

‘What Is Your Solution?’: Resident Raises Concerns About Alton Public Camping Ban

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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ALTON - An Alton-area resident spoke up at [Wednesday’s Alton City Council meeting](#) to voice their concerns with an [ordinance passed in November of 2023 to ban camping on public property within the City of Alton](#). Connor Shoburn took the podium and asked city officials multiple times what their solution is to address homelessness.

“Just recently due to this ordinance, a homeless person set up a camp at Rock Spring Park, as they have very few places to go,” Shoburn said. “A citizen then called the police on them, and then the cops forced the citizen to take down their tent and leave the park, as per my understanding.

“This person - where do you plan them to go? They don't have a home to go to, they don't have the ability to camp anywhere, so what is the solution that Alton is going to provide for those who are homeless?”

Shoburn went on to say the ordinance seems to be “punishing homeless people for something that is not under their control,” which he also sees happening through the removal of bus stop benches to prevent homeless people from being able to sleep on them, forcing them to sleep on the ground.

“Illinois was a free state - still is. It is a safe haven for those who have been damned, taken advantage of, and exploited as a result of greed, carelessness, and the continuation of exploitation under our current capitalist system,” he added. “As a city built on civil rights, justice, equality, and human dignity, I believe that this council is not holding up that part of our history by forcing those who have been failed by the system out of the public’s eye.”

He also pointed out that housing in Alton is likely to become less and less affordable for a larger portion of the population as home prices, rent, and property taxes continue to increase faster than wages. He also asked what specifically the city plans on doing with its American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to address homelessness.

“I believe that you are failing your citizens who have been failed by our society at large,” Shoburn said in closing. “I believe that #OurAlton means everyone, not just those who own homes or a place to go at night. You are actively giving them less places to go when they seek refuge. Again - what is your solution?”

In related news, the Alton City Council voted 6-1 to give their final approval for \$200,000 worth of ARPA funding to be given to the Alton Police Department for “homeless services.” While more details about how exactly the Police Department will use these funds is still unclear, [more information was revealed during the Committee of the Whole meeting earlier this week](#). Alderwoman Carolyn MacAfee cast the sole vote against the ARPA funding at the Council meeting.

To learn more about Alton’s public camping ban, see [Riverbender.com’s previous coverage of its passage](#). For more on the \$200,000 in ARPA funding for the Police Department to use for “homeless services,” see [this related story on Riverbender.com](#).

A full recording of the Feb. 14, 2024, Alton City Council meeting, including Shoburn’s entire public comment, is available at the top of this story, on the [Riverbender.com Facebook page](#), or on [Riverbender.com/video](#).