

October 31, 2021

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Joan Duckitt and I am a resident on River Road, 300 yards from River Road Golf Course. I write to voice my opposition regarding the proposal to house unsheltered individuals at River Road Golf Course this winter, or at any time in the future.

I have resided there for 20 years, and deliberately chose this location for the quietness, small neighborhood, and peaceful atmosphere. While the road has gotten much busier due to the city allowing "light" industries to locate on the road, it still is a quiet community. There are 7 homes located just east of the golf course, on the south side of the road between the golf course and Veterans Memorial Parkway. My home is one of them. Several light industries, and more homes are located to the west of the golf course.

It does not take much observation to notice that people **do** live on River Rd. The home of my neighbor to the west of me is 100 yards from the golf course. My home is approximately 300 yards from the golf course. My neighbors on the other side of me are about 500 yards from the golf course. I have heard Kevin Dickerson on the news call River Road Golf Course a "remote location" and "that they (the city) plan to move the homeless to an "isolated" location "out of the watchful eye of the community, neighbors, and passersby." Please recognize that there **are** neighbors who live right there. There **is** a community on River Road. The comings and goings of the homeless people will certainly be in our view and under our watchful eyes. They will be living 300 yards from me!

The Golf Course used to be the pride of River Rd. The grounds were well kept and tidy. On the weekend in the winter months, it was common to hear families enjoying the toboggan hill behind the Clubhouse. Who is going to tell them that they are no longer welcome to use that "little gem" for family recreation? In July I asked Councilor VanHolst to investigate why the trailers were at River Road Golf Course. I was told that they were merely being stored there, and not to worry. I asked again a few weeks ago when we heard that the trailers were indeed going to house the homeless on the site. The Councilor knew nothing about it and then the information broke in the news the following day. Obviously, we were lied to in July and then a few weeks ago. It seems to those of us who live on the road that the decision to house the homeless there was made months ago, and this is simply a matter of "rubber stamping" that decision.

I pose some questions for the committee to consider:

1. If the City is indeed trying to sell the golf course, why was it left to deteriorate to the conditions that now exist?
2. Has the City received any viable offers for the property?
3. Why were the residents on River Road not notified of the intent to shelter the homeless on our road? Why was it left to the media to educate us of this decision?
4. Where in the study regarding unsheltered individuals does it recommend that you further isolate the homeless people by placing them on a dark road, with no sidewalks, no bus route, and no police presence? Jody Hall of the WISH evaluation team was quoted on the news saying as much.
5. What sanitation facilities will be provided for these people? What toilets will they use? What bathing facilities will be available? We are not on the city sewer system; we all have septic tanks.
6. Why can't all the homeless be housed at Fanshawe Golf Course where there are no residential areas in sight
7. Why split the indigenous homeless peoples from the general homeless population? What resources will be on site to meet their needs?

8. We are all aware of the security issues surrounding the homeless sites last winter. We know that the sites drew unwanted individuals that were not housed on site. We know that there were problems with drug and alcohol abuse. What security will be available to my community?
9. My neighbors heard the Clubhouse being broken into a few months ago. There was no police response until hours later and after much vandalism. Can you guarantee us that our neighborhood will be safe, that there will be a police presence and a prompt response from police, if needed?
10. Can you guarantee that my property value will not decrease because of this decision?

I feel that this decision to house the homeless at River Road Golf Course is ill-conceived, and irrational. It is typical of this city's bureaucracy- "just stick the problems in London east- no one will notice- no one will say anything!" It is the proverbial- "out of sight; out of mind."

I find myself contemplating moving from this city, that is if I can even sell my house with this "on the table." I fear for my personal safety, and that of my property at the prospect of this plan. I have never felt unsafe in the 20 years I have resided here. I will now have additional outlay of money to purchase cameras and improve lighting around my home to help offset my anxieties. I am enraged that I must do so.

I heard Mayor Ed Holder remark that he is so "proud" of this proposal. I wonder if he or any of you on this committee would like to have this homeless setup 300 yards from your front doors? I beg you to rethink this decision. I encourage you to come to this location, and try to see things from our point of view. River Road Golf Course is not the solution to your dilemma!

Respectfully,
Joan Duckitt