

April 23, 2025

Honorable Kevin Shoemaker
President, City Council
57 West Fifth Street
Chillicothe, Ohio 45601

Re: Ordinance 16-25 Objections

Dear President Shoemaker and Members of Council,

I am returning Ordinance number 16-25 without my approval and exercising my veto authority. While I share Council's goal of addressing health and safety concerns in public spaces, this ordinance creates serious enforcement challenges for our Police Department, places undue burden on our officers, and in some ways creates more problems than solutions.

On March 24, 2025, Police Chief Ron Meyers submitted a letter to City Council outlining his concerns with the proposed ordinance. Chief Meyers has been with the Chillicothe Police Department for almost thirty years and is in his fifth year as Chief. The Chief raised clear and thoughtful concerns about both the practical and legal issues this ordinance presents. Our police officers are not equipped, or meant, to act as a campsite or hazardous waste clean-up crew as this ordinance requires. Once the police department finishes cleaning up a site, the ordinance then requires our officers to store personal property of value and create a process by which individuals can claim said property. These are not responsibilities of the department today, and Council has not addressed the additional resources and training necessary for the Police Department to properly and legally carry out these kinds of responsibilities.

I also share the Chief's concerns about the ambiguity of the ordinance. For example, a police officer must use his or her judgment to determine which items in a campsite have utility or monetary value. The use of the word "may" instead of "shall" throughout the ordinance is also problematic in that it gives officers no guidance on when a citation or ban is appropriate. Further, the penalties section lacks clarity on whether repeat offenses are based on prior convictions or simple citations. All of these issues raise fairness and enforcement questions.

Our Police Department works hard every day to keep this community safe. We need to support them with clear, enforceable laws—and not put them in a position that compromises their mission or creates unnecessary problems or risks.

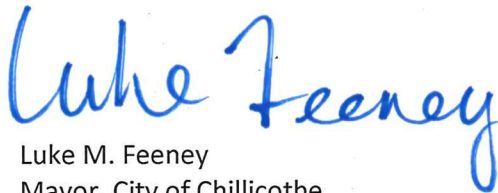
In addition to looking out for our police, I am also compelled to veto this legislation after listening to the comments and concerns of the professionals who work in this field on a daily basis. I



heard opposition to this legislation, but I also heard a willingness to work together to craft solutions that address the root of the problem. As the Law Director noted in her letter to President Shoemaker, the language she sent was an "early rough draft" and intended to be "a starting point for conversation." I am hopeful that City Council will work with my office and the professionals in our community to continue that conversation and implement solutions that are right for Chillicothe.

For the foregoing reasons, I am vetoing Ordinance 16-25.

Sincerely,



Luke M. Feeney
Mayor, City of Chillicothe

cc: Anna Villarreal, Law Director
Clerk of Council, Kennedy Moss

