

Asheville City Council January 25, 2022 Email Comments Received

TimeStamp

1/22/2022 9:48:00 PM

Text

I believe this ordinance may one day be used to stop ANY gathering, not only gathering for the homeless, to share "food and resources".

1. Could this ordinance apply to anyone having a gathering, such as a picnic for 25 friends at one of our parks? A neighbor living facing such a park could complain and use this ordinance to stop this 'food sharing' activity.

2. Could this ordinance apply to citizens' gathering at a park where "resources" such as information on health related services, voting service, the distribution of aid to Refugees or food distribution in case of some out-of-the blue emergency be restricted/banned???

3. Could this ordinance be used against open air markets/art exhibits on public land (such as the River Arts District waterfront areas)?

I believe these activities currently include food sharing and sharing of intellectual and artistic resources for every kind to passers-by, be they homeless or not.

Beware of setting up restrictions that may have unintended consequences. Of course, you could pass these restrictions by "specifying" that they only apply to "HOMELESS" Citizens of Asheville. How will that make any one of us feel when we look into the mirror in the morning.....let alone when one of "us" for no reason at all, other than fate, may become homeless at one point or another in our lives.

Thank you for considering my comments as you, the Asheville Council, move forward in trying to solve the very difficult issue of homelessness in Asheville.

Beatriz Lothrop

1/22/2022 9:51:00 PM

"It has come to our attention that the City of Asheville is considering an ordinance to limit the sharing of food and resources in parks limiting gatherings to less than 25, requiring a permit, and only issuing permits to a group twice a year.

This potential ordinance is WRONG on many levels and has profound implications on those who are already suffering housing and food insecurity in our city not to mention community gatherings for family reunions, barbeques, children's birthdays and more in public parks." *

*Taken from correspondence from Beloved Asheville.

I had heard this was being considered and did not want to believe it.

You cannot be serious!!

This is not the Asheville I moved here for 21 years ago.

C. HeilW. Asheville, NC 28806

1/22/2022 9:52:00 PM	<p>Do not entertain the idea of an ordinance against sharing food in public spaces. It's an inhumane idea. It also takes away our agency to support our own community.</p> <p>- Kristen Molina-Nauert</p> <p>--</p> <p>*Kit / Kristen*</p> <p>*she <https://www.queerundefined.com/search/demigirl> / they <https://www.queerundefined.com/search/demigirl> / siya <https://preen.ph/96642/on-the-filipino-gender-neutral-language-and-our-egalitarian-origin>*</p> <p>*828-772-0762*</p>
1/22/2022 11:18:00 PM	<p>Please do not regulate how food is given away to hungry people. This type of regulation will harm the hungry and give Asheville a bad name.</p> <p>Barrie Bondurant</p>
1/23/2022 3:06:00 PM	<p>I'm writing to say that I'm against the proposed regulation to restrict sharing food and resources in public parks. The Asheville City Council has moved against the homeless in some pretty extreme and ugly ways lately, and I'm appalled by this movement. You are trying to keep people from being compassionate, decent human beings when they are merely trying help their neighbors in need. Continually moving the problem of the homeless to new areas and trying to hide their existence is not the answer. Straight up cruelty used as an attempted deterrent is not ever the solution. I chose to move to the Asheville area (we live in Cullowhee) because I was under the impression that it was a liberal leaning area with new, better ideas for solving social problems. I have been very disappointed to find otherwise. From the horrifying treatment of BLM marchers by the Asheville police last year, to the repeated attacks on the homeless, I've been truly distressed by the actions of the city's leaders. I have other friends that have discussed moving here and I've had to tell them not to bother. This is not the place I hoped for. Please reconsider this regulation, and start looking for actual solutions to the increasing numbers of homeless people on the streets of Asheville. Maybe consider finding a way to house them, instead of starving and freezing them out. Kim Mason195 Indian Mound RdCullowhee, NC</p>
1/23/2022 10:49:00 PM	<p>Stop criminalizing homelessness.</p> <p>Stop putting up unaffordable apartments.</p> <p>Stop tearing down the land.</p> <p>Stop.</p>
1/24/2022 3:33:00 AM	<p>To Whom It May Concern,</p> <p>It is deplorable that a city that claims to be progressive, culturally diverse, open minded, and liberal would consider restricting it's impoverished and unhoused citizens access to resources and food. This food and resources is given freely to the unhoused community from organizations and churches.</p> <p>What is a park if not a place where one can freely gather in groups and celebrate by eating food together? Can we truly call this a progressive city if these kind of restrictions are placed upon our citizens? It is not only the homeless community that will be effected by this. It's other groups that have just as much of a right to gather in parks and share food together. The city of Asheville is supposed to be a place where people come from all over the country to visit. Are we going to limit these tourists and their celebrations and gatherings as well? It is unhinged of the city to even consider placing such ridiculous restrictions on it's people whether they are homeless or not. I think they are forgetting what makes this city a great place to live. It's the citizens that live here, their generosity and consciousness.</p> <p>Erica Deaton</p>

