



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Roberts and City Councilmembers

FROM: Bonita Roznos, Deputy City Clerk

DATE: April 12, 2016

RE: Documents received at 4/11/16 Council Meeting

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

Attached hereto are documents received from the public at your April 11, 2016 City Council Regular Meeting.

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

COUNCIL TALK

4.11.16

My name is Brad Lancaster. I live in Shoreline.

I have suggested a series of changes to Shoreline law that might make Shoreline more hospitable to homeless persons. Shoreline (and all of America) needs to coordinate the chaotic and duplicative menagerie of systems aimed at helping poor and homeless persons. When seeking public help, the homeless person faces a daunting series of applications. Each application approaches the homeless person as if he had never before contacted public entities. Paperwork obstacles leap up, impenetrable as granite. From the perspective of homeless people, the system, if we can dignify it with the name "system," seems aimed at making sure homeless persons get no assistance.

This is not a new problem. In 1997, almost twenty years ago, the Washington Supreme Court found that DSHS has an affirmative duty to provide for homeless children a "comprehensive and coordinated plan for providing services."¹ Twenty years later, matters have degenerated.

In 1997, the Supreme Court found that the majority of the Washington homeless are families with small children, and homelessness has significant adverse effects upon the growth and development of children. The Court stated, "State agencies have not coordinated their services or their goals concerning homeless families and their children. There is no plan that coordinates the services provided at the state level. At the local level, there is no effort to coordinate with non-profit providers that serve homeless families. It is a very fragmented system."

The Gates Foundation urges that, to bring systemic improvements, the delivery of services needs "one simple way to access the system."² This will reduce delay, waste, and redundancy.

The Gates's billions and the lumbering DSHS behemoth have not remediated this problem. What should Shoreline do for its homeless persons? I suggest that the City could save money by hiring someone to coordinate services to homeless persons. That person could create a system that gathers from homeless persons all the information the various organizations need, and then issues that information in the format each department prefers. The homeless people I know are not great at administration. The system we have invented to help homeless persons requires an administrative genius to navigate. The mismatch is stupid. Failure of coordination causes great suffering. It defeats our good intentions.

Set someone the task of making access to homeless services simple and coordinated.

¹ Washington State Coalition for the Homeless v. Department of Social and Health Services, 494 P.2d 1291, 133 Wn.2d 894 (Wash. 1997).

² <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/What-We-Do/US-Program/Washington-State>.