From: Tris Cushman
To: All Alders
Subject: Dairy Drive Closure
Date: Tuesday, September 16, 2025 10:31:28 AM

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Alders,

In the finance meeting last week you expressed concerns that “robust” social services would not be able to be provided if Dairy Drive continues to stay open beyond Thursday. Yes, you heard that right, you are effectively closing down Dairy in two days, after which date residents will be kicked outside and will not be able to go back, even for their personal belongings. This also gives residents no time to find adequate housing arrangements and despite requests by Madison Street Medicine, the City of Madison will provide no assistance such as hotel vouchers or other transitional places to stay where they will not be harassed by police or putting up tents in the City’s parks. You are the last chance for the dozens still staying at Dairy (even those who might be in some part of the process of locating housing with vouchers, closing on Thursday will effectively remove the centralized location where the dedicated social workers of the non-profits running Dairy have been able to meet and provide services, so they may lose their housing opportunities due to a lack of communication abilities. When you expressed concerns that services would not be robust enough I was shocked to then hear that your resolution to this matter was to remove ALL services. How are no services better than services that exist but might not perfectly meet your ideals of robustness? Come Thursday, everyone still here will be out on the street with nowhere to go. Moreover, they will lose all of their belongings that they have spent years acquiring, and will likely have nothing left once they are displaced outside.

You also expressed concerns that the non-profit leading Dairy, MSM did not seek external or private funding to support Dairy, and white I agree that efforts to find such funding could have been helpful, our City, County, and State are Morally Obligated to support our unhoused population. It isn’t the sole responsibility of MSM to aid, fund, and run housing programs to support our most vulnerable citizens. It takes all of us working together to do this, and the City, County, and State of Wisconsin need to recognize that we all have to work in unison to combat the housing crisis and by voting to end a program that is serving a very specific subset of the unhoused - those who are inherently unable to use our traditional city shelters right before winter WILL result in deaths. Come Thursday, all residents will be on the streets again, effectively reverting us back 4 years and undoing all of the work that Dairy has done to assist these individuals.

You heard from MSM staff that some individuals are in stages of using housing vouchers,

but without the continued support and lack of place to live beyond Thursday will likely result in more than just the 10 people who have no housing vouchers being outside, everyone who isn't already in an apartment will lose their housing Thursday and be living outside once again. This will likely result in additional chronic homelessness and will not aid in the housing first model that Dairy has been working for years to support. This program has been working, it just needs to stay open a bit longer and needs to have a resolution to allocate some funding from the 2026 budget towards these people who are in dire need of help. Please consider how destructive it will be for those who are actually being displaced. We sit in these meetings and talk about numbers and money like there aren't actual lives on the line right now.

Also in the meeting, you were advised that this program was specifically designed to serve a subset of the Madison homeless population that are COMPLETELY UNABLE TO USE THE CITY SHELTERS. Let me repeat that. The residents of Dairy are individuals who cannot use the standard City shelters. For each person the reason is unique and deeply personal. Maybe they were traumatized and the reality of using a shelter is too triggering for them, or maybe they have more belongings than they can carry on their backs back and forth, back and forth between The city shelters and the Beacon day in and out. Or maybe they are a queer person who is targeted within the shelters for being different - I'm speaking largely of queer women whose only option is a shelter run by The Salvation Army where they are not allowed to stay if they are in a relationship with another woman. Over the last several years I have provided assistance when the situation became so critical that the shelter had called the police on the individuals for no reason other than being queer. Maybe there aren't even shelters for them. I will use myself for this example. I am disabled, queer, and have two service animals. Over two and a half years ago I became unhoused due to an abusive landlord who threatened my life and those of anyone helping me. I am Trans Non-Binary. Madison has a women's shelter and a men's shelter. I am neither. So which shelter do you propose I use?

If you take any lasting point from this, please recognize that closing a transitional program down that has been doing groundbreaking work and providing services and housing to our most vulnerable populations before actually getting everyone into other programs or housing will undo all of the good that this place has done. Please also realize that at this point, expecting everyone to be on the streets again in two days is abhorrent and I implore you to oppose the demolition resolution and to create a new resolution to give the residents living at Dairy until April to find adequate arrangements.

Thank you,

Tris Cushman - they/them/theirs

From: Mimi Hasan
To: All Alders
Subject: Keep Dairy Drive open through April
Date: Sunday, September 14, 2025 11:53:59 AM

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Dear Alders,

I'm writing to encourage you to support the measure to keep the Dairy Drive camping site open through April 2026. We have the opportunity to keep these folks warm for another winter, and I believe it's our duty to do so. There's no other plan for these most vulnerable and marginalized individuals, which means the plan is to hope they disappear, a euphemistic way of describing the true fate of these human beings. With our Federal government's recent executive order to bring back psychiatric institutionalization, it is an especially dangerous time to exist in public spaces without the security of a private home to return to. It also shortsighted to demolish a valuable community asset and investment that can based on operating costs, when funding for which could become available in the future.

