



AGENDA MEMORANDUM

April 20, 2021

Town Selectboard Meeting Item: 4f

Submitted by: Tracy Yarlott-Davis, Town Manager

Subject: Town Encampment Response Policy

Background: On April 15, 2021 I activated the Town of Hartford Encampment Response Policy. This goal of the policy is to manage the adverse impacts of homeless encampments by balancing the interests of all residents and focusing encampment actions on mitigating negative outcomes as they pertain to public safety and public health.

Discussion: The policy aims to create clear criteria for designated high-sensitivity areas, findings that will prompt intervention, and guidance on addressing those findings. This includes promoting voluntary compliance and strategies to address non-compliance by the individuals residing in the encampment.

High-sensitive areas include, but are not limited to:

- Parks and playgrounds
- Schools
- Jurisdictional wetlands, waters, and waterways
- Floodways and floodplains
- Critical wildlife habitats

These designated high-sensitivity areas address both impacts to vital ecological infrastructure and public properties that have a high frequency of use by Hartford residents.

There are also health and safety considerations that will require the Town to respond and intervene. This include, but are not limited to:

- Confirmed case or exposure of infectious disease
- Excessive animal or vermin vector hazards
- Presence of biological vector hazards
- Pervasive criminal activity
- Damage to essential infrastructure
- Excessive amounts of waste/garbage/debris
- Proximity of encampment to objective dangers
- Unpermitted outside fires
- Presence of open electrical splices or illegal wiring

In consideration of the rights of individuals against the Town's fundamental duty to maintain public health and safety, I have developed a process for responding to encampments. If the Town receives a complaint of an encampment that may be in a high-sensitivity area or have public health or safety findings, I will convene an on-site meeting with representatives of Police, Fire, and Public Works as well as the Health Officer. We will make a determination if the encampment is in a high-sensitivity area or not compliant with public health or safety requirements.

Based on that determination, Town staff will attempt to achieve voluntary compliance with public health and safety issues. However, it may not be possible, due to the location or health or safety concerns, for the encampment to become compliance. Therefore, the Health Officer, or other Community Wellness staff as designated by the Town Manager will provide applicable housing vouchers and connections to other local services as available from State and local community agencies.

If encampment residents are unwilling or unable to comply, The Town may intervene in ways including, but not limited to:

- Posting the area against trespassing and having the individuals cited and/or removed.
- Advising property owners on how to post the area against trespassing.
- Requiring the property owner to mitigate the site to remove public health hazards as listed above.
- Directing Police and Fire to comply with local, state, and federal laws in an ordinary manner.

Except when urgent health and safety concerns require shorter notice, encampment residents will be given 48 hours to accept an offer of shelter or alternative housing if such referrals are available. A person is also free to voluntarily relocate if shelter provisions are declined. All declinations will be documented. Outreach efforts and service offers will continue, as resources allow, with the goal of ending the individual's unsheltered status.

**Financial
Impact:**

The complete financial impact of an encampment response will change depending on the specifics of an encampment. However, there may be costs associated with providing services to the unhoused people, cleaning the encampment or debris, or mitigating health hazards that require specialized attention such as vermin or biological hazards.