



City of Winston-Salem City Council Council Agenda Item Summary

Title	Ordinance Amending Chapter 38 of the City Code Relating to Miscellaneous Offenses and Provisions to Revise City Park Rules
City Council Committee	Public Safety Committee
Staff Lead (Presenter)	Ben Rowe, Assistant City Manager
Department Head	William Royston, Recreation and Parks Director
City Manager/ACM	W. Patrick Pate, City Manager

Agenda Item Summary

Recommended Council Action	Ordinance Approval
Suggested Motion Options	Move to Approve Changes to Chapter 38 of the City Code Relating to Miscellaneous Offenses and Provisions to Revise City Park Rules
Strategic Focus Area	Livable Community
Strategic Plan Objective	LC1: Enhancing Residents' Sense of Safety and Reducing Crime
Anticipated Fiscal Impact	Fiscal Impact Anticipated: See Analysis in Summary

Summary of Information

In recent days, the level of disruptive behavior at Merschel Park has escalated to a point where residents have expressed fear to City officials and an increasing number of individuals who occupy the park have been directed to leave by Winston-Salem police officers. The Police Department has provided the attached calls-for-service report that shows there were 376 calls for service from May 1st through September 23rd, for issues including security checks, City ordinance violations, disturbance calls, trespassing, assault, and assault on a government official. *

To respond to this growing problem, City staff took the following immediate actions on Friday, September 26th to hopefully discourage the bad behavior that is taking place there.

- Remove all furniture from the park.
- Remove and store the solar table until staff can identify an alternative location.
- Disconnect free WiFi service in the park.
- Implement additional police tactics to monitor and respond to disruptive behavior.

Removal of park amenities is consistent with how the Recreation and Parks Department has addressed safety issues at other City parks.

While the City's downtown parks have been the focus of these immediate actions, disruptive behavior has occurred at parks throughout the city, including encampments, drug use, and damage to City property. As a result, City staff are proposing the following new rules for the City's 83 parks:

- The use of hammocks or camping gear (tents, lanterns, etc.) in the parks is prohibited.
- Erecting structures of any kind is prohibited.
- Storing or leaving personal belongings is prohibited.
- Large personal belongings including but not limited to: suitcases, storage containers, shopping carts, or other similar items are not permitted.
- The removal of items from trash receptacles is prohibited.
- Defacement of or damage to park property or material is prohibited.
- No person shall possess, distribute, sell, solicit, or consume marijuana or any controlled substance in the parks.
- No defecation or urination, except in park restrooms

This Council Action provides for changes to the City Code, specifically Chapter 38 relating to miscellaneous offenses and provisions, to enable the Police Department to enforce the new rules. In addition, operating hours will be changed to run from sunrise to sunset, while providing the Recreation and Parks Department the flexibility to extend hours for specific areas of parks (e.g., tennis courts) and programs and events. The proposed Code changes also allow the department to establish different hours that a park is open to the public on a regular or temporary basis.

Recreation and Parks and Police staff presented these changes to the Recreation and Parks Commission for their review and recommendation on Tuesday, October 7th. Commission Members approved a resolution recommending that the City Council amend City Code Chapter 38 to implement new rules for City parks.

If the City Council approves the proposed code changes, the new rules would go into effect immediately, as soon as new signage can be fabricated and installed. The estimated cost to prepare 250 new signs throughout the City park system totals \$75,000.

With colder weather approaching in the coming months, City staff anticipate that activity in the parks will drop off. The proposed rules would attempt to address problems now but also provide a "reset" for City and community expectations when next spring arrives.

* Note about the source of calls for service: If the source is "Self," it is a self-initiated call by the officer. "Phone" is a non-emergency line call, "W911" is a (cell) wireless 911, "E911" is a landline 911, and "CCNT" is a CAD2CAD call dropped from Forsyth County EMS. That means the caller asked for medical assistance upon first calling

911 and the call was sent to EMS who then sent it back to us as police were also needed.

Analysis of Fiscal Impact

The estimated cost to prepare new signage for the City's 83 parks totals \$75,000. This cost includes materials and labor for the installation of 250 new signs throughout the park system.

Attachments

- Ordinance Amending Chapter 38 Relating to Miscellaneous Offenses and Provisions
- Exhibit – Winston-Salem Police Department Call-for-Service Report

Committee Action	Tabled until 11/10/2025
For: Unanimous	Against:
Remarks:	