

[Transcript of Facebook video message released by Bloomington mayor Thomson on April 27, 2024]

Good afternoon, Bloomington, this is Mayor Kerry Thomson. And as you know, there have been protests on the IU Bloomington campus for the last several days, which have unfortunately involved police response. This was not a response that the Bloomington police were involved in, and I want to update you on what's happening, and also on my position on the situation. I support freedom of speech and the ability of our residents to express themselves in a peaceful manner. What's happening in Dunn Meadow currently is part of a national movement on college campuses, and it has attracted some who are believed to have an outside agenda and indeed be from outside of our community. These agendas are known to be less than peaceful. The university asked the state police to come to Bloomington to enforce the removal of the encampment in Dunn Meadow on Thursday, and 10s of arrests have been made over the past 48 hours in two separate events, to dismantle the encampment. The Bloomington police department has had no involvement in policing the protests, no involvement in the dismantling of the encampment, has made no arrests related to the protests and has my instruction not to be involved in these activities. I'm supportive of the protesters and their freedom to express themselves. I'm not supportive of unauthorized encampments, nor of violence. I urge all involved to use the principles of non-violence and de-escalation and to be aware that these times are already charged for so many. It's essential that we work towards solutions where possible, we communicate well, so that the use of force would absolutely only be a last resort. A primary theme of my leadership has been that of listening and meeting people to co-create solutions to the often difficult challenges we face as a community. There are certainly times which warrant protests. And ultimately, my hope is that in addition to the protests, we find a path to discuss a peaceful way forward. One where ideas are welcomed and forward motion is recognized. I've been in conversation with the leadership at the university and have been assured that the protesters will be welcome to stay in Dunn Meadow, but any unauthorized encampments will continue to be removed. I stand by my commitment to the freedom of speech and a community that welcomes all voices. Let's work together for peace in Bloomington.