Thanks,
Miriam Hasan
2722 Sommers Ave
Madison, WI

From: Andy Heidt
To: All Alders; Mayor
Subject: Dairy Drive
Date: Tuesday, September 16, 2025 8:13:32 AM

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I am flabbergasted that the closure is an issue. Please look at least a temporary solution through April at least. It is a sad commentary that this body is even pondering the demolition.

Sincerely,

Andy Heidt
3128 St Paul Ave
Madison, WI

From: mcsee@aol.com
To: All Alders
Cc: "Julia Matthews"
Subject: Dairy Drive Letter from Matriots group
Date: Tuesday, September 16, 2025 9:48:37 AM

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Hello Alders

I belong to a group of politically minded women in Madison, we call ourselves Matriots. We meet monthly and talk about what each of us are doing to impact local and national politics. This usually ranges from attending demonstrations, letter writing and phone calls, and attending speakers. Matriots is about providing a safe place to land and talk about frustration and do some self-care so we can get back to doing what we do. At our last meeting we discussed the issue of destroying the Dairy Dr. project. We organized a small meeting on Sunday morning at a north side church. Four alders were invited and three attended; Alders Glenn, Martinez-Rutherford, and Matthews.

During the meeting the Alders explained the many barriers to keeping the Dairy Dr. program in place and that there were no plans to replicate this successful program. The need to funnel monies to the new homeless shelter was stressed. Though that shelter, even with 24/7 services will not be able to replicate the 70+% success that the Dairy Dr. model attained. This is due, in my opinion, to the lack of having dedicated space for each person that Dairy Dr. provided. It is my understanding that the new shelter will house on a first come first served basis and will only be able to accommodate less than 250 men. The success rate of finding permanent housing with that model is 30 – 35 %.

It was explained that the Dairy Dr. project was funded with ARPA monies during covid and was designed to end in 2025. Based on it's location, which is not located near any sources of food, transportation, or other services, and minimal personal services, such as lack of heat or personal toileting space, these were built as temporary shelters. They were designed to fail was the quote I remember. Yet despite that and the expense of providing services. The model effectively moved people into the housing market with the afore mentioned success rate of over 70%. Pretty amazing!

Despite the proven success of the Dairy Dr. model, it is destined to be destroyed and no comparable replacement is in place to continue that successful transition from unhoused to housed. We asked numerous questions and have even more since that meeting. Something about this is not making sense. We are hoping at the very least to delay this demolition until April to give the community more time to find alternate solutions to keeping this successful program going.

Ideas that came out of this meeting and discussions afterwards are as follows.

- Increase non-profit involvement at no cost to the city. Leverage what so many agencies do and do well

- Sell the properties to a non city entity for an under market value price ($1?) to encourage continued development, similar to the Hartmeyer project (but I can support this as it is about basic human needs)
- Can volunteers be used to keep Dairy dr. open until April and beyond
- Can we plan to develop the successful housing program in a more service accessible location. (Tiny villages)
- A few people expressed willingness to have some units relocated to residential properties that they own
- Relocate the housing structures, in part or all, to the homeless shelter property's parking area as a step up towards more permanent housing
- Consider using volunteers who need workforce training to provide the labor. Through Operation Fresh Start or similar agencies

We are coming to this issue late in the process and are sure that these ideas and many more have been researched and discussed at length. We welcome the opportunity to be involved at this stage and appreciate the hard work on this so far.

What was very clear during the Sunday meeting was the immobilizing complexity around finances specific to where and how to spend money. As a tax payer, I appreciate that attention to detail! However, it is keeping us stuck in a system that does not seem to meet the needs of all residents of Madison. In a push to increase housing, it makes little sense to destroy housing that has been so effective with no plans to replicate the program by offering a half step to housing, like what Dairy Dr. is offering.

Thank you for reading/listening.

Respectfully submitted by
Cathy Couture on behalf of The Matriots Fair Housing Subcommittee

Linda Colletti, Cathy Couture, Deenah Givens, Beth Reschke

From: Leland Pan
To: All Alders
Subject: Dairy Drive Campground
Date: Sunday, September 14, 2025 10:42:09 AM

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Hi all,

I've already written my comments to my Alder, Alder Guequierre, and I appreciate him following up and responding to me, but I just wanted to share what I wrote to him to the full council.

I write in opposition to the closure and demolition of the Dairy Drive campground.

As a school social worker, I work regularly with Madison's unhoused population. The lack of housing options in Madison is at a crisis; 7% of our student population at my school is homeless, and it has hit 15% in at least one school. Until there are more options for people, we can't demolish current programming for people facing homelessness, no matter how temporary or flawed they may be. Long term, I hope the city is comfortable with not just more and denser housing development, but also with not for profit and government owned housing that is accessible to people far below the area median income - 0-25% range, for example.

Thank you,
Leland Pan
1706 Laurel Crest, Madison, WI, 53705