1/24/2022 4:44:00 AM	<p>Paula Baran 138 South French Broad Ave Asheville</p> <p>Feeding the homeless, housing the homeless are all good things but no one wants homeless in the parks, begging on the streets, or encampments.</p> <p>We do not want to be like other large cities that have major problems. If you feed them in town they will be in town, no toilets, no showers, no place to stay. We need to work with resources to serve the homeless where there are services for them. The band-aide measures to feed mean well but the incentives to bring them in without services will only grow our problem. We can do better than this if we really are a caring community! Let's come up with a plan to get them off the streets and out of the parks that we all can feel good about.</p> <p>Paula Baran</p>
1/24/2022 5:53:00 AM	<p>Hello,</p> <p>My name is Miles Mesk. The recent ordinance proposal to restrict how neighbors and friends care/feed our unhoused community is deeply disturbing. This is an inhumane and appalling solution to confronting the homelessness issue in Asheville. It's very heartbreaking to see this idea suggested in any capacity. Just needless cruelty against people who are trying to survive in a city that actively rejects their existence. I urge city council to work with community organizations to address the needs of our most vulnerable population to help receive the resources they need most. Do better. Give back.</p>
1/24/2022 6:10:00 PM	<p>The need to create a safe environment for all people in Asheville to enjoy the parks and public spaces is necessary for a healthy community. However, I do not see anywhere in the City's statements on the matter that their concern for hungry, unhoused people to be a priority.</p> <p>As such, it seems that the "need for safety" is a thinly veiled excuse to curtail charitable acts with the end result of more power and control to government officials at the expense of people in need. How can our city government say this is for everyone's safety when the city's most vulnerable people are bearing the cost?</p> <p>Nathan Phillips</p>
1/24/2022 9:01:00 PM	<p>Hello. I am Jan Zehr. I have personally provided and served coffee, fruit, and pastries to the homeless in Pritchard Park, rain or shine, for the better part of 4 years. I am there between 6:30 and 8:00 every morning. (Right now, service has ceased due to the new outbreak of Covid.)</p> <p>I am amazed by these wonderful people. One homeless man spent his last dime buying a broom so he could sweep up things people had dropped. Others make sure I can lift the heavy containers of coffee (I'm 75!) They all know my Coffee Cart policy is to put our trash in the cans.</p> <p>At Pritchard Park, we have a great city employee who starts his day by picking up trash, sweeping, and emptying the cans 5 days a week! The problem is that our city does NOT pick up trash or empty the cans on the weekends. By Sunday, Asheville's great impression is trashed by the overflowing trash cans filled by the tourists. WOW!</p> <p>I object to your new policy against the homeless in the park.</p> <p>Jan Zehr</p> <p>21 Battery Park Ave.</p>

