

From: Dean Dafis DDafis@maplewoodnj.gov

Subject: Re: Maplecrest Park

Date: August 21, 2023 at 3:42 AM

To: Destene Styles destenestyles@gmail.com

Cc: Albert Sally Asally@maplewoodnj.gov, Nancy Adams Nadams@maplewoodnj.gov, Victor DeLuca VDeLuca@maplewoodnj.gov, Patrick Wherry pwherry@maplewoodnj.gov, Candice Davenport CDavenport@maplewoodnj.gov, Deborah Engel dengel@maplewoodnj.gov, Jamaine Cripe JCripe@maplewoodnj.gov

DD

Ms Styles, our outreach and support includes substance abuse intervention. Homelessness and substance abuse are interrelated.

Happy to discuss with you. I'm away on holiday until Labor Day. Please do share this information with your neighbors, as we have talked about these issues and our plans in addressing them during our public meetings in recent months.

Enjoy the remaining days of summer.

Kind regards,

Dean Dafis, he him
Mayor
Township of Maplewood
cell: 347-613-3403

On Aug 21, 2023, at 3:19 AM, Destene Styles <destenestyles@gmail.com> wrote:

****CAUTION****

This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Dean,

Thanks kindly for your response. I want to ensure you understand that my concern is with drug use, not with homelessness. If you ask anyone in recovery they will tell you that you cannot make anyone change. Not their mother, their children, their spouse, no-one can make an addict change. The only way an addict seeks help is if they want to change. And more often than not they sadly do not.

I would love to sit down with you and get more details around the plan and a sense of timing for when the community can anticipate some type of resolution for what is going on in Maplecrest Park. I'd also like to get more information about other areas in Maplewood which may be experiencing the same kind of issues. Please let me know what your availability looks like this week so we can align calendars to find a time that works for us both. I would also be happy to walk you through the park in the early morning. I am not sure if you live in the neighborhood and I am wondering if you've actually experienced it firsthand?

I'd also like to ask if you're comfortable with me sharing your response with some of my concerned neighbors?

Thanks again for your timely response and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Best,

Destené

On Aug 20, 2023, at 10:36 AM, Dean Dafis <DDafis@maplewoodnj.gov> wrote:

Ms Styles,

Thanks for reaching out. I've looped in the rest of the governing body, our Health Officer, and Township Administrator.

Indeed, we are directly working with non profit homelessness prevention and support agencies to address the issue. We also have our own social workers engaged. The goal is to ultimately safely house these folks, several of whom are Maplewoodians. The street outreach and supportive services take time but we're confident in being able to address their displacement. Based on existing screening of these individuals none of them are violent or a threat. We've identified them and our police are aware of them.

Homelessness has no boundaries. Even affluent communities like Maplewood experience these vulnerabilities. Our neighbors are seeing the same. The longterm and sustainable solutions lie in statewide & federal reforms in housing and in existing antiquated support systems - we're working on those do in terms of advocacy. In fact, by way of example, we lobbied our new Congresswoman Mikie Sherill recently on this issue and since then she's introduced new legislation that makes it easier to house folks who are houseless by waiving older federal guidelines that make communities like Maplewood ineligible for necessary grants for this purpose.

We live in an amazing vibrant community. Those experiencing bad times don't bring all of us down but rather our compassionate and collaborative spirit brings all of us up.

Kind regards,

Dean Dafis, he him
Mayor
Township of Maplewood
cell: 347-613-3403

On Aug 20, 2023, at 3:54 PM, Destene Styles <destenestyles@gmail.com> wrote:

****CAUTION****

This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

I hope this note finds you all well.

Unfortunately I am writing to ensure you all are aware of the homeless population who has been sleeping in Maplecrest Park. I walk every day anywhere between 5-7am and every day it's been the same situation. There are the same folks sleeping in the same spots. It started with Lisa, who is a lovely and respectful human. If it was just Lisa I would not mind her staying there forever. Sadly, there is now three men I see regularly, two of which I have seen nodding out. One was actually nodding out over the garbage can and as I walked behind him I saw he had a plastic baggie in his hand.

I moved to Maplewood to appreciate a certain quality of life. To feel safe and secure. In my earlier years, when I could not afford a \$19,000 a year tax bill, I lived in areas that had drug problems and it is not something that get's better on it's own. There is theft, violence, pollution, and even death. It truly becomes a public safety issue and a quality of life issue for members of the community.

Every day since Wednesday, August 16th I've called the Maplewood Police to report my concerns, and the very next morning I see the same scenario. Should you want context of those conversations I recommend you speak to the following who fielded my calls: Dispatcher 1035, Dispatcher Love, Sargent Wegley, and Lieutenant DiMaggio.

During one of my phone calls it was mentioned that there may already be an action plan underway. I would appreciate getting more information on what the action plan is.

Thanks for your commitment to keeping our community a safe one.

Sincerely,

Destené Styles

