

202001687

**Williams, Antonio**

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**From:** Pastor, Jeff  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 20, 2020 5:28 PM  
**To:** Williams, Antonio  
**Subject:** Fwd: [External Email] Piatt Park concerns

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Emily Jennings .....>  
**Date:** August 20, 2020 at 14:04:50 PDT  
**To:** "Pastor, Jeff" <Jeff.Pastor@cincinnati-oh.gov>  
**Subject:** [External Email] Piatt Park concerns

External Email Communication

Hello Councilman Pastor,

My name is Emily Jennings and I am the property manager for Garfield Tower Apartments located at 111 Garfield Pl. We are home to 160 residential units and 4 businesses. I am writing to voice some concerns about Piatt Park. The park is located right across from our front doors and has always been a beautiful addition to our community. It has also been a great selling point to prospective residents, as green space can be few and far between in the downtown area. However, in recent months this has been far from the case. I know that you are probably aware of problems that have happened in the park and concerns that business owners have had over the years but please know that these issues are now starting to affect our business like never before. In the past, the issues were few and far between and were not so "visible" to the residents of our community. We are beginning to lose residents and prospective residents and I fear it will continue to get worse. As a matter of fact, one of our brand new retail tenants is the person who first witnessed the stabbing a couple of weeks ago and called the police. While I understand that unfortunate events can happen anywhere, it was not a very good introduction to their new neighborhood where they hope to have a thriving business. Concerns are not only the recent stabbing but fights, illegal activity, rampant homelessness (and the issues that surround that problem) and just overall safety.

Please know that we are not the only community that is affected by this problem. Our neighbors at the Gramercy and Greenwich (Towne Properties) are also affected. I have been told that their residents are also moving due to safety concerns and that all but one of their townhomes that face the park will be vacated in the coming weeks. These townhomes are very rarely available and are usually very desired units. They have stated that the notices that were given were largely due to safety concerns stemming from the park. Our residents have expressed concerns with walking their dogs, coming home late at night, etc. These are not concerns that we have heard from our residents in the past.

All this being said, I sadly do not have any further suggestions to rectify these problems other than what has already been discussed in many 3CDC sector meetings and privately organized meetings with other business owners on the street. There is another privately organized meeting that business owners have scheduled to try and brainstorm ways to rectify these issues as a community. I will be in attendance as well as representatives from other businesses on the street as well as Officer Epstein from the CPD. We would love to have yourself or a member of your staff, other council members, etc to be in attendance. As you know, downtown is the heart of the city and we certainly do not want all of the efforts to revitalize be in vain. If we begin losing people who have chosen to make downtown their home, I do not know how many years it will take to recover. It is in all of our interest to address this problem head on and not wait for something terrible to happen to one of the residents of these communities. If you can attend, here are the details of the meeting:

**Monday, August 24th @ 10:30am**

The Lofts at Shillito Place  
151 W 7th St  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Thank you for your time and I hope to hear from you!

*Emily Jennings*  
Property Manager  
Garfield Tower

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## **MOTORCYCLE MENACE**

Illegal vehicles, driven dangerously, have taken control of Cincinnati's streets. Low-ride motorcycles, off-road vehicles and occasional passenger cars race – at will – through our streets and parks. Most are illegally modified to blast excessive noise.

This report describes the problems created by the vehicles and their riders. The report also offers possible solutions to defeat the menace. Some of the proposed solutions are already employed by other cities.

### **THE PROBLEMS**

#### **Safety Hazard - Dangerous**

The riders (drivers) – for thrill or attention – intentionally create dangerous conditions. With little concern for their own safety and total disregard for the safety of others (motorists and pedestrians) they violate all manner of laws that exist to keep our streets safe.

They run red lights and stop signs, weave in-and-out of traffic, pull abruptly in front of other motorists and enjoy performing “wheelies,” all while riding at high speeds. At night, they often add to their thrill by performing without lights.

#### **Intent to Terrify and Intimidate - Mob Mentality**

They ride in packs (swarms, flash mobs). The riders gleefully intimidate and terrify lawful motorists and pedestrians. They seem to dare confrontation and encourage road-rage reaction.