1/24/2022 9:45:00 PM	<p>I oppose proposed regulations for distribution of food and other items (to the homeless and less well off) in our parks.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The park is a better place than a downtown street or store front. These are alternatives. So are church yards and parking lots. And of course any other open public space or private space. There shouldn't be any limitation on sharing, whether it's with one or two, 10 or 25, or 5,000 people. 2. In this country, we have freedom of assembly. I believe this freedom is not limited to two times a year or groups smaller than 25. 3. I certainly will support continued sharing of resources by individuals or groups throughout the city where ever the need exists. <p>Farrel Zehr</p> <p>21 Battery Park Ave.</p>
1/24/2022 10:00:00 PM	<p>Please provide safety and support plus shelter and nutrition... "as best you can" and continue to ask for volunteer help.</p> <p>Thank you, Sharon Godfrey</p> <p>Sent from my iPad</p>
1/24/2022 10:51:00 PM	<p>Dear City Council members,</p> <p>I have been a resident of Asheville and Buncombe County for over 30 years and have been following with horror the latest direction the City of Asheville has been taking when it comes to the treatment of our neighbors who suffer from the lack of housing or shelter and who have to live on the streets.</p> <p>I am also a long time volunteer at a local food pantry and on a regular basis see people who have nothing when it comes to material belongings. These people often lack access to nutritious food, but just as often the opportunity to get together, feel appreciated and celebrate life events.</p> <p>This potential ordinance has profound implications on those who are already suffering housing and food insecurity in our city not to mention community gatherings for family reunions, barbeques, children's birthdays and more in public parks.</p> <p>I urge you not to pass an ordinance that makes life for our most vulnerable neighbors and friends even harder.</p> <p>Sincerely,Monika Wengler</p>
1/25/2022 12:24:00 AM	<p>I'm really amazed that Council has gone to this extreme to eliminate people it considers "undesirable." Rather, you should be finding ways to provide the basic needs of any human being - shelter, food, safety.</p> <p>I would propose that any one of you, or all of you, spend one week living on the streets the way our neighbors are forced to do - 'walk in our shoes' as they say. Then see where you stand on what appears to be a measure to systematically starve a portion of our population.</p> <p>This should not even be an issue.</p> <p>Nancy Allen Certified EFT Practitioner Certified Wealth Coach anancy08@gmail.com <anancy08@gmail.com> 865-337-3683</p>

1/25/2022 12:51:00 AM

Good day to you and thank you for your time and service to our beautiful mountain city. Today is an incredibly important day in your tenure and the history of the City of Asheville in voting to restrict gatherings in public spaces and food distribution for 25 or more persons.

I believe this ordinance unfairly and overtly discriminates against the unhoused members of our community. By the city's own statistics on your public website, in 2020, of the 547 unhoused residents, 70 were families, 15 were youth, and nearly half (46%) were United States Veterans. The proposed ordinance is would unfairly impact our vulnerable, unhoused neighbors. It is classist, biased, and despicable.

Now more than ever, we need community. We need to be able to safely gather in outdoor public spaces to keep alive our community connection, to celebrate with our loved ones, to practice circus arts and inspire future generations, to move our bodies together and break bread, and so much more. This ordinance comes at exactly the wrong time, and demonstrates how out of touch we have become from our own community mission statement.

I implore our council to do better for our community. To stand up for what is right for our needs and represent us to the best of your ability. The parks are ours to share and this includes people of all socioeconomic standings. This ordinance would disintegrate our connective and supportive threads that make Asheville such an amazing city to commune in. I beg you to stop this ordinance in its tracks and find a better way to accomplish your goal.

Thank you,
Christine Aiken, born in Asheville and 25 yr returned resident
President, Founder- Asheville Aerial Arts
Former President - WNC Mortgage Bankers Association
President - Dare to Fly Trapeze
VP - Mortgage Lending and Renovation Specialist
828-301-5615 text/cell
Christine@AshevilleAerialArts.com

1/25/2022 1:36:00 AM

Hi Council,

I'd like to add my statement to open public comment.

My name is Colin Alford. I'm a homeowner in West Asheville and I'm extremely disappointed that the city is considering taking measures to take away the freedoms of individual citizens to help their neighbors by even considering policies like the rumored permitting for distributing food.

Policies like these are regularly passed in cities to stop citizen activism. I'm sure someone in Asheville government or the police department carefully selected the Florida legislation as a model because it has been tested in the courts and found to be constitutional, even though it is clearly ethically reprehensible.

So many of our neighbors depend on these services for basic survival. The City of Asheville does not provide help for those in need at the scale needed. At the very least, individuals have banded together to fill in some of the gaps where the city either cannot or will not look after the basic needs of its most vulnerable citizens, not to mention how the houseless have been terrorized by the 20 or so camp raids that happened in the past year.

I ask that you please drop any consideration of this policy. Human lives are more important than litter, and if we want to address the litter issue, then why not pour resources into fixing the root cause, which is unaffordable housing and lack of food access? We always have a choice, and this policy seems to be choosing property over people.

Colin

1/25/2022 1:51:00 AM	<p>Council members,</p> <p>My name is Lori Thomas. I am a nurse. I am writing to say I absolutely stand against any plans to curtail or regulate food or resource sharing.</p> <p>Part of what makes Asheville special is the feeling of community. I was born and raised in Miami and literally didn't understand what "community" meant or was until I came here. Sharing with and supporting our neighbors and friends is a kind and compassionate thing to do. In what world would it make sense for our city government to stop the citizens from doing that?</p> <p>Homelessness is not a crime and it's not fair to act like homeless people are less than human. They are the same as you and me.</p> <p>The right thing to do is DROP this legislation as of today. And never pick it up again.</p> <p>Sincerely Lori Thomas, RN</p>
1/25/2022 2:24:00 AM	<p>Asheville City Council,</p> <p>I am a current student at UNCA who would rather be focusing on my homework, but I am instead forced to acknowledge the lack of care the city I live in has for its community. The new ordinance you are attempting to pass is inhumane. Parks are public spaces and should be treated as a safe space for all to enjoy. These are spaces where people find refuge, enjoy nature, and most notably, share food. This ordinance will restrict unhoused people from receiving the nourishment that everyone deserves. We are in a pandemic and therefore, it is not safe for people to gather indoors, especially with the rise of a new variant, omicron. Therefore, the only safe place people can share food is outside. Asheville prides itself on its strong home-based community, but what is the City Council doing to uplift that community? By passing this ordinance, you will be refusing people access to eating and obtaining food safely. You will be putting lives at risk. You will be putting the Asheville Community at risk. Please discard this ordinance and think about the people you will be putting in danger if it were to be passed.</p> <p>Sincerely, Evie Horton</p>
1/25/2022 2:47:00 AM	<p>City Council,</p> <p>This new proposed ordinance denies basic human rights of unhoused folks in Asheville. Food is a necessity and is clearly something y'all feel is fine to limit to those who are privileged enough to have constant access to it.</p> <p>I've been cooking meals over the past few months that are distributed to unhoused folks in partnership with Asheville For Justice. This issue matters and I've seen first hand the impact of food insecurity.</p> <p>Stand up for those in Asheville instead of catering to the image of a quaint town with cute shops for rich tourists to enjoy.</p>

1/25/2022 12:24:00 PM

I write to you because it has come to my attention that (even though it is not on the agenda at the 1/25 City Council meeting) the City may be discussing tonight an ordinance to strictly regulate food-sharing in parks in Asheville. It is important to me that an entity as powerful as City Government not criminalize ****people**** who are houseless in ways that are dehumanizing and result in the deepest harms (including death). This type of criminalization and its results have been evident in the camp clearings (so many of them in 2021, and so many before), during a pandemic and at times in weather that can be (and has been) fatal for some.

Food-sharing in parks is lifesaving and life-affirming. People, energy, resources, and drive exist in the community to care for folks who are houseless, as evidenced by the efforts that exist to provide food in parks (among so many other ways the community is providing support). People who are houseless benefit greatly from the community's efforts to care for them, both in material resources and food, and ****also**** in the understanding that they are seen, respected, and valued as human beings. BeLoved and the Asheville Survival Program are two examples of organizations who are providing these community supports consistently and with passion, and I strongly encourage you to hear and follow what they have to say in their advocacy on this issue (and in general) as **experts** on what the community of people who are houseless may need to survive and how we as a larger community can ALL benefit from caring about houseless folks' well-being.

**How can the City consider effectively addressing community issues without deeply involving the community? *I feel particularly concerned about the idea that this could somehow be discussed in the City Council meeting today without having been on the pre-released agenda (that I - and I suspect others as community members - use to know if there is something important for which I need to engage with City Council). Without prior notice to the community, the Council could conceivably discuss, and come to conclusions about, policy on this issue without public input. It feels to me that discussing and coming to conclusions about addressing something as deeply interwoven in our community as people's experiences of houselessness is something that would require deeper public input for making informed decisions and having all of the information, not less input from the community (or none at all).*

The City could consider alternative solutions that don't harm people. The ordinance to strictly regulate food-sharing in parks will result in people needlessly going more hungry. There ****are**** potential solutions other than regulating, penalizing, and controlling some of the **most vulnerable** members our communities - if waste and cleanliness are a concern, the City could actually **partner** with these community organizations to **provide support** to ensure that both the City and our residents who are houseless are getting what they need during food-sharing events. Please do not take such a punitive, paternalistic, power-centralizing move with this ordinance. Please demonstrate your commitment to equity and justice by putting in a bit more time to imagine solutions that involve one-ness with the community members and organizations who are demonstrating humanizing and effective ways to provide for people who are houseless. I believe we could be revolutionary in our responses as a City (working intimately with community organizations), and actually heal and address the issues we see houseless folks experiencing if we just worked together.

I ask two things, in solidarity with the community of people who are houseless and the organizations that work with them:

1. Please do not entertain the idea of this ordinance in our city.

**2. Please more deeply involve the community and community-led organizations in your consideration of what you believe may be solutions to*

1/25/2022 12:38:00 PM

To whom it may concern,

I am emailing concerning talks of having a permit system for providing food and supplies for groups of people over 25 in public parks. Public parks are important areas of gathering for many groups including the unhoused, groups of worship, and family gatherings (all of which are parks of our community). Having a permit system would essentially end access for the poor or individuals who don't have the ability to fill out the required paper work (ie the elderly). It also would rely on the speed of filling of an already busy local government. I am staunchly opposed to this as a Asheville City community member.

Katherine Davis
From 28804
Sent from my iPhone

1/25/2022 1:52:00 PM

I'm writing in dissent from the ordinance presented and to be discussed at the PSC meeting to criminalize sharing food/resources in public spaces. This "permit system" is a ruse to prevent the community from providing much needed services to those in need, something that the council should be focused on instead of this effort.

Unfortunately, the city of Asheville has a way of avoiding responsibility and accountability to their most vulnerable populations, hence the efforts from the community to step in. If you were doing your jobs well enough, there would be no need for us to provide mutual aid efforts, but here we are. And instead of taking an honest look at the root cause of sharing resources in public spaces, you have chosen to further dig into avoiding actually providing support.

This ordinance will not only be a distraction from providing real solutions to the problems caused by lack of cite action, but will further exacerbate the lack of resources unhoused people are already receiving. Public safety isn't about putting a band-aid on a self-inflicted wound, but to stop cutting yourself. If you truly want public safety, for all, you would focus your efforts on supplying unhoused community members with resources, shelter, and support.

Thank you,
Gabrielle Fricke
18 Hilldale Rd
Asheville, NC

1/25/2022 2:02:00 PM

Dear Council Members,

I'm writing in to make a comment against the ordinance restricting distribution of food and resources in public parks.

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This ordinance creates unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape for those who are on the front lines doing the work to care for our unhoused neighbors. If it makes BeLoved's live-saving work more difficult, it should not be done. We should not create red tape around feeding people.

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I was under the impression that Asheville was experiencing a shortage of police officers. Will this not create unnecessary police interactions for an already overextended staff?

-

This is anti-freedom. Public parks are for the public to gather.

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Most importantly though, the focus of this ordinance is not on care and support for struggling community members -- the problem it's focused on is one of optics. You should not prioritize the comfort of folks who simply do not want to see poverty over providing support for folks who are actually suffering. Extreme poverty in a country of extreme wealth should make us uncomfortable!

I was compelled to comment on this because I find this ordinance to be morally repugnant. I hope it is not lost on the council that this ordinance would have banned Jesus from the miracle of feeding the masses with a few loaves of bread and fish. "Sorry Jesus, can't feed people, you should have gotten a permit. Guess these people will just have to starve." "Sorry Jesus, you've maxed out on your allotted permits for the year -- no miracles of care for today!"

Please do the right thing, and do not pass this ordinance.

Thank you for your consideration,

Nicole Lopez