

ADDRESSING EMERGENCY FACILITY NEEDS OF THE HOMELESS

Unhoused persons in Dane County have few accessible spaces available to carry out life-sustaining activities like eating, drinking, sleeping, washing and going to the bathroom. Long term solutions, including increased development of affordable housing, greater access to physical and mental health care, AODA programs, and case management services must be pursued to adequately meet the needs of unhoused persons who are among Dane County's most vulnerable residents. Res. 292, 11-12, Dane County Recognizes Housing as a Human Right, provides for the development of a Housing Plan to increase affordable housing stock in Dane County communities, reduce the number of homeless children in our schools, ensure no one is denied access to shelter and develop additional daytime shelter space. These are long term solutions, however, and will take time and resources to develop. In the meantime, unhoused persons should not be pushed out of public spaces that are desperately needed for shelter and accessing water. Harassment, ticketing, and removal from Dane County property solely for engaging in life-sustaining activities, including resting, eating, drinking, or accessing public showers or restrooms is unnecessary and unproductive.

Dane County ordinances and policies governing the use of public spaces, while originally well-intentioned and reasoned, when applied to unhoused persons, exacerbate their insecurity and create additional and unnecessary barriers to fulfilling basic needs, including accessing shelter from the elements and clean water for drinking and washing. When resources are limited and long term solutions are being pursued, existing public spaces and amenities can be maximized and made available to unhoused persons to carry out basic, life-sustaining activities. The City County Homeless Issues Committee established pursuant to Res. 20, 12-13, will soon be conducting a comprehensive analysis of homeless issues, including current gaps in services. Interim measures are necessary until the recommendations of the Homeless Issues Committee take effect.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Dane County recognizes the inherent human dignity in every Dane County resident and commits to ameliorating the difficulties experienced by unhoused persons when carrying out basic, life-sustaining activities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that no later than September 15, 2012, showers, restrooms and lockers will be provided, at a location to be determined by county staff, and accessible and prioritized for unhoused persons at least ten (10) hours per week and at least five (5) days per week until such amenities are accessible at a centrally located day center.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that portable restrooms and sanitary stations shall be provided in parking lots outside the following Dane County facilities: a downtown Dane County parking ramp, Alliant Energy Center, Human Services Building, and Tenney Locks.

Submitted by Supervisors Wegleitner, Hendrick, Hotchkiss, Sargent, Zweifel, Richmond, McDonell, Krause, Levin, Pan and Matano, August 2, 2012.

Referred to HEALTH & HUMAN NEEDS, PERSONNEL & FINANCE, PUBLIC WORKS & TRANSPORTATION, CITY-COUNTY-LIAISON and HOMELESS ISSUES.