

From: Kris Condon

Date: July 11, 2023 at 02:23:52 CDT

To: mthomas@homewoodil.gov

Subject: For public comment at 7/11 Village Board meeting; confirmation receipt requested

Dear Clerk Thomas:

I respectfully request the following public comment be shared with President Hofeld and members of the Board of Trustees. Please confirm receipt.

With appreciation, Kris Condon

Dr. Kristine M. (Kris) Condon

Homewood, IL 60430

July 11, 2023

To President Hofeld and Members of the Village of Homewood Board of Trustees:

Let me preface my public comment this evening with apologies for a schedule conflict that precludes me from making my remarks in person. Let me also share that I have resided in the village for 35 years, have long been engaged in community and volunteer activities, and have always felt the best choice I could make was to create a home in the home my grandparents built 71 years ago. In all of that time, I have never, ever been fearful for my personal safety or for the security of that home.

Until Tuesday, July 4, 2023, that is.

Between the complete Wild West atmosphere of bottle rockets, Roman candles, and other fireworks being openly lit in the middle of Evergreen Road and Homewood Avenue and the virtually nonexistent response to three nonemergency contacts to local law enforcement, I am seriously considering leaving this village for the first time.

I note Trustee Heiferman's comments in the June 27, 2023, "GENERAL [sic] BOARD DISCUSSION: Trustee Heiferman asked residents to be cautious and considerate when using fireworks to celebrate the 4th of July. He reminded residents that they are illegal in Illinois, and fireworks can do harm to pets and persons sensitive to the sounds." Now, the reality is that while fireworks are indeed illegal in Illinois, no village has the law enforcement power to stop every household from discharging them, regardless of our Police Department's admonitions on social media. And my three contacts to HPD's nonemergency number were not the ravings of a cranky lady who thought someone had littered a gum wrapper in her yard. For a period of almost four hours on the evening of July 4, I witnessed:

1. Bottle rockets openly discharged by a group of five teenagers and one parent at the intersection of Evergreen Road and Homewood Avenue. On several occasions, these fireworks were stacked in an orange, five-gallon Home Depot bucket, with debris scattering almost one-half block north

on Homewood Avenue onto my front porch. Additional debris was found below my windowsills—windows I had installed two weeks prior. On one occasion, the female parent (who lives across the street from me) set off a series of bottle rockets **on the village parkway** intersecting Evergreen Road and Homewood Avenue, ostensibly to keep the debris from damaging her two Mercedes parked on Evergreen with no overnight parking stickers;

2. Bottle rockets openly discharged in the middle of Homewood Avenue between Evergreen Road and 183rd Street by one family. These fireworks were set off between transformer power lines that run east to west through the alley between Homewood and Highland Avenues. In this situation, these fireworks were discharged in the direction of my neighbors immediately to the north, who have just had a wooden deck installed, and in the direction of my garage, again so their vehicles were not damaged. Fortunately, their freestanding basketball hoop, which is positioned on the right-of-way sidewalk in direct violation of village ordinance, also did not have to be moved and sustained no damage;
3. Property damage to my garage to the tune of \$200, which occurred when one neighbor's bottle rockets made contact with my garage exterior light fixture, created an arc flash, and then shorted the dusk/dawn light sensor. This wooden frame garage housed two vehicles, both with fully-fueled gas tanks. My electrician (who, incidentally, is licensed to do business in the Village of Homewood so that we can alleviate any concern you may have about his credentials) advised me that I had "dodged a bullet" by this minimal \$200 repair job, as there was enough damage to the wiring that could have triggered a garage fire—or worse.

As for my three contacts to nonemergency law enforcement, I make room for the fact that I may not have seen all that transpired, primarily because I was afraid to venture outside and did not think it appropriate to take matters into my own hands. However, my understanding is that no action occurred after the first call. After my second call, it appeared that a squad car traveled north on Homewood Avenue to Evergreen Road, blew the horn at the offenders, and then turned east onto Evergreen Road without stopping. During my third call, I received among the most condescending encounters of constituent service when I recapped my two prior calls and was told to "take a breath." I did witness a squad car travel westbound on Evergreen Road, directly over the bottle rockets and other debris dumped in the middle of the road. Respectfully, dismantling that situation two calls prior could have assured the dispatcher that I was indeed able to breathe appropriately and would likely have saved me \$200. This interaction with law enforcement was particularly disappointing as a 40-year veteran of the legal system, where working with all three branches of government was my job. Just as I was expected then to provide more to government constituents with whom I came into contact, I expected more from three legitimate requests for help on July 4.

Now, because I don't wish to come to the table with a problem and then not proffer a solution, I again acknowledge our local law enforcement doesn't have the resources or the manpower to police every situation. However, the personal injuries and property damage in Illinois from uncontrolled fireworks discharged, where enforcement was minimal to nonexistent and where residents assumed there would be no consequences for their actions, was entirely too well-documented in the media. Therefore, I would like to respectfully suggest the following preemptive measures before another holiday weekend:

1. First, this Board needs to adopt an ordinance that specifically addresses the use of fireworks on **public roadways and parkways**. Surely such an ordinance can be drafted without conflict with existing or proposed Illinois law.
2. Next, it's insufficient to simply adopt an ordinance; law enforcement needs to, well, **enforce it**. I'm not sure law enforcement is fully aware of how admonitions on social media were ignored and, yes, mocked with the "logic" that there would be no consequences anyway.
3. As to your anticipated response that no funding exists for enforcement, there are many public safety grants that can be used for community policing, public education, deterrence, and equipment (such as drones) that can be used to address non-emergency enforcement and evidence-gathering. The money is there, and the training exists.
4. As to consequences, it would seem that an ordinance violation would result in an appearance before a village ordinance court with appropriate financial penalties.

I came to this village for the quality of life and for the people who live here. My family and I pride ourselves on the condition of our property (which was a 2022 Beautification Award winner) and the relationships we have cultivated with most of our neighbors. But I have never, ever felt heard less or dismissed more than I was on July 4, both by the flagrant disregard from neighbors and the complete lack of enforcement I witnessed. I'd be grateful for someone to address my concerns—but I'm not optimistic. Things seem to have changed in our community—starting with our municipal buildings. The best I can say is that a response from one of you, or lack thereof, will likely inform whether I stay or whether I go. I hope you will help me decide to stay.

Thank you for listening to my concerns.

Respectfully,
Kristine M. Condon

Dr. Kristine M. (Kris) Condon
Homewood, IL 60430