

COMMITTEE ON BILLS ON SECOND READING

October 18, 2022 at 5:15 PM

Chairman Gamache called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Gamache, Fajardo, E. Sapienza, George-Kelly

Absent: Alderman T. Sapienza

Messrs.: Mayor Craig

1. Ordinance Amendment:

“Amending Section 96.06 Behavior by adding new language in subsection (E) Camp and adding new subsections (K) Shopping Carts and (L) Bicycles.”

Alderman Fajardo stated I wrote a short statement that I will read. I am not in favor of this ordinance change but I am very torn about it in part because I can very easily acknowledge that this is a serious issue and I get a lot of calls about it on a regular basis. I know that all of us also received quite a few emails and I would like to acknowledge and thank the people who took the time to reach out. We heard from both sides. I appreciate that so many people are paying attention. I also want to acknowledge Mr. Gomez and your team and the efforts that you make and your ability to keep our parks as beautiful as they are despite the challenges. That said, I feel like we are giving people very few options already and I feel that adding these restrictions is, in fact, criminalizing homelessness and I don't think that is the right thing to do. I don't think that is the right solution to the larger problem. I do feel like if the city is serious about adopting a housing first model we need to be bold in how we think about that. This could include considering the possibility of a sanctioned encampment. Many other cities across the country are doing this and are seeing really positive results, notably in Burlington, Vermont. There is essentially a template out there. We do not have to reinvent the wheel. We can follow the example and importantly the learnings of other cities in terms of what they have done to find success in taking an approach like this. I know there is always the “if we build it they will come” argument and I think that this perspective is certainly legit but at the same time also fails to acknowledge the reality of our current situation which is that people are here already. I know this will take an incredible amount of resources and money and a location and I don't know the answer to any of those things at this time. I am simply voicing that I think our city could and should do better. Ultimately, I hope there could be a more meaningful collaboration at the state and county level as well to help with a response that could effectively support our city and the scope of the issue that we face here. I will close by saying I know that this is a long game but I would ask that we all be willing to at least ask ourselves what we are willing to put forward to make the city the best version of itself for everyone. Thank you.

Alderman E. Sapienza stated I am in favor of this. I think it is important that we maintain a welcoming environment for decent, law-abiding folks and we need to maintain a family-friendly atmosphere so I am in favor of this.

Alderman George-Kelly stated I also am not in favor of this ordinance at this time. As I stated in our last Public Safety Committee meeting, I believe that we are moving towards criminalizing homelessness with ordinances such as this. I think that as Alderman Fajardo said, I agree that we have amazing parks in our community and that we need to be able to keep them safe, however, we also need to respond to the unhoused citizens in our community with a city and state partnership that really provides opportunity to have other emergency shelter and response options, including in a sanctioned encampment and that we need to do that before we are putting ordinances like this forward because we are solving the wrong problem with an ordinance like this. I am going to be voting no.

Mayor Craig asked can the Clerk remind this committee what the goal of this committee is. I think it is important.

Matthew Normand, City Clerk, replied this committee is charged with technical review of the ordinance. This is not a policy review. That was done in the prior committee. Your official charge is to make sure that the ordinance is correct and legal. It is a technical review of the language. That is where you are at with this committee. There is no motion on the floor at this point.

Alderman E. Sapienza moved that the ordinance ought to pass and be referred to the Committee on Accounts, Enrollment & Revenue Administration. Alderman Gamache duly seconded the motion. Chairman Gamache called for a vote. There was a tie with Aldermen Fajardo and George-Kelly being duly recorded in opposition.

Mayor Craig stated if this is a technical review, that is what this committee should be judging and if we want to hash it out from a policy perspective you could bring it forward to the full Board tonight and we could discuss policy at the full Board.

Alderman E. Sapienza stated I reviewed it and from a technical standpoint it looks great so I move that we approve. Alderman Fajardo duly seconded the motion. Chairman Gamache called for a vote. The motion carried with Alderman George-Kelly being duly recorded in opposition.

There being no further business, on motion of Alderman E. Sapienza, duly seconded by Alderman Fajardo, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.



Clerk of Committee