

New Bedford City Councillors filing motion to curb panhandling

Councillor Dunn filed a motion, co-sponsored by City Council President Joseph Lopes, and Councillors Abreu and Winterson, aimed at curbing panhandling, by giving city residents and visitors a more effective way to donate their money – while also supporting services for this at risk population.

The proposal places traffic signs, at high volume panhandling locations, providing a telephone number for people to make donations to local charities that provide food, shelter and mental health services. The number can also be used for pandandlers to access these services. The program has already been implemented as partnership between the city of Albuquerque, NM and the United Way.

Dunn stated that “New Bedford is a compassionate city, we are our brother’s keepers and we care about our fellow citizens. This program will help us to uplift our homeless and most vulnerable population – inaction is not an option. Panhandling, especially in high traffic areas, is inherently dangerous both for the panhandler, and the general public. Giving a few dollars is not going to lead to the life changes necessary to get these individuals back on track. However, by establishing a responsible system of giving and accessing services – we gain confidence that our change is going towards making positive changes in these people’s lives.”

Dunn also stated “If people consistently give to charities rather than directly to panhandlers – we can be assured that the money isn’t being spent on alcohol or drugs and that the panhandlers are more likely interact with organizations that can help identify long-term housing and employment

opportunities – thereby reducing the burden on our first responders.”

The motion reads as follows:

WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Dunn, Abreu, Winterson and City Council President Lopes requesting, that the Health Department, the Department of Public Infrastructure, the Traffic Commission and the Mayor’s office explore the implementation of a program that places, at popular panhandling locations, signage designed to encourage and facilitate responsible giving by providing a telephone number to both donate to local charities that provide food, shelter and mental health services and enable this at risk population to access these services.

The motion will be discussed at the upcoming City Council meeting on August 17th.