



MILWAUKEE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Supervisor Shawn Rolland – District 6

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Supervisor Rolland urges Wauwatosa Common Council to reject ordinance that would worsen homelessness and job insecurity

Proposed ordinance to “discourage panhandling” will actually create flashpoints between police and neighbors, and harm their ability to secure housing and jobs in the future

WAUWATOSA – Milwaukee County Supervisor Shawn Rolland is calling on the Wauwatosa Common Council to reject a [proposed city ordinance](#), that, if enacted, would enable Wauwatosa Police Department officers to [issue tickets ranging from \\$25 to \\$500 to neighbors](#) who are panhandling in certain Wauwatosa intersections.

According to Milwaukee County’s Housing Division, historically, about 99% of these tickets go unpaid, which spurs judges to create a bench warrant for that individual, which makes procuring housing an even more difficult proposition.

“Instead of working to end homelessness, the root causes of panhandling and our neighbors’ hardship, this ordinance could create yet another system that’s rigged against people in need,” says Sup. Rolland. “I have great respect for my colleagues on the Wauwatosa Common Council, and I agree that panhandling should be addressed, but I fear that they are about to make a mistake that converts a bad situation into an absolute nightmare. Let’s pause to think: do we want to intentionally create another flashpoint between our police officers and someone down on their luck? Or should we do things differently – and provide people with the resources they need to secure affordable housing, find a good-paying job and escape poverty?”

“I’m hoping the council can show some grace and expand their lens when looking at this issue,” says Eric Collins-Dyke, Milwaukee County Assistant Administrator of Supportive Housing and

Homeless Services. “Housing, at its core, is a fundamental human right. Instead of approaching this from an enforcement standpoint, I think it's time to work together on increasing affordable housing, supported employment opportunities, and expanding community case management services.”

Between mid-June and late-July 2021, Mr. Collins-Dyke and his team spoke with individuals in Tosa who were panhandling. Out of 14 people they spoke to, 11 were experiencing housing instability and three were homeless.

“The community members we engaged with expressed a desire to have access to safe and stable housing, employment, and services,” says Mr. Collins-Dyke. “If Wauwatosa is committed to intentional inclusion, the time is now to move towards it in a meaningful and tangible way. Citing for violations of the proposed ordinance will only add to the already daily, heavy burden of experiencing housing insecurity. As a community, we must explore humane responses that focus on solutions which address the complexities and trauma often associated with homelessness.”

On July 27, 2021, Mr. Collins-Dyke testified in regard to this ordinance in front of Wauwatosa’s Community Affairs Committee. Watch his testimony via this video link, starting at the 15:10 mark:

<http://wauwatosacitywi.iqm2.com/Citizens/SplitView.aspx?Mode=Video&MeetingID=3844&Format=Minutes>

Supervisor Rolland represents neighborhoods in Wauwatosa, West Allis and the west side of Milwaukee on the Milwaukee County Board, serving as Chair of its Economic and Community Development Committee, and as Vice Chair of the Health Equity, Human Needs and Strategic Planning Committee. He also serves as a member of the Wauwatosa School Board.

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