

City of Goshen Policy on the Removal of Existing Homeless Encampments

5/8/2019

Purpose and Intent

To protect the health and safety of the community, the city has determined that it is necessary to remove homeless encampments on public property. The basis for this policy includes the following considerations:

- City Code 7.1.1.8 prohibits camping within any park or other recreational area without the permission of the Parks Superintendent and no such permission has been granted. In addition, City Code 7.1.1.9 prohibits camp fires and 7.1.1.10 prohibits the consumption of alcohol.
- City Code 6.3.1.15 requires that temporary structures (including tents) used for more than 30 days as a residence are required to comply with building codes.
- The city has received numerous complaints from neighbors, trail users and business owners about homeless individuals engaging in unlawful and disruptive behavior.
- These recreational areas are not equipped to support camping and lack the appropriate sanitary facilities to protect public health.
- Social service agencies are not able to provide on-site counseling services due to concerns about staff safety.

This policy establishes procedures that will be followed by the City of Goshen in the removal of such encampments from city property. It is the intent of this policy to ensure that homeless individuals are treated fairly and respectfully and given access to temporary housing and other supportive services available through partners of the Goshen Homeless Coalition.

Definition of Homeless Encampment

The term homeless encampment means a place on public property with temporary accommodations of tents or other structures in which homeless persons have been living.

Displacement Procedures

1. Before the city will displace a homeless person, the city will give at least fifteen (15) days' notice to the homeless person living in the camp of the deadline to vacate the property. The notice will be posted on the site and hand-delivered to homeless persons who are on site at the time of posting. However, if the homeless person is engaging in criminal activity, they will be asked to leave immediately.
2. Anyone subject to displacement will be provided information about the services offered through the Goshen Homeless Coalition. The Coalition partner agencies will be available to assess the needs of homeless individuals and coordinate the efforts of all participating service providers to ensure that the homeless persons displaced are offered support services.
3. The City will work with the Homeless Coalition to attempt to secure temporary shelter for all homeless individuals who meet the requirements of organizations operating shelters.

4. Residents of the homeless encampment will be reminded of the scheduled cleanup 24 hours before it occurs.
5. The city will assist displaced persons in retaining their personal possessions as they transfer to alternative shelter. Personal possessions will be kept by the city in a secure location for 90 days.
6. The city will assist in arranging transportation to destinations in Elkhart County and the surrounding counties.
7. After June 1, 2019, all individuals camping on city property will be asked to move immediately. Members of the Coalition will also be notified at that time.

Goshen Homeless Coalition

The Goshen City Coalition for the Homeless is a loosely affiliated group of about 12 organizations working together to meet housing and other needs for homeless people. Members of the Coalition include: Center for Healing and Hope, Interfaith Hospitality Network, Oaklawn, The Window, Cornerstone Christian Fellowship, City of Goshen, Elkhart County Clubhouse, Faith Mission, Goshen Salvation Army, Faith and Hope House and Operation Treehouse.