

Murphy, Claire

From: Maggie Giles [images@mac.com]
Sent: Saturday, June 20, 2009 10:12 AM
To: City Council
Subject: persistent problem needs addressing - 53 Tremont

Dear City Council,

Thanks for taking the time to read this; there is perhaps one of you in particular I should be addressing but I'm embarrassed to say I don't know which one!

I live at 53 Tremont Street, right at the corner of Hampshire Street above Lorem Ipsum Books; we are just on the Cambridge St side of the intersection as opposed to the Broadway side. There are five apartments in my building.

There is an on-going phenomenon in our lives here that appears to be getting worse, and our patience is exhausted - and as you will see it is almost impossible to exhaust our patience.

Our little doorway and the little triangular park across the street on DPW property are extremely popular spots for men who have clearly been mowed down by addiction problems; during the day in particular there is often one or two spending time in that park or parked on our front stoop. By and large they mind their own business as we come and go and the reason why we have what I referred to as virtually inexhaustible patience with them is that many of us who live here are in the substance abuse field or do similar social service work. These gentlemen's frequent presence on our front stoop is enough reason for sadness at the end of a long day working with consumers very similar to them, yet our compassion allows us to leave them alone if they don't bother us.

Ah, but that's the problem. If we only had to constantly encounter them on our private property, constantly step around them, constantly have to ask them to move, I wouldn't be writing to you. But they leave empty bottles, cigarette boxes, take out food containers, all sorts of trash on our front stoop. Often a good portion of the food they are eating there ends up all over our front porch. In our back yard there are often bottles left, even human excrement. Last week we reached a new low, however. Some of my neighbors were over my apartment for dinner and we heard what sounded like a loud conversation outside; the windows were open, it's a busy intersection, we assumed it was some folks hanging out in that little park on DPW property. At about 10 when one of the neighbors went to go out he discovered that the conversation was between two men drinking on our front stoop. He stepped around them but called me and told me about it. Their conversation went on and on and finally another neighbor called out her window at about 11 asking them to please speak more quietly when they started shouting expletives at her. One of them left, and that's when the other one started throwing up all over our front stoop and passed out on the sidewalk. Two of us called 911 and asked for an ambulance, but by the time the medics got here about 15 minutes later the gentleman had gotten up and headed down Hampshire. I tried to point out the direction he went in when the police and medics showed up. And then we spent about 30 minutes with a bucket brigade of hot water and bleach from the first floor apartment trying to clean up the front stoop.

So. We are in the field, we understand addiction, we understand the struggle to help people in a time of dwindling revenues for agencies, we get it. But there is clearly a problem right in our neighborhood.

And because we are in the field we know that it doesn't have to be this way.

The other night was an anomaly in that the event occurred at night.

Typically these fellows are milling about in the morning, as if a wet shelter has turned them out for the day. Or perhaps there is a program that will provide food or something to men even if they are using, a breakfast or lunch service they are taking advantage of. If that is the case then we need to speak to that program and see what they are doing to be accountable for the ramifications of the services they provide. Perhaps part of the problem is that the liquor story on Cambridge between Prospect and Tremont apparently serves to customers even if they are clearly intoxicated.

Whatever the cause / contributing factors, we have had it. Our quality of life is severely compromised by these folks and I am willing to work with the people who work with them to try to make them more accountable, but something has to stop. Some of us here in the building have some great ideas for how to spruce up the back yard and we think our landlady would be thrilled and will pay for our ideas; but what's the point if these men are going to hang out back there? So here we are with a backyard in Cambridge and we are loath to use it, to invest at all in it, because of this problem.

I would love to work with you, to work with area providers, to even work with these men, to find a solution. But this can't go on. I look forward to coming to City Hall and meeting with you or to give you a tour of our little neck of the woods.

Thanks for your help.

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