



October 14, 2020

Dear Commissioners & Alders,

Please exercise your power and privilege to vote in a way that allows individuals who are experiencing homelessness during this pandemic to camp under the Emergency Camping order. It is an extraordinary time to “force” individuals into congregate shelter living many of whom I know this would mean splitting up with their spouse or significant other. During this time especially, being with our loved ones is important.

Prior to the pandemic, my work as Director of Hope’s Home Ministries for First United Methodist Church in downtown Madison involved connecting and helping people in person at our church. For the past six months, I have been helping people who are experiencing homelessness who are surviving sleeping in their vehicles or camping. Every week, I serve on a team that goes out to specific encampments. Today, a man broke down in the woods. He shared how he is losing hope. He asked me to pray for him. I serve with Tami Fleming, Executive Director of Shelter from the Storm. Tami shared a prayer and we sat there under the canopy of trees with another amazing woman, Gail Bliss, who accompanies us to help with voter registration. We are serving on teams and going out to the encampments building bridges to safety, services and **HOPE**.

Every week, I have encountered an individual in serious emotional crisis not knowing where they may be without being pushed out. We know that there are some individuals with inappropriate behaviors whether housed or not housed. These behaviors are addressed and even more so when we know where people are located, and when we may make connections. The connections on a regular basis provide stability. Our work involves serving together on powerful teams because we all are from diverse agencies, organization and bring expertise in helping individuals who are experiencing homelessness. Many of us have experienced homelessness, and some of the same challenges our brothers and sisters are facing. I am sober today. I was homeless as a teenager. I tried to take my own life. It is because someone believed in me, and they met me where I was at and it is a long way from where I am now. Please let us help our brothers and sisters in this difficult walk of experiencing homelessness during a pandemic. Please believe in us that we can make a difference in helping individuals where they are at and for them to be able to make a choice to camp in designated areas legally.

My gratitude for your reading this long-winded letter just moments prior to the meeting.

Respectfully,

Director of Hope’s Home Ministries