

# Victoria City Council By-Law Amendment Proposal

Lincoln Stoller, PhD, CHt, June 1, 2018



## Summary

The city Bylaws don't allow a person to sleep in any park unless they are homeless. This also applies to wilderness parks throughout the peninsula. I would like the Council to consider amending the bylaws to allow residents to sleep in our parks.

## History

Victoria has a large number of people interested in outdoor activities. Many lack cars and, or access to open land. City parks and services limit nighttime use of parks, and explicitly prohibit camping.

Camping and sleeping are different, but are equated in the current Bylaws. Camping establishes a day and night-time presence, a structure, equipment, preparation, investment, and duration. It is visible, includes eating, drinking, recreation and socializing, usually involves vehicles, an extended presence, and other activities.

Sleeping out involves nothing but sleeping. It has no daytime presence, no vehicles, is instantly engaged or removed. It requires a blanket or sleeping bag but takes no space, leaves no trace, can be invisible, attracts no attention, and causes no disturbance.

## Proposal

Amending the parks-use Bylaws to permit sleeping in public parks under the limited and specified conditions detailed below. The council request the park commissioner consider this proposal, for the purpose of improving it.

## Benefits

**Public Service:** Involving people in sharing of the commons is essential for an involvement and awareness. Opening park resources a night extends involvement and awareness.

**Custodianship:** Involving people in caring for shared resources creates co-creative neighbors. People involved in night-time use will agree to greater custodianship.

**Health:** The benefits of exposure to fresh air include gaining a more robust constitution, an improvement of memory, pulmonary function, and better sleep. Sleep deprivation affects 30% of the population, causes a high percentage of traffic accidents, is implicated low immune function, stress, poor job performance, and contributes to many physical diseases and psychiatric dysfunctions. People who sleep outdoors get better sleep, and raising awareness of this issue will have some impact.

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## Details of the Proposal

I suggest amending the Bylaws to allow sleeping in parks under these conditions:

- 1- a permit application is made between 1 and 3 weeks ahead of time
- 2- the application is considered, approval at the discretion of the parks department
- 3- if approved, a permit is issued
- 4- a single overnight period, and single location must be specified
- 5- permission granted is for only that date and location
- 6- there must be a group leader who carries the permit at the event
- 7- the group leader represents the group to citizens and officials
- 8- names and addresses of all participants are listed on the application and permit
- 9- groups enter after dark and exit before dawn
- 10- no tents or other structures are erected
- 11- no cooking, open flame, fire, smoking, or alcohol is allowed
- 12- no littering, loud noise, or public disturbance
- 13- group members remain within easy sight and quiet speaking distance of each other
- 14- no sleeping or lying within 5 meters of any path or road
- 15- no sleeping or lying in playgrounds, sports fields, flower beds, long grass, areas being used for an event, cemeteries, or anywhere that is considered environmentally sensitive
- 16- participants pick up any liter in their area, taking it with them when they leave
- 17- group leader submits an event review to the park department within 10 days of the event

If this proposal is approved I believe it will benefit individuals with more access, neighborhoods with greater security, parks with better attention, the Parks Department with better information, the city with greater services, and the City Council with good publicity.

## Who We Are

In December 2017 I created a Meetup group called the "Sleeping Outdoors As Much As Possible" group. The online service Meetup provides a meeting space for like-minded people. Within the following six months 145 people joined this group. Our purpose is to facilitate sleeping out of doors.

Respectfully,  
Lincoln Stoller  
June 1, 2018