Fortunately, most citizens do not react. Either paralyzed by fear or restrained by better judgment, law abiding citizens don't take the bait; they ignore the bullies. The intimidating swarm continue loudly down the road to find more persons to intimidate throughout the evening and into the early morning hours.

#### **Damage to City Park**

In a recent incident, Cincinnati Police received citizen calls of motorcycles and off-road vehicles causing damage to the turf at Smale Park. Packs of motorcycles and off-road vehicles are known to ride through the entire Riverfront Park area after the park's closing hours.

#### **Numerous Laws Violated**

The list of laws these riders violate are many, all found in the Cincinnati Municipal Code (CMC) and Ohio Revised Code (ORC). The following are just a few of the laws that are ignored.

Reckless Operation (506-6 CMC)

Speed (506-8 CMC)

Traffic Control Device (502-19 CMC)

Muffler (503-38 CMC)

Noisy Muffler (511-16 CMC)

Unnecessary Noise (511-12 CMC)

Disobey Police Officer Signal (502-9 CMC)

Racing (506-30 CMC)

Rules for Equipment of snowmobiles, off-highway motorcycles, and all-purpose vehicles (4519.20 ORC)

**Prohibited Acts (4519.40 ORC) – Note: Refers to off-road vehicles which are not permitted on city streets.**

### **Laws Not Enforced**

The police find themselves limited by two obstacles. 1) A **No Pursuit Policy** prevents police officers from pursuing traffic violators and non-felony criminal violators. 2) The riders, fully aware of this, flee from the police in attempt to encourage pursuit.

A Police Officer who sees a pack of riders, simply “monitors” the reckless violations and might initiate a broadcast for other officers to also “monitor” the pack further on down the road. The performers ride on; unstopped and emboldened.

Police Captain Doug Weisman and his team of the Central Business Section have made some attempts to address the problem. They meet the bikers at one of their staging places along the riverfront. While the vehicles are stationary, the officers enforce vehicle violations when found. But these efforts have had limited effect on resolving the problem. Moving violations and other equipment violations continue unabated.

### **Police are Mocked and Taunted**

Aware of the No Pursuit Policy, the riders taunt the police. They defiantly speed, weave, run red lights and perform their stunts in front of police officers. They know the police will not stop them, will not pursue them. They ride with impunity.

The riders openly mock the police. The riders are known to raise their middle fingers at police officers while loudly revving their engines and performing wheelies as they speed away.

Police Officers are understandably frustrated.

### **Perception - Selective Enforcement?**

The negative impact of police non-responsiveness cannot be overlooked. The tacit message to the public is this: The police will enforce the law if you comply, pull over and accept your ticket. If you give the cop a finger and speed through a few red lights to get away, you are rewarded with a free pass.

### **FIND CREATIVE SOLUTIONS**

The No Pursuit policy has a solid foundation in public safety. Pursuits have proven to be dangerous and deadly, often to innocent bystanders.

But Cincinnati’s leaders (Elected and Police) cannot allow the policy to render them immobile; unable to protect citizens, unable to enforce the law. City Leaders must become creative and innovative. Citizen safety and quality of life demand effective resolution.

## **IT IS A NATIONWIDE PROBLEM**

The problems described are not unique to Cincinnati. Other cities have been burdened with similar vehicular mob unruliness for the past few years. The other cities are also hampered by the limitations of the No Pursuit policy as the policy is generally universal.

Research into this nationwide phenomenon reveals incidents of death and serious injury to riders and innocent bystanders. Articles report of assaults, fights and even shootings which stem from the intimidating tactics of the riders. One article describes a Nashville Police Officer being dragged by a three-wheeler (2019); another article reports of an Officer in the Bronx surrounded by a swarming pack (2019).

Research also shows cities are beginning to push back.

## **OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN FROM OTHERS – RESEARCH and FOLLOW UP**

Cincinnati's Elected Officials or Police Officials could contact their counterparts in some of the other cities to learn if effective strategies were adopted. What worked, what didn't work? Creative and effective strategies could then be tailored to address the menace in Cincinnati.

Cursory Google research found the following, mostly news articles. Some were found using terms "Motorcycle Swarms" or Motorcycle Mobs."

### General Overview – Some Other Cities with Similar Problems

West Palm Beach, Florida (2017), Seattle (2017), San Francisco (2017), Philadelphia (2017 and 2018), Boston (2018), New York (2018), Hunts Point The Bronx (2019), Nashville (2019), Orlando and Orange County, Florida (2019), Chicago (2019), Atlanta (2019), Vancouver BC (2019), Washington DC (2019), Miami-Dade (2020).

### Cities that Implemented Plans – Taking Action

Recent articles (March and April of 2020) found cities that took action – creative and inventive – to return the streets and the quality of life to their law-abiding citizens. These are presented in alphabetical order, by city. News source, date and title of article are also included.

- Allentown, PA (The Morning Call, May 22, 2020) – *Allentown Police Cracking Down on ATV, Dirtbike Riders*
- Boston, MA (Masslive, May 20, 2020) – *Boston Police Confiscate 30 Off-Road Vehicles, Arrest 18 people*
- Bridgeport, CT (Patch, May 13, 2020) – *Bridgeport Crackdown Leads to Seizure of 9 ATVs*
- Camden, NJ (Camden County Public Safety, May 26, 2020) – *Public Safety Campaign Targeting Illegal Off-Road Vehicles Has Resulted in 70 Impounds to Date*
- Chicago, IL (Chicago Tribune, May 23, 2020) – *Chicago Police Announce Crackdown on Motorcycle, Memorial Day Weekend Speeders*
- Hartford, CT (WTNH, April 28, 2020) – *City of Hartford, PD Crush Seized ATVs, Dirt Bikes as Part of Ongoing Enforcement Efforts*
- Lake County, Ohio (Cleveland News 5, May 4, 2020) – *Lake County Cracks Down on Illegal Use of Off-Road Vehicles after Property, Railroads Suffer Damage*

- New York, NY (Patch, April 27, 2020) – *Cops Snatch 20 Off-Road Vehicles ‘Terrorizing’ NYC Streets: NYPD*
- Miami, FL (CBS Miami, January 16, 2020) – *South Florida Law Enforcement to Crack Down on “Wheels Up, Guns Down” Reckless Riders*
- Springfield, MA (WAMC Public Radio, July 10, 2019) – *Police Use New Tactics to Pursue Illegal Dirt Bikes Operators*
- Syracuse, NY (WSYR-TV, May 26, 2020) – *Syracuse Police Crackdown on Illegal Dirt Bikes, ATVs*

### Strategies and Tactics to Consider

The following is an overview of some strategies to consider. Most were employed by some of the aforementioned cities.

- Partnership among Elected Officials, Police Officials and Citizens
- Meeting of Law and Public Safety to Develop Strategies – Discuss Existing Laws
- Increase Fines to be hefty
- Impound and Destroy Vehicles (if Illegal or Ownership Unproven)
- Enlist Support and Assistance from the Public – Citizen Partnership
  - e.g., Where are vehicles stored and garaged?
- City Social Media or Twitter Page dedicated to the problem and Citizen info exchange
- Public Announcement of Plans (a warning to the violators)
- Public Announcement of Results (the Public knows something is being done)
- Police Create Special Task Force of Officers to Address the Issue
- Plain Clothes Officers to follow swarms rather than pursue
- Infiltrate
- Social Media Intercept to Monitor Groups in Advance of a Swarm
- Hand Held Decibel Readers for Police
- Stationary Sound Devices in high incident areas
- Stationary Cameras in high incidence areas
  - Cincinnati: Real Time Crime and License Plate Recognition
- Helicopters to follow to homes or gathering places rather than pursue
- Drones
- Stop Sticks – Some made specifically for ATVs

### **CONCLUSION**

The problem is more than just a nuisance or loud noise complaint. The defiant riders are a dangerous threat to safety. Allowing the inconsiderate hordes to continue to mock and taunt police is embarrassingly unacceptable. It is not fair to the citizens of this city and not fair to the good men and women who work hard to protect us.

Cincinnati’s Elected and Police Officials can address the problem in manners that are both fair and creative. We can be smarter than the mob riders. Where necessary, laws can be, and should be, changed. Action must be taken to regain our city’s streets.