

Bobbie Walthall

To: Diane Stoddard
Subject: RE: Upcomming Agenda Item for 06/04 regarding Transporation from Shelter

From: Sarah Bloxsom [<mailto:sbloxsom@heartlandworks.org>]

Sent: Friday, May 31, 2013 3:28 PM

To: mdever@sunflower.com; mikeamyx515@hotmail.com; voteyourselfafarmer@gmail.com; riordan346@gmail.com; schummfoods@gmail.com

Cc: David L. Corliss; Diane Stoddard; Cynthia Wagner

Subject: Upcomming Agenda Item for 06/04 regarding Transporation from Shelter

May 31, 2013

Dear Mayor and City Commissioners,

My name is Sarah Bloxsom. I am a resident of Lawrence KS. I work at the Lawrence Workforce Center and administer a voluntary work program for individuals in Douglas County that receive food assistance to find work to reduce or eliminate their need for food assistance. I am advocating as a resident - not for the workforce center or their affiliates.

The Lawrence workforce center is an excellent resource for job seekers in the community. We are on route 7 and route 5 which also serve the homeless shelter. We have approximately 20 computers with internet access, free printing and faxing, free phone usage all accessible to the public for job search. In addition to resources, we also have grants like mine to assist with training and job search and house numerous job fairs.

After the move earlier this year we have seen an increase in individuals that are walking from the homeless shelter in efforts to gain and locate employment. The shelter is 5 miles from the workforce center. While some grants provide access to transportation assistance; the process takes several visits in order to be eligible to receive the assistance. In addition, getting employment requires daily need for transportation to get to workforce center or other resource centers to apply for positions via internet, and interviews with in the community. A majority of the population at the shelter would be eligible for entry level positions, which many times require walk in application requests to numerous places around town. It is imperative that job seekers get out in the community to network their skills, learn bus routes, and engage in as many work ready opportunities as possible to find employment.

In order for people to find employment they must have access to transportation. Currently, it is my understanding that people need to have an interview in order to get a bus pass at the shelter. I have worked with leadership at the shelter to get patrons to my orientations if they are eligible for my program- however there is a vast amount of able bodied adults that aren't being served or eligible for work programs that would benefit from resources like the workforce center to map out and plan for work search.

I would suggest that a free pick up in front of the shelter be a wise step in an effort to get homeless people engaged in work search that would inevitably lead them to housing. It is not enough to read the classifieds and poke around on the internet; you must be engaged and visible to employers. We can no longer hide the homeless population from our "view" and pretend they don't exist. Being able to get out and investigate the numerous resources our city has for underserved populations is imperative to success. It is not an appropriate expectation to place on the shelter to provide all community resources; including employment. While partnerships are being established to bring needs to the shelter- employment opportunities are outside of the walls of the shelter; and people need assistance getting them there.

Just increasing the number of bus passes the shelter has to offer is not enough. It puts the shelter staff in situations that they have to make judgments on whom is more "deserving" of a limited number of passes. Please consider the increase in ridership on route 5 that serves the shelter. 50 more riders a day on that route alone. I have been out to the shelter to provide services, but truly believe that in order to establish work ready behavior; getting out of where you live everyday is necessary. A free pickup will get this population out in the community engaged to find employment and needed resources.

Thank you for your consideration, time, and service. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns. Please distribute this email to others that may have authority on this vote.

Sarah Bloxsom

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