



## MAYOR GINA-LOUISE SCIARRA

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### Joint Statement from City Departments on Summer Recreation in Leeds

The City of Northampton hereby issues this statement about the city's approach to summer recreation in Leeds concerning activities in and around the Orange Dam, updated for 2022. The city is aware that there continue to be incidents of noise, trash, parking, and other associated problems caused by people understandably using this area for recreation.

The city deeply sympathizes with the residents of Leeds affected by this situation. The Mayor's Office, working with representatives from the Police Department, Fire Rescue, Planning & Sustainability, Emergency Dispatch, Department of Public Works, the Office of Parking Enforcement, and the City Solicitor, has developed this response policy in an effort to clearly communicate where there is a role for the city, and where there is no role for the city.

Below is the city's approach to each of these issues for the summer of 2022:

#### **Changes to Parking Ordinance in Leeds:**

After exploring short-term parking bans designed to ensure public safety access to the neighborhood and the safe flow of pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle traffic on streets not designed to handle the level of traffic and parking present during peak recreational usage, the city instituted permanent measures to help manage parking in the area. Parking is now prohibited on sections of Grove Avenue, Front Street, Florence Street, and Main Street. Enforcement in the form of ticketing and towing is already underway.

In addition, Chartpak has entered into a contractual agreement with a towing company to monitor their lots during hours when they are not operating. This appears to be working.

#### **Managing Trash:**

We ask that every recreational user carry out all items they bring in, including trash, consistent with the citywide 'Carry in- Carry out' policy. This will ensure that our beloved recreational areas are kept pristine and welcoming for all. Leeds residents, the Leeds Civic Association and their partners, the Office of Planning and Sustainability (for city land only), and Chartpak will assist in this effort.

Chartpak had committed to thrice-weekly trash pickups on their property, and the city will join the Leeds Civic Association in asking that this continue in 2022.

**Quality of Life Issues:**

Residents have made it clear to the city and the community that the levels of noise - around the dam especially - are significantly impacting the quiet enjoyment of their homes. Leeds Civic Association members have volunteered to talk to recreational users about the impacts of noise on surrounding residents, and Chartpak has committed to hiring police details to monitor the area, when officers are available every Saturday and Sunday. The city continues to be grateful that Chartpak is engaged in conversation with residents and has taken meaningful steps toward addressing challenges at the dam. We are confident that the combined effect of everyone's efforts will result in a positive impact on the dam's neighbors.

Outside of times when a police detail is present, the Northampton Police Department will continue to respond when called by residents for crimes being committed when they have available personnel. Northampton Police will *not* respond to noise complaints or trespassing complaints in this area, as city ordinances generally do not support such enforcement. The city has no wish to issue criminal trespassing charges against families swimming in the river, and there is no civil option for the city to invoke on private property. Likewise, Planning & Sustainability and the Conservation Commission are not undertaking enforcement actions but will alert Police and Fire Rescue when necessary.

The Northampton Fire Rescue Department will continue to respond to reports of large and dangerous fires in the area when called but will not respond to calls about cooking fires. Northampton Fire Rescue does not have the resources or the inclination to monitor that level of activity and needs to be ready to respond to other emergencies. Residents are urged to only call in case of a true emergency.

**Longer-term:**

The city continues to explore the options for securing federal or state funding to create municipally-owned and managed swimming and picnic areas on the Mill River and the Connecticut River to meet community demand for safe use and access to our resource areas. Planning & Sustainability and Parks & Recreation are actively engaged in site exploration based on the outcomes of a recent river swimming study and public forums on this topic to make it a reality.

Again, the city is grateful for the engagement and assistance of Leeds residents and Chartpak as we all work through these complex issues and try to chart a balanced and appropriate response. We will continue to update everyone in the city as we monitor the effectiveness of each of these approaches.

Thank you,

Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra  
Police Chief Jody Kasper  
Fire Rescue Chief Jon Davine  
Director of Communications Kelly Schuetze  
Director of Public Works Donna LaScaleia  
Director of Planning & Sustainability Carolyn Misch  
City Solicitor Alan Seewald  
Parking Enforcement Administrator Nanci Forrestall