepting and appropriating insurance reimbursement funds in the amount of \$22,177.00 for the replacement of a totaled Police Department cruiser. Ms. Preston declared this item would move to the next agenda.

An Ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with the Walter H. Drame Company to update the Codified Ordinances of the City of Chillicothe, to prepare twenty (20) sets of replacement pages, to update the Code on the internet and declaring an emergency. Ms. Preston declared this item would move to the next agenda.

An Ordinance to approve current replacement pages to the Chillicothe Codified Ordinances and declaring an emergency. Ms. Preston declared this item would move to the next agenda.

Ms. Preston asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Henderson made the motion and Mr. Greg Phillips seconded. All members in attendance voted "yes" and Ms. Preston declared the meeting adjourned at 4:36pm

Kennedy Mord - Clerk of Council



My name is Julie Bolen, and I am the Executive Director of Ross County Community Action and the Chair of the Ross County Continuum of Care, which is a coalition of community members and organizations working together to end homelessness in Ross County.

First, I would like to recognize we have a significant homeless problem here in Chillicothe. This problem is not unique to Chillicothe, homelessness is a concern in most cities across our country. And one that has been worsened with the covid 19 pandemic.

Although homelessness is not unique to Chillicothe, I believe our community has recently collaborated in unique ways to address these issues and I would like to highlight a few of them.

Last year, Community Action started and lead a coordinated homeless outreach effort to visit the encampments in Ross County. We've partnered with numerous organizations to go on weekly outreach trips to provide a variety of services and resources to people living in the encampments and to also help assess the situations and identify solutions.

We handout bags filled with items they may need like snacks, water, bug spray. We bring our laptops with wifi hotspots and process applications to get them personal ID's like birth certificates so they can start to access benefits, healthcare, employment, and housing programs. We bring trash bags so they can clean up their trash and give them blankets if they are cold.

Most importantly, we talk to them and treat them like human beings, how we would want to be treated if we were in their situation. This outreach has started to create trust between us and the people living in the encampments. This trust has led to change such as getting to the shelter and helping individuals access SUD treatment.

In January, Community Action had the opportunity to expand our shelter services to a larger bed capacity with the ability to serve men, women, and families with children. The shelter is currently located off Eastern Ave and we are working with Salvation Army to utilize space in their facility, hopefully, soon. Since we opened in January, we have served 179 individuals at the shelter with an age range of 17 days old to 72 years old. These numbers show the need for the shelter which is

why we remain focused on providing a year-round emergency shelter. However, we continue to face many obstacles to offering and operating such a large-scale shelter. The two most significant being zoning and funding.

I am here to ask you to reconsider the ordinance changes being discussed today. As you can see, we are making great strides and putting forth significant effort as a community to help the homeless and provide them with resources to better their situation. We are building trust and relationships by treating our homeless population with care and respect. The outreach, shelter, and resources we provide are helping to solve the problem, criminalizing people because they don't have a home will not. Criminal charges will only compound the problem and add even further barriers to finding stable housing and employment.

Even with all the work we are doing, there are still not enough resources. The shelter only has capacity for 50 people and is often close to capacity. The shelter has limited hours and is also not necessarily a good fit for everyone and every situation. Hotel/Motel vouchers are costly. And, we simply do not have enough affordable housing to meet the needs of the those currently without a home. Right now, we several people approved for our Rapid Rehousing Program, which can help with paying deposit and rent, but there are no rentals available for them.

Our homelessness situation is complicated and there is not one easy solution. But I hope you can see that we are committed to finding collaborative and creative solutions. I believe criminalizing the issue will not compliment these efforts, and in fact, feel it will hinder the progress. I invite you to work with us to develop other strategies to prevent and respond to homelessness.

We need to find long-term solutions, such as identifying a permanent shelter location, accessing funding, developing affordable housing or a designating a camping area that could be supported by organizations such as Community Action, and the list of opportunities could go on. We have great ideas, but we need the support and collaboration from our partners at the City of Chillicothe to find real solutions that help the people in need.

At a minimum, I ask that you delay this ordinance change to allow time for us to talk and provide insight into the issues and concerns. Ross County Community Action is committed to solving the homeless problems in our community and we ask that you join us in these efforts.