



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Roberts and City Councilmembers

FROM: Bonita Roznos, Deputy City Clerk

DATE: January 26, 2016

RE: Documents received at 01/25/16 Council Meeting

CC: Debbie Tarry, City Manager
John Norris, Assistant City Manager

Attached hereto are documents received from the public at your January 25, 2016 City Council Business Meeting.

- 1) Written comment regarding homelessness submitted by Brad Lancaster.

COUNCIL TALK
1.25.16

My name is Brad Lancaster. I live in Shoreline.

I am asking troubling questions about homelessness. Tonight, I ask: **Do homeless people deserve our help?** The historical answer in America has been, No, homeless people should help themselves. But our perspective changes as our culture mutates. Perhaps now we can treat homeless people with respect.

Our nation's story is one of slowly learning to include people. We, frankly, have a ghastly history of exclusion. In the 1600s, we sailed to America to escape European religious persecutions. Once here, we excluded heretics, and burned a few. In the 1760s, we drove nasty Americans loyal to King George into Canada. In 1789, we agreed that Yankee Anglicans could indeed put up with Baptist tobacco farmers, at least to the minimal extent the Constitution required. We let free, white males vote. In the 1800s, we nearly exterminated American native populations. In the 1860s, we killed one and one half million Americans resolving the question whether one man could own another. We abolished slavery, but granted little freedom. In the 1920s, belatedly, women got the franchise. Again, for a time, that meant little. In the 1960s, we belatedly finished the Civil War. We enacted statutes that gave people of color a chance at prosperity. Jim Crowe died (or was badly wounded). In the 1980s, America's women seized their day. In the 1990s, we built some wheelchair ramps. In the 2000s, we recognized that odd sexualities are not all that odd. Always slowly. A little too slowly.

Not surprisingly, the poor's freedoms are off to a shaky start. The Great Depression showed us horrors. FDR intervened. The 1970s saw War on Poverty. Now, belatedly, courts may declare homelessness, even poverty itself, a suspect class. Hating poor people may soon be treated like race or disability or sex discrimination. Where attitudes of exclusion persist, we need such declarations.

So, do homeless people deserve our help? Homeless people need respect. They need homes. Nothing fancy. Just a spot secure, dry, warm, and private. A base from which to re-launch themselves. Can we now say that homeless people deserve our help? Can we lend a hand? We shall see.