In the Council Chambers of the Showers City Hall on Wednesday, May 1, 2013 at 7:30 pm with Council President Darryl Neher presiding over a Special Session of the Common Council.

COMMON COUNCIL
REGULAR SESSION
May 1, 2013

Roll Call: Mayer, Neher, Rollo, Ruff, Sandberg, Spechler, Volan, Granger, Sturbaum
Absent: None

ROLL CALL

It was moved and seconded to suspend the rules to re-order the agenda such that the sections titled "Reports" (current section IV) and "Additional Public Comment" (current section VIII) be moved to the end of the agenda, immediately before "Adjournment."

MOTION TO SUSPEND RULES

The motion received a roll call vote of Ayes: 9, Nays: 0

Council President Neher gave the revised Agenda Summation

AGENDA SUMMATION

There were no minutes for approval at this meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved and seconded that Ryan Cobine be appointed to the Traffic Commission. The motion was approved by a voice vote.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

There was no legislation for final action at this meeting.

LEGISLATION FOR SECOND READING AND RESOLUTIONS

It was moved and seconded that Ordinance 13-09 be read by the clerk by title and synopsis only.
Ordinance 13-09: To Amend Title 15 of the Bloomington Municipal Code Entitled "Vehicles and Traffic" - Re: Amending Schedules A and B of BMC 15.12.010 to Authorize a Multi-Way Stop at the Intersection of Moores Pike and Olcott Boulevard

LEGISLATION FOR FIRST READING

Ordinance 13-09

REPORTS

- COUNCIL MEMBERS

Darryl Neher said the Homeless Charrette process had unfolded over the last months, meetings had been completed, and the report was almost ready. He said he was hopeful that the report would identify objectives and a true plan for the city. He said it was not easy for organizations to collaborate, but hoped this would lead to the community moving forward together to address issues of homelessness.

Marty Spechler said he attended part of the charrette process. He said attendance was good, and support and sympathy for poor and homeless people was indicated by the willingness of people to spend hours mulling over solutions and approaches. He noted the idea that he thought had the greatest attraction was that of rental subsidies which he said worked across the country to move people from the streets to decent housing. He said his experience indicated that this was the most expedient and least expensive way to reduce the number of homeless persons. He said homeless are attracted to Bloomington for reasons that include our sympathy.

Steve Volan said he attended part of the charrette. He admitted that the Shalom Center did not have a prominent place in his mind for many years, but since the recession he had taken more notice of the "problem that everyone is trying to define." He refused to say it was a homelessness problem because most people lumped panhandling, aggression, alcoholism, addiction and violence with homelessness. He said the problem was more an emergency services situation. He asked why a low barrier shelter could not logistically be erected somewhere in the city, adding that when it existed in the past, it was on church grounds. He said it was difficult to accept that a city where more than half the population is not originally from the city would have so much objection to an emergency shelter for homeless because "those people" seem to be from out of town. He said it took a long time for the community to accept someone who moved to Bloomington as a permanent resident. He said the city accepted 42,000 students per year seemed to begrudge less than 100 people a place to sleep at night. He acknowledged that it was a complex problem

Andy Ruff stated that the planet reached a scary milestone in the past week. The carbon dioxide concentration at Mauna Loa Observatory had reached an all-time high of over 400 parts per million. Levels had not been this high since 4 million years ago, when the planet was much different. He said

that increased CO2 levels were largely the result of human activity such as burning fossil fuels. Scientists predicted the levels would continue to rise unless serious efforts were undertaken to reverse this chilling, scary trend.

Chris Sturbaum spoke about local homeless issues and about the terrible disease of addiction that often played a role.

Susan Sandberg, as Chair of the Jack Hopkins Social Service Funding Committee, read a statement about sheltering persons who were homeless or in need of shelter. The statement is an addendum to these minutes.

Council Members Reports *(cont'd*

There were no reports from the Mayor or other offices at this meeting.

- The MAYOR AND CITY OFFICES

There were no reports from council committees at this meeting.

- COUNCIL COMMITTEES

- PUBLIC

** This portion was joined witl the final public comment segment for a total of 45 minutes of continuous public comment.

Brianna Underhill spoke as the co-director for the Ubuntu shelter, the proposed low-barrier summer shelter that was seeking a facility. She stated that over 60 homeless neighbors were sleeping without shelter that night. She said that low barrier shelters were grounded in the idea that shelter was the most basic of human needs, at the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Most of the individuals who used the interfaith winter shelter would not meet admission criteria for Martha's House or Backstreet Missions due to alcoholism, drug addictions and severe mental illness. Without a year round low barrier shelter, many ended up in jail cells, mental hospitals, alleyways, church steps, bushes, truck beds and wooded areas.

Nicole Johnson, 36 years old, stated that from age 20 to 22 she was indigent and until the age of 27 she was a drug addict. Johnson was now a psychologist and sociologist, and stated that she saw situations from a unique perspective that most people didn't have. She explained that, as a city grew, so its homeless population grew in disproportionate numbers. She asserted that homeless people came to Bloomington because of the social services here that smaller towns lacked.

Marc Cornett commented on the expense of building a recent roundabout and questioned the relative value of investing in roads vs. investing in services for needy people.

Chris Aver, social worker, talked about his personal and professional experience with homelessness and heroin addiction. Aver expressed his disgust with the priorities of local government and referred to the council as oppressive.

Daniel McMullen opined about the city's budgetary discrimination against shelters for the homeless.

Samantha Harrell asked the audience to follow her guided imagery to gain deeper empathy for the challenges faced by homeless persons.

Kathy Byers, social worker, emphasized how important it was for people to have a safe, dry place to sleep at night before they could work on more complex problems. She said that we needed more long term planning for affordable housing in Bloomington.

Haley Bouchart, social worker and secretary of the board of directors of New Hope Family Shelