

Pamela Megill

From: Jim Arp - City Council
Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 11:36 AM
To: Pamela Megill
Cc: City Council; Doug Hewett; Gina V. Hawkins; Kristoff Bauer; Jay Reinstein
Subject: Council Member Action Item Request - Safe Streets and Parking Lots in Fayetteville - Addressing the Growing Problem of Panhandling

Agenda Item Title: Safe Streets and Parking Lots in Fayetteville - Addressing the Growing Problem of Panhandling

What do you want to accomplish with this item? The City must develop a comprehensive plan to address "Panhandlers" that are becoming increasingly aggressive, endanger the public with their activities in City and NCDOT Streets, and negatively impact the conduct of commerce.

How does this item connect to the City's Strategic Plan?

GOAL I: The City of Fayetteville will be a safe a secure community.

- To reduce the incidence and severity of crime and to improve public perception of safety through community engagement and interagency collaboration in crime/safety initiatives.
- To ensure traffic safety by striving to reduce preventable vehicle accidents and traffic related fatalities and injuries.

GOAL II: The City of Fayetteville will have a strong, diverse and viable local economy.

- To sustain a favorable development climate through continual improvement of internal processes and by providing redevelopment tools to encourage business growth.

GOAL IV: Fayetteville will be a highly desirable place to live, work and recreate with thriving neighborhoods and a high quality of life for all residents.

- To provide for a clean and beautiful community with increased green spaces.
- To improve mobility and connectivity by investing in traffic flow strategies, sidewalks, trails and bike lanes.
- To reduce homelessness.

Comments:

The problem off panhandling continues to be a significant problem in the City of Fayetteville and seriously impacts our ability to achieve three specific strategic goals.

The number of panhandlers in Fayetteville appears to be increasing. They now are regular fixtures across the City, at major intersections (all along Skibo Road, Bragg Blvd, and others), at our commercial and retail business sites, and across our downtown area.

Their activities of soliciting money in the right-of-way of highly traveled roads (45-MPH Roads) creates a public safety issue for motorists as they cross, enter, linger on medians, and accept money on the roadways themselves. Their activities are not limited to daylight hours only. Many panhandlers are working the medians of busy roads, like Skibo Road in front of Walmart, wearing dark clothing and after dark in areas with little to no lighting. This puts the general public at risk of an accident as well as the panhandler.

The aggressiveness of panhandlers is creating an impact on commerce activities in the City as people now are being confronted in parking lots of retail establishments, restaurants, and other commercial business by aggressive panhandlers seeking money. This aggressiveness is fueled by their substance addictions and potentially puts citizens at risk. It is creating a "chilling effect" on shoppers and patrons and driving revenue out of Fayetteville as more and more citizens are avoiding these commercial and retail areas so as not to be confronted by the aggressive panhandlers. The impact is to small and large businesses alike.

Additionally, panhandlers are significantly impacting the image of Fayetteville with others from outside our community. As we attempt to recruit business, industry and investment, the image of people panhandling on street medians and corners, approaching patrons dining at outside venues and in shopping center parking lots, as well as approaching people attempting to enter their place of business presents a highly negative appearance. Couple that with business and industry recruiters who visit the City having to experience this situation personally - being approached at restaurants and at their hotels by aggressive panhandlers. This clearly presents a chilling effect to their decision making process and impacts a potential economic development decision to locate their companies here.

The City cannot fully achieve the three strategic goals listed above without a comprehensive plan to address panhandlers. We need to establish an overall comprehensive "Safe Streets" initiative that allows us to achieve the three goals above by focusing on specific public safety areas including panhandling (Speeding, Red Light Running, Panhandling, Litter, Aggressive Driving, and Texting while driving).

Our specific effort on panhandling should include, but is not limited to the following:

- Synchronize City of Fayetteville public safety efforts with non-profit civic and religious organizations, the VA, and other Federal, State and County Social Services Agencies who are funded to provide help to homeless panhandlers so they receive opportunities for proper shelter, food, clothing, job training, and receive services for substance abuse and mental health issues.
- Establish an ongoing Public Service Announcements Campaign that encourages citizens and residents not to give panhandlers money. Rather, we should encourage them to donate to civic and religious organizations that provide assistance with drug and alcohol addiction and assistance for those who are truly homeless.
- Stepped up law enforcement effort on panhandlers and aggressive panhandlers within the current ordinance. Panhandlers that enter the roadway and endanger themselves and the public should be addressed on an ongoing basis (zero tolerance for panhandling in the streets). Aggressive panhandlers that threatened citizens and residents should equally be addressed by law enforcement within the current ordinance.
- There needs to be better synchronization of efforts between our law enforcement, the DA, and Sheriff's Office for appropriate prosecution of recurring violators or threatening violators.
- We need to determine legally the actions that can be taken to stiffen the panhandling ordinance similar to other communities. The problem here appears to be greater than in other communities in NC and across the Southeast US.
- Implement a comprehensive and aggressive effort with all commercial and retail establishments to define private property with signage as no panhandling areas for better prosecution.

- Enforce littering laws on panhandlers who leave trash along the roadways, in parking lots, and who are "squatters" on private property where they establish camps and leave volumes of trash and debris.

Please take time to review this City of Fayetteville Panhandling Video from 2009 prior to our work session.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7zaoUYy2ks>

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