
From: Forrest Swall [mailto:flowell@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2009 11:11 AM
To: David L. Corliss
Subject: Fw: People Who are Homeless in Lawrence

David,

I want to copy my message along with the attached letter from the Social Action committee of the Lawrence Unitarian Fellowship.

I hope to be at the meeting of the Commission tonight and speak representing the Social Action Committee.

Forrest Swall
785-843-6319

"The spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not too sure that it is right." ---Judge Learned Hand

--- On Mon, 2/9/09, Forrest Swall <flowell@sbcglobal.net> wrote:
From: Forrest Swall <flowell@sbcglobal.net>
Subject: People Who are Homeless in Lawrence
To: mdever@sunflower.com, robchestnut@sunflower.com, mikeamyx515@hotmail.com, suehack@sunflower.com, boog@lawrence.ixks.com
Cc: khbins@sunflower.com, cdic@sbcglobal.net, Shirley.smith@adeconna.com, wes_dahlberg@usc.salvationarmy.org, hubbard247@yahoo.com, Monroe@lkpd.org, smurphy@douglas-county.com, laweckan@sunflower.com, sandy.tutwiler@washburn.edu, commandr2001@yahoo.com, cknoche@ldcha.org
Date: Monday, February 9, 2009, 7:53 PM

Mayor Dever and members of the Commission,

I am pleased to present a letter on behalf of the members of the Social Action committee of the Lawrence Unitarian Fellowship. Please see the attached.

In addition I am copying this letter to members of the Community Commission on Homelessness. I plan to be present at the meeting of the HCC tomorrow afternoon and expand briefly on my concerns and the concerns of the members of the Unitarian Fellowship Social Action committee.

I have followed the news, as with many others, and the developments on behalf of people who are homeless in our community in the news. The most encouraging of these has been the willingness of the city to devote resources, including Bert Nash, to reach out to our citizens whose challenges are all too often well beyond their ability to address on their own.

I along with a good many others was surprised and deeply saddened to learn of the destruction of the efforts of some of the people to create shelters for themselves; disappointed that it could happen so quickly in terms of time frames of the people who had created space that had meaning to them; disappointed as I learned more about the event, that time was not allowed for the Out Reach workers to be in contact with more of them to help them prepare.

However I am not insensitive to the concerns of city officials. I, along with the members of the Unitarian Fellowship Social Action Committee believe that there is concern; there is a desire to find ways to be helpful. The members of the Committee which I chair, want to support you in your efforts. The best way we think we can support you is by sharing our heartfelt concerns for the people in Lawrence who are homeless.

In addition we think we can be helpful by urging an extension of more, not less, effort that will contribute to their safety, well-being and where possible, movement to permanent housing for people who are homeless.

Mayor, Dever, you have been quoted as saying that there has been little public concern or response to the issues surrounding people in Lawrence who are homeless. The implication is that the broader public is not concerned, that in fact we do not care. Speaking for our committee, as well as a number of other people in our community. I must say that those sentiments are not in keeping with what I have learned.

I have read the letter to the members of the City Commission from the ministers in our community. I am aware of the number of faith communities in Lawrence who have partnered with Family Promise to provide hospitality to families with children. The Unitarian Fellowship is in conversation with the Family Promise regarding becoming a partner in that most worthwhile effort.

Please know that the Social Action Committee of the Lawrence Unitarian Universalist Fellowship is prepared to join with others across the community to support your efforts as the Mayor, and members of the City Commission in taking positive, constructive and humane action on behalf of people who are homeless in Lawrence.

Thank you for taking time to consider our deep sense of concern on behalf of people who are homeless.

Forrest Swall, Chair

Unitarian Fellowship Social Action Committee

Unitarian Fellowship of Lawrence
The Social Action Committee
1263 N 1100 Road -- Lawrence, KS 66047

February 1, 2009

Michael Dever, Mayor
City of Lawrence
6 E Sixth Street
Lawrence, KS 66044

Dear Mayor Dever,

I am writing on behalf of the Social Action Committee of the Unitarian Fellowship of Lawrence concerning the needs of people in Lawrence who are homeless.

We are aware of some of the efforts underway to provide heated shelter during the cold winter nights by the Lawrence Community Shelter and the Salvation Army. We are also aware of the meals being served by LINK and other groups—all of which is good. We know, as well, that there is an outreach service through the city's Homeless Outreach Program and Bert Nash Mental Health Center.

Even so, we are concerned that there continues to be a substantial unmet need for people with multiple problems/challenges and other related conditions that contribute to their homelessness. We appreciate that there is a Homeless Commission appointed by the City to study and make recommendations that would serve the Homeless.

As a religious group, we believe that our city has the resources to address more fully the compelling needs of people who are homeless. We are, in this letter, expressing both our concern and our commitment to support a greater level of effort.

We, along with many in the community, were disturbed last fall when the camp that sheltered several people who are homeless was destroyed with relatively little notice. It was reported that a 24 hour notice was given, which is better than nothing. We also know that for some of the people who had personal property in the space never knew of the impending destruction until after the crews completed their destructive clearing.

We are also concerned that the members of the Homeless Commission voted down the proposal to recommend setting space aside for camping with the city providing minimal sanitary equipment. We believe that the initiative of some of the people who are homeless provides a way to build on the strengths they are showing to provide for themselves.

We would acknowledge the supportive interest for the Family Promise program as expressed by members of the City Commission. The Lawrence Unitarian Fellowship is considering becoming a partner with Family Promise. Family promise serves an important function of housing and support for families with children, a significant dimension of homelessness in our community.

