

CITY COUNCIL E-MAILS

Received: May 16, 2024 (after 9:00 a.m.) – May 20, 2024 (before 5:00 p.m.)

May 20, 2024 Council Meeting

ADDENDUM

Submitted on Fri, 05/17/2024 - 06:35

First Name

Kerri

Last Name

Hassan

Email

kerri.hassan@gmail.com

Address

60 Nathaniel Drive

Message

I wanted to write to express my disappointment that a solution for Dondero is to build modular classrooms. I don't think this is the best solution for Dondero. I certainly hope this decision is re-considered. I would think re-districting could be a more viable option, I understand that is a large & cumbersome process to redistrict but spending money to build modular classrooms which are often an eyesore certainly does not seem like the most cost-efficient or best solution. Any parent I have spoken to about this is upset with this decision. I don't know what the best solution is but I do feel the need to say that as a parent of a Dondero student, I am extremely disappointed to hear this. I certainly hope to see this matter discussed further with other solutions presented.

Please indicate if you would like your comment to be part of the public record for the upcoming City Council meeting. Yes

Submitted on Fri, 05/17/2024 - 10:13

First Name

Kyle

Last Name

Engle

Email

kte2325@gmail.com

Message

5/17/2024

City Council,

I'd like to commend Councilor Bagley for continuing to hear our concerns regarding overnight RV camping, and for coming up with possible solutions to this increasing problem within the city.

Zoning changes allowing RV camping on private property seem like a logical first step but will only be effective if there is a deterrent to camping on our streets and in our neighborhoods. If you are visiting the area as a tourist, where would you rather park your vehicle overnight, along the waterfront in the South End, or in a Walmart parking lot? I think the answer is clear.

The question then becomes how would a camping restriction be enforced, and how do we differentiate between those who truly lack alternative housing and those who choose this lifestyle and are sporting around in \$150,000 Sprinter Vans?

Councilor Bagley said, "there are likely two types of people camping on city streets," but is this truly the case, and has anyone compiled data to ascertain the demographic of who is living in these RVs? I would also question if referring to campers as potential "criminals" could be biasing the issue.

Based on personal observation, most overnight campers are those who have chosen the RV lifestyle or tourists passing through the city. The element who are truly having housing challenges are not the folks who are at the root of the issue. The folks we're talking about are the ones setting up barbecue grills, having coffee on people's front lawns, occupying parking spaces for lengthy periods and utilizing city resources while contributing nothing in return.

Mayor McEachern posed the question of how would such a policy be enforced? Last year the city posted a sign on Peirce Island restricting camping. After the sign was installed the number of overnight campers on the island has nearly dropped to zero. If camping is restricted on Peirce Island, then why can't it be restricted in other parts of the city? Signage, like that on Peirce Island posted in areas such as Parrot Avenue and Kent Street would be the first step in the process. Additionally, zoning changes allowing camping on private property would provide alternatives and allow law enforcement to direct potential campers to sites other than our city streets.

Councilor Tabor raises a valid concern when discussing employees who work locally and need housing, and thus have turned to the RV lifestyle. If private sector businesses could accommodate camping, these folks could reside on the premises where they work or other nearby participating businesses.

The situation is challenging, no doubt. But even a city which touts its open-door policy must have rules and policy commensurate with current trends and needs. Our city streets were never intended to serve as camping sites. For those who don't see this as an issue, I ask you to imagine four or five RVs parked in your neighborhood or parked in front of your house. It might be out of sight out of mind for some, but for many this is real and becoming a worsening issue requiring a remedy.

Thank you.
Kyle Engle
Portsmouth

Please indicate if you would like your comment to be part of the public record for the upcoming City Council meeting. Yes

Submitted on Sun, 05/19/2024 - 18:24

First Name

Sarah

Last Name

Lynch

Email

sarahlibbylynch@gmail.com

Address

19 Sunset Rd

Message

5/19/2024

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing in regard to the current class size issue at Dondero and the growing population in the Dondero district. I have lived on Sunset Road in the West End for eleven years. I have a 2nd and 4th grader at Dondero and a 7th grader at PMS. When my oldest daughter started at Dondero nine years ago, the average class size was around 15 students. Currently my 4th grader has 23 students in her class.

Last summer, I wrote multiple letters to the school board and superintendent regarding my concerns surrounding the large class sizes. We were told that there were no other options available to us (the Superintendent said modular classrooms were not a good option) but that a committee would be formed to monitor the situation. It is now a year later, and the only option being proposed is a modular classroom. I realize this is a tough situation, and that redistricting can take time, but given the inaction of the school board this past year, I fear that by the time a redistricting solution is approved, my 2nd grader will be out of Dondero and we will have spent three years with huge class sizes.

Another issue that impacts this situation is the bus driver shortage. When my oldest started at Dondero, there were 19 kids on her bus. This year our bus frequently had to take additional bus routes which would result in 70 kids on P15. Not only does the ride take an hour, but the 5th grade students stand in the aisle to help monitor the huge number of kids. In my opinion, this bussing situation is not safe or sustainable. Meanwhile, my neighborhood is .9 miles from LHS which has empty classrooms.

The superintendent mentioned during this week's school board meeting that redistricting the West End to LHS is not a good idea because each school should have similar demographics. (The superintendent bought in our neighborhood last year but opted out of sending his 4th grader to Dondero.) I agree that ideally each school should have similar demographics, yet the school board just allocated the very expensive Parson Woods development on Peverly Road to LHS. Meanwhile our bus P15 drives down Peverly Road to pick up the rest of the neighborhood headed to Dondero. The city will now need an additional bus to drive the Parson Woods students to LHS.

We love Dondero, however class size and transportation are in my view two primary considerations for students and families living in the city. With these priorities in mind, it makes significantly more sense for the West End to go to Little Harbor and for all homes this side of Peverly Road to fall within the LHS catchment, not just the Parson Woods development. The superintendent estimates that Dondero will need modular classrooms for two years at most. Two years of large class sizes and modular classrooms is not an acceptable solution for families. Parents, teachers, and students will not be happy if their class is isolated in a modular classroom all day.

By redistricting the West End to LHS now, Dondero could avoid modular classrooms, additional bus routes would be eliminated, and the school board would have time to properly redistrict the whole city. Families with students already enrolled at Dondero could opt to stay, and younger families without school aged children would be moved to LHS freeing up classroom space. My neighborhood alone has 15 students entering kindergarten next year.

I appreciate your time and consideration and hope that the disparity between the three schools is addressed sooner than later and that all Portsmouth students are offered an equitable learning environment.

Sincerely,
Sarah Lynch

Please indicate if you would like your comment to be part of the public record for the upcoming City Council meeting. Yes