

RESOLUTION NO. 20170831-059

WHEREAS, the number of people experiencing homelessness in Austin is increasing, leading to more people seeking assistance to sustain themselves; and

WHEREAS, some means of assisting those in need, such as contributing to roadside or sidewalk solicitation (“panhandling”) are being increasingly recognized as detrimental to the well-being of those experiencing homelessness and are being supplanted by programs such as “Keep the Change” in Milwaukee, WI and “Text to Give” in Philadelphia PA; and

WHEREAS, programs such as “Keep the Change” and “Text to Give” facilitate contributing to services and directing people to those services, while removing some of the hazards of panhandling, such as being in a dangerous travel lane or right-of-way; and

WHEREAS, Austin’s residents express the desire to direct their compassionate acts in the most effective ways to address the needs of their vulnerable neighbors experiencing homelessness; and address the public safety issues caused by panhandling; and

WHEREAS, connecting those in need with the best array of resources to address their needs and connecting those in the community who wish to support those resources is a significant step toward the systemic change which facilitates the greatest level of self-sufficiency and full life in the community; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin is well suited to publicize and facilitate the community’s role in addressing citywide and neighborhood challenges engendered

by the disconnect between housing and health resources and the people who need access to them; **NOW THEREFORE,**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to develop recommendations for engaging the community in alternatives to activities such as “panhandling” with more effective and positive interactions with people experiencing homelessness. The process for developing the recommendations should include consultation with agencies and groups which provide service and support to people experiencing homelessness and with neighborhood representatives in areas experiencing panhandling.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager will focus recommendations on public awareness and education on the most effective ways to serve the population experiencing homelessness as well as opportunities to have direct positive impact on service connections serving the vulnerable population. The City Manager will include recommendations for creating and operating an electronic platform which would include, but not be limited to, the following capabilities:

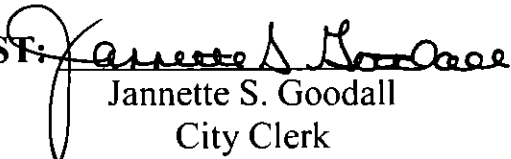
- Targeting informational advertising to social media outlets;
- Offering education, information, and electronic resources, including the appropriate response to persons experiencing a crisis and direct links to the appropriate responders;
- Identifying and creating direct links to resources available for vulnerable persons and the most effective methods for connecting people to those resources; and
- Enabling individuals to volunteer with, join, or contribute financially to service agencies and advocacy groups.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to identify resources with the city or appropriate non-profit organizations required to implement such a community engagement program, including sources such as grant funding and other appropriate mechanisms. The City Manager is further directed to return to the City Council with the developed recommendations no later than January 31, 2018.

ADOPTED: August 31, 2017

ATTEST:


Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk