

**From:** Jes Foster <jesfoster@ashevillenc.gov>  
**Sent:** 6/7/2022 4:55:45 PM  
**To:** Debra Campbell <dcampbell@ashevillenc.gov>  
**Cc:** Peggy Rowe <prowe@ashevillenc.gov>, Greg Shuler <gshuler@ashevillenc.gov>, Darian Blue <dblue@ashevillenc.gov>, Amy Deyton <adeyton@ashevillenc.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: Park arrests

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Debra,  
I would love the opportunity to speak with you directly about my experience over the past several years working on some of these issues. Â  
Please let me know if there is time on your calendar to chat.

I also want to clear up some City statements that I read in the ACT yesterday regarding the protest arrests, as I was not consulted about trash-related issues.

*"Additionally, City staff is not aware of any other instance in the past ten years where known persons left that volume of trash on City property," Miller said.Â*

As recently as December 2021, we cleaned up OVER 15,000 lbs of trash from a site, and APD was knowledgeable of who left the trash and did not have a desire to pursue felony littering charges. (To be clear, I amÂ **not**Â advocating that they should have pursued charges, but I AM saying the narrative being pushed that felony littering is not a regular occurrence is false.)

My staff are regularlyÂ asked to clean up City properties that no one manages, as well as tons of litter and dumping in ROWs.Â The amount of trash is always appalling, and frequently falls into the felony littering category. Sometimes we know who did it, sometimes we don't - there have been no 6-month investigations into those issues.

In the past 6 years, Sanitation has generated **OVER 900** illegal dumping service orders based on complaints and reports.Â

As Dawn Chavez from Asheville GreenWorks reported at the March City Council meeting, even when evidence of perpetrators is available and provided, APD will not follow up.Â I can recall this being an issue since at least 2019, when we discussed it at a community litter meeting thatÂ I organized.Â I don't believe APD had the current staffing shortages as a reason at that time, yet still, were unable to assist in enforcement for our illegal dumping issues.

**So with all of that being said:**

1. I would REALLY like some conversation, transparency, and truth telling around what is happening, and for cleanliness/trash to not be publicly touted as the reason.
2. Do we need to continue pursuing common ground and collaborative solutions with ASP (and other groups) around food sharing?
3. ShouldÂ I expect support from APD moving forward on other felony littering cases?

I have worked tirelessly over the past few years to try to coordinate the City around some internal processes/communication about camping when no one else would take the lead. I have been doing this **because** the lack of communication and coordination severely impacts the efficiency and morale of my division. While I do personally care about homelessness issues and policing issues and public safety issues, my primary reason for involvement was to try and resolve some seriously problematic internal City issues that impact my staff's daily work and that impact the City's ability to effectively serve the community.Â

I simply cannot be effective at my job with the current lack of communication or collaboration and without knowing that we are all working towards common goals.

Best,  
Jes

*She/Her/Hers*

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On Sun, Jun 5, 2022 at 10:19 AM Debra Campbell <[dcampbell@ashevillenc.gov](mailto:dcampbell@ashevillenc.gov)> wrote:

GoodÂ morning.Â Thanks Jes for sharing your concerns with me.Â I will discuss this with APD leadership next week.

Hope you enjoy the restÂ of your weekend.

Debra!

On Sun, Jun 5, 2022, 9:51 AM Jes Foster <[jesfoster@ashevillenc.gov](mailto:jesfoster@ashevillenc.gov)> wrote:

Debra,

I'm sorry, but I just don't even know what to say about this.

I have put a lot of time and effort into trying to build goodwill with a group of people serving the needs of the homeless community and show them that the City is not specificallyÂ targeting them, and then wake up to read [this](#).

I don't understand how an 'understaffed' police force can spend 6 months investigating 'littering' in a park.

Clearly, these folks weren't littering - it was a protest to raise awareness about the needs of the homeless. Obviously I understand the impacts that it had on staff who had to clean up what was left behind - I do it everyday.Â

I understand there are rules and consequences, and that this group is intentionally antagonistic to police, but this seems **way** overboard and a clear effort by the City to shut down this group who, at the end of the day, just wants to serve the under-served.

It would have been nice to know that an 'investigation' was ongoing while I was doing my best to build a foundation with them.Â I really felt we could all move forward and achieve common goals, but clearly that is not the case. I am so embarrassed.

Did you know that Sanitation spends thousands and thousands of dollars and staff time **every year** cleaning up illegal dumping, as does Asheville Greenworks?Â When we have asked for aid in enforcing this, we are turned down.Â So, this is clearly not a case of APD caring about litter.Â I'll add that I really am disgusted by Chief Zack comparing that 'litter' to what our volunteer groups did downtown this year. Â

If we want to make headway with food sharing, if we want to our parks to be safe and enjoyed by all, and if we want our homeless to be treated with dignity and humanity, then we need to have some real talk that is transparent and direct and we all need to be on the same page.

Respectfully,  
Jes

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*She/Her/Hers*

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