

November 21, 2016

W.B. Braxton-Bantu
Advocate, ASWAN
VIA PICKUP at LEGAL AID JUSTICE CENTER

Dear Mr. Braxton-Bantu:

You had asked about the issue of the City of Richmond suggesting that a permit is required of community members to provide free food at Abner Clay Park to homeless and other hungry low-income Richmonders. This is a critical issue, especially since the Salvation Army on West Grace Street ended the city's main indoor meal program, and (more recently) since the traditional outdoor location of free food to homeless and other hungry low-income Richmonders – Monroe Park – is now closed for renovations.

I have reviewed the City of Richmond Code of Ordinances (the City's law). There is a section dealing with use of public parks, and with permitting.

However, I see no evidence that providing free food to homeless and other hungry low-income Richmonders is something that requires a permit, under City law.

Obviously, those who feed the poor should be commended, rather than hurt by alleged permit requirements or other restrictions. But, above and beyond the fact that permits shouldn't be required in this situation, it also appears that City law doesn't require permits in this situation.

For your reference, I have attached a part of the City of Richmond Code of Ordinances – Chapter 8 (“City-Owned Real Estate”), Article VIII (“Use of Public Grounds, Parks, Playfield and Playgrounds”). Within this section, you may wish to pay particular attention to Division I (“Generally”) and Division 4 (“Park Permits”). I have also attached Appendix A of the Code (which sets forth park permit fees for various specific situations).

I hope that this letter is helpful to you.

However, if you have any questions concerning your situation or the contents of this letter, please feel free to contact me at (804) 643-1086, x308.

Sincerely,



Pat Levy-Lavelle