

## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** Wooshik Brian Kim [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 12, 2024 1:44 PM  
**To:** Public Comments  
**Subject:** Drug usage problems in Davis Square

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Hello Councilors and Somerville residents,

My name is Brian Kim. I live at [REDACTED]. This is a general comment related to drug usage problems in Davis Square.

As many of you are aware now, we have drug usage problems near Davis Square. Starting this year it became more uncomfortable for our family to take a walk to Davis Square. We walk pretty much everyday. So we noticed when people started to set up camp and show uncomfortable behavior. One incident that still haunts me is when one person shouted "I am going to kill them all" about 3 times seemingly high. He was weirdly(?) running(?) in some direction toward Davis Square. My wife almost had a nervous breakdown and I was very worried for her. According to other anecdotes I hear, there were worse incidents than what I saw (defecating, sex, actual drug use...)

I tried to assure my wife that there is nothing to worry, they are people just like us, probably much sturdier who can survive better in the wild. So I joked that they would be good survivors in a post post-apocalyptic world. But when some started showing anti-social behavior related to drug use, I can't defend them any more.

Before this I would often see toddlers from daycare (probably bright horizon) taking a walk in 2 columns. They would put the kids connected in some colorful string (probably to make sure they don't go too far). And there are times when multi-row baby strollers are used to take the smaller ones for a walk. Sometimes I see bigger kids selling lemonade there. One time I bought it from a kid who told me he was saving money for a scooter (I wonder if he got it). Adults use it too: we know there is a juggling group on Thursdays and stick self defense classes on some other day. Now I see much less action now. I don't see kids any more on the streets.

Why is it this way? Is this what we want for our city? Less kids playing outside and more drug addictions? I believe this is the direct result of Deprioritizing Arrest for hard drug ordinance. This was implemented without an effective alternate approach.

Let's talk about solutions I have in mind. I think about 2 things: homelessness and drugs. I often think about what it would be like if I were homeless. Would I be able to find a shelter against the weather? Would I be able to find a place to take a shower? Are we doing a good job on this front as a community? I think we have an existing system to care for the homeless. I saw multiple organizations and they seemed to be healthy organizations. So I think we should keep doing what we do and more to help the homeless population.

Now for drug issues. I tried to search if hard drugs are still illegal in MA. It is. The law states that control substance drugs are treated more harshly. So then why is the police not taking any action? I saw from today's Somerville Committee meeting that we try to deprioritize arrest for drug use. This is part of a compassionate approach. I like that we are taking a humane approach. But is the alternative we have effective? No. As we clearly see now, this was badly implemented. If we are deprioritizing arrest, we need an alternative approach that is similarly effective. Current alternative is confiscating drugs and warning them. If the effectiveness is measured by how good we are at curbing drug use, then this seems to have almost no effect (I think it contributes to an increase of drug use). Positive feedback results in unbounded increase. We need negative feedback. So then what would be another approach? Instead of just confiscating and warning, I thought about the following proposals (in addition to confiscation of course): put people into rehab facilities to enforce a reduced drug use - this would still be a more humane approach compared to incarceration; do a 3 strike out system, if you are caught 3 times with the drug use, then you get arrested - not punishing at all does not make sense. I am open to any other ideas if and only if the alternative is equally effective in reducing drug use as incarceration/fine. That's all I could think of now. If we don't have a good idea, please follow the law appropriately for hard drug use and arrest or fine the individual.

So this means I am open to removing the current policy/ordinance: deprioritizing arrest. I think hard drugs have a negative effect on society. For the drug user it leads to a path of destruction and spiraling one at that. For others near them, it has an impact of deteriorating the neighborhood. So rightfully hard drugs should be treated with stronger actions: either forcefully with arrests/fines or with a system of care to stop the drug user from the spiraling cycle. Now I think the latter is the ideal solution. But it is a costly one. Can we get the fund to implement this solution? Do we have such a system? Do we have a plan for such a system? So unless we can come up with an effective alternate solution, I would rather have our police officers follow the law as is.

I will wrap up here. I would like to hear different actions taken from the Council. Please.

Thank you  
Brian Kim

## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 18, 2024 9:25 AM  
**To:** Mayor  
**Cc:** Ben Waldrip; Public Comments; All City Council  
**Subject:** Please tend to these problems in our neighborhood

Dear Mayor Ballentyne,

I am writing to ask you and your team to please do something about the disgraceful mess in the Davis Square area that has gotten worse and worse over the last 5 years. I can't walk my dog through/around the Davis Square area w/o tripping over and being surrounded by Homeless People, their belongings, disposables and bathing areas, Drug Addicts and their debris and concerning energy and activities, Disgusting Trash including human waste and toilet paper and trash spilling out of the trash cans and all over the ground – particularly at the back of the Highland Commons' building that leads from the Bike Path behind where Osco Drug used to be located (375 Highland Ave), right next to the rat boxes that are very active.

What gives? All one needs to do is open their eyes and walk around and see what a downfall has been happening. While of course we have compassion and empathy for those suffering, the whole scene has gotten out of control. Shops and restaurants closed down and covered with flyers and black marker graffiti in the square, terrible condition of paved streets and potholes and rat holes and water and sewer problems ALL OVER THE CITY.

As a homeowner here for 30 years, where I put all my hard work and investment into my home, property and family, and as an active caring community member, I am asking for you to be seen, to do something, to care. I am sorry if my anger is noticeable, but what am I pay very high taxes for???? Davis Square used to be one of the most desired places in the State, never mind City. It has fallen to the dogs and there is no reason for this except neglect, other priorities and poor management.

Please clean up Davis Square! (And feel free to remove the disgusting hunks of plastic crap that is located on the bike path near Willow Street. Beauty may be in the eyes of the beholder, but these heaps of dirty, broken, unattractive plastic things are NOT pleasant to walk by. I don't want to see someone else's trash sitting out on display is if it were art. It is not art and, in case you forgot, we are in the middle of a climate crisis and hunks of plastic are a real turn off. Where is the Somerville pride?)

Thank you for your attention,  
Nancy Iappini  
[REDACTED]