

From: Avi Goldberg <[REDACTED]>

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To: "Wells, Bob" <mayor@courtenay.ca>, "Cole-Hamilton, Will" <wcole-hamilton@courtenay.ca>, "Frisch, David" <dfrisch@courtenay.ca>, "Hillian, Doug" <dhillian@courtenay.ca>, "Jolicoeur, Evan" <ejolicoeur@courtenay.ca>, "McCollum, Melanie" <mmccollum@courtenay.ca>, "Morin, Wendy" <wmorin@courtenay.ca>

Subject: Parks and Open Spaces Bylaw

Mayor and Council,

I am writing to you today to share my concerns about the Parks and Open Spaces Regulation Bylaw.

When I voted for all of you in the last election, I was keen to support a slate of candidates who had progressive ideals, who shared values of equity and justice, who had compassion for the most vulnerable in our community and would work hard to support them.

And so I am disappointed to see the new bylaw that would prevent unhoused people from camping in parks and open spaces during the day.

Many unhoused people have nowhere else to go.

There are not enough shelter spaces to meet the need.

There are not enough supported housing facilities to meet the need.

There are not enough affordable rentals to meet the need.

There are simply no options for many, other than living in parks and open spaces.

I know you will continue to advocate for more affordable housing, and I am well aware of provincial and federal governments' lack of urgency in addressing the housing crisis. But the local reality remains - there are many unhoused people in Courtenay who have no option other than sheltering in parks.

So how do we, as a community, react? If people have no option other than to shelter in a park, why would we force them to pack up and move out every morning? Where do you think they should go? What should they do with their belongings? Daily evictions - what an inhumane approach!

Please be the progressive, compassionate, humane politicians we elected you to be, and change this bylaw. Allow unhoused community members to shelter 24/7 in designated parks and open spaces. Ensure people have access to washrooms and other basic necessities in these spaces. Ensure people are able to leave their temporary shelter to access meals, health services and other supports in the community, without fear of having their belongings taken away and thrown out by bylaw officers.

And, once you have revised this bylaw, find innovative ways for the municipality to provide better shelter options than soggy tents on wet grass. We can do better if there is political will.

Sincerely,
Avi Goldberg
Courtenay