The Outreach Workers report of constructive initiatives and, in talking with them, we see the potential for possibilities of more effective services for people who are homeless in Lawrence. The members of our Unitarian Social Action Committee sense that the city may be more willing

to respond to the needs of these people who are homeless. While we will continue to follow developments and join with others who share our concerns, we would urge you, as well as the members of the City Commission and members of the Homeless Commission to consider:

1. Immediate as well as long range plans to create humane resources for people who are homeless. It is imperative that our community provide more adequate Shelter resources, building on the foundation work of Loring Henderson, the Shelter volunteers and the Salvation Army. For example, those who work with people who are homeless speak to the desperate need for a detox and rehabilitation center and supportive housing for the mentally ill. These resources would be enormously beneficial to some of the people who are homeless; in addition there is a critical need to maintain the limited Outreach staff who work with people in the homeless population.
2. The provision of needed sanitary facilities modifying city ordinances as necessary, to permit the placement of sanitary facilities where people who are homeless congregate. For example: create toilet facilities for people who are homeless; surely our city can facilitate porta-potties strategically located as an alternative to urinating and defecating in public.
3. Removing barriers that deny basic accommodations for people who are homeless who have no place to turn, thus taking into consideration people who, because of their sense of fear and their past experience are unwilling or unable to accept the traditional services extended. For example, there is a need to examine the ordinance(s) that criminalize people who are homeless.

We do not want to diminish the significance of efforts currently underway by the City of Lawrence. However, we are concerned when we know that people in our community are suffering from the effects of life situations beyond their control that result in homelessness and exposure to severe life threatening elements.

As with others, including members of the City Commission and your staff, we ascribe to the fundamental human principle of “respecting the dignity of every human being.” The number of people in Lawrence who are homeless, who are vulnerable to exposure to the elements, who are hungry, who have no sure place to sleep reveals a lack of living up to this value.

The Unitarian Fellowship Social Action Committee will strongly encourage a more determined effort to address the needs of people who are homeless in Lawrence. We will join with other religious congregations and faith groups, and concerned citizens, to support constructive and effective programs and services. It is our hope that no man or woman, or families with children will need to be without necessary shelter, warmth and nutrition in our city.

Sincerely,

Forrest Swall, Chair and on behalf of the Social Action Committee of the Unitarian Fellowship of Lawrence (flowell@sbcglobal.net -- 843-6319)

CC: David Corliss, City Manager
Members of the Lawrence City Commission: [Robert Chestnut](#), [Mike Amyx](#), [Sue Hack](#), [Boog Highberger](#)
Members of the Community Commission on Homeless:

From: henocho [mailto:henocho@sunflower.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 14, 2009 12:04 AM
To: khdins@sunflower.com
Cc: Margene Swarts
Subject: Campsite for the Homeless...

Dear Chr. Katherine and Community Commissioners on Homelessness--

I'd like to know WHERE you feel homeless campers CAN BE --legally, if you don't support their right to camp? --And where we can turn for help for this most vulnerable, alienated population who simply ask to be left in peace?

I believe IF anyone took our City to Court for their devastating actions toward these people, that it would indeed have been found to be illegal! With your INaction today, you have endorsed their actions, and offered only vague (somewhere...sometime...) hope for people who need our support NOW!

What would have been wrong with some compromise proposal that designated a place, with portable toilets, a few picnic tables, and trash containers with pickup?? Surely that's NOT an expensive, unreasonable compromise--with a review--even in six months--and with regular contact with outreach workers and law enforcement support?? YOUR function is to make humane responses that might lessen alienation--and would contribute to the dignity and sense of worth of our homeless people. --Let the City worry about Parks & Rec's budget!

Perhaps, there's something wrong with a Vision that leaves out this segment of those who are homeless --and continues to criminalize their actions. As you are our last resort, OUR COMMUNITY Commission on HOMELESSNESS, you leave these homeless people--and the rest of us who care about how human beings in our community are treated--deeply disappointed.

Perhaps, the Community Commission itself will have a more humane approach; they DID rely on you to come up with some constructive answer... You have offered none. (They HAVE changed their minds about hedgehogs...)

**Very truly,
Hilda Enoch**

Margene, I'd be very appreciative if you would forward my letter above to all members of the CCH. Thank You.

**Hilda Enoch
1500 El Dorado Dr.
Lawrence, KS 66047
Ph. 785-842-6513
Henocho@sunflower.com**

1/14/2009

To: khdins@sunflower.com

Cc:

Subject: Camping in Lawrence for Homeless

To the members of the Lawrence Committee on Homelessness: I have just received a call from my daughter who does mental health counselling at the jail in Ottawa. She told me of a "prisoner" brought in recently who had deliberately sat in front of Weaver's, knowing they would call the police for his loitering, with his intent to be arrested and find refuge in jail for the night. His comment was "Where do you expect me to go?" This is the situation we are creating! I attended your meeting Jan 13 at City Hall, and could not believe what I heard from Parks and Recreation. Surely there can be some small acreage owned by the city that could be set aside for those who have nowhere to go, where they will not be criminalized for camping. An "At your own risk" sign could be placed to relieve the city of liability (as is done at public beaches. Two porta-potties and dumpster surely cannot be that costly. (We do that at city parks for festivals). These homeless folks are part of us and we can't pretend they will just "go away. "A society is measured by the way they treat their most vulnerable". Please, please, re-think this situation and come up with a more compassionate answer. Janney Burgess, e-mail APBJVB@webtv.net". 127 East 17th Terrace

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