

CITY OF MADISON  
**INTER-DEPARTMENTAL**  
CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: September 3, 2015



TO: Community Development Block Grant Committee  
FROM: Mayor Paul R. Soglin  
SUBJECT: **Legistar Item 39502**

In discussions with representatives and staff of the National Coalition for the Homeless, we were told:

1) That the West Coast approach (Portland, San Francisco, Seattle) is very compassionate and sensitive to the constitutional rights of the homeless, but absent of local rules and regulations has been a failure. That the Boston approach which is just as sensitive and compassionate to has been effective in that there are rules and responsibilities in regards to the homeless community. Consequently, there are far few problems in Boston.

2) That it is important not to have large groups of homeless people congregate, particularly when many are facing substance abuse and mental illness challenges. Rather than have one location with forty people, it is far preferable to have ten groups with four people because the smaller groups are less likely to see escalating bad behaviors, and the enforcement of rules is more accepted.

In discussions with psychiatrists, I was told that with the exception of schizophrenics, most homeless people can and will obey rules within a community. This is confirmed by those who operate homeless shelters. Making it very clear that it is not only in the best interest of the larger community, but also the homeless community, to have sets of rules and responsibilities.

We all have a deep concern for the well being of the homeless, but let's be clear that we have a responsibility to the larger community as well. Since the introductions of these proposals, newly-arrived homeless individuals are responsible for;

- an attempted rape on campus,
- an assault with knife, and
- an overdose in the bathroom of City County Building, accompanied by a forceful confrontation with police and firefighters over the confiscation of drug paraphernalia.

In addition, we have continued problems with hypodermic needles found in areas where children play, and recently experienced an incident involving a chronically-homeless individual washing her underwear in the drinking fountain of the City County Building.

Since the breakup of the seating at Philosophers' Grove, the dispersed individuals are behaving much better. Law enforcement personnel report improvements in just one week.

The proposed ordinances provide us with the opportunity to disperse groups and enforce rules. We put millions of dollars into homeless services. We must acknowledge our responsibility to all the people of Madison.