



“Tent City” Given 72 Hours to Clear Out Due to Rat Infestation

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — County officials say social workers are starting to move “tent city” residents, living in the North End Encampment, into temporary shelters after Mecklenburg County issued an 72-hour eviction notice over public health concerns.

Officials say living conditions at the encampment have worsened over the past two weeks, most recently with the discovery of a rat infestation, and emergency shelter preparations are underway to move these individuals.

County officials say they are working with community partners to expand existing shelter capacity, and they will add an additional shelter hotel just for those residents evacuating from the North End Encampment.

The new shelter will be open for 90 days, and staff will work to help these individuals find other housing options.

CEO of one community partner, Roof Above, Liz Clasen-Kelly says she was just as surprised as everyone to learn the North End of the Encampment would be cleared in less than 72 hours, and recognized how big a task this will be.

Clasen-Kelly says they have already moved 60 people out of the encampment, Mecklenburg County has leased 80 motel rooms, and Roof Above is working on connecting those in need with resources they already have in place including their winter shelter.

Residents of “tent city” just north of Uptown have less than 72 hours to leave the homeless encampment.

Mecklenburg County issued the order, saying there’s a rat infestation.

“This is not a situation that anybody should be living in,” Mecklenburg County Health Director Gibbie Harris told County Commissioners on Tuesday night.

It’s a sudden move to evict the around 140 people living in “tent city.”

Harris says the rat infestation at the camp on 12th Street, between Tryon and College, has left it unsanitary and at risk for spreading disease.

“There’s a food source that these rats can easily get to and so they’re not going away, as long as that continues to be there,” Harris said.

A video Queen City Nerve obtained from a source shows rats scattering in January, when someone lifts a tarp.

Harris also showed Commissioners pictures including rat droppings.

“What we did also experience was a number of dead rats on the site, which indicated that there was poison being used,” Harris said.

County officials haven’t said what actions they’ll take to enforce the order, but Commissioners say they’re already getting angry e-mails.

“We’re being called despicable people. And so I want them to understand this is the most humane thing that we can do. We can’t let people live among rats, and I think we can all agree on that,” said Commissioner Laura Meier.

The county is offering hotel rooms for those at the camp, but in the past most have turned them down.

“Not everybody’s gonna want to go to a hotel or they would have gone to a hotel when offered,” Meier said.

One of the property owners at “tent city” filed a lawsuit last year, arguing the city and county should declare the encampment a nuisance and clear it.

County leaders haven’t said if the lawsuit influenced the decision to clear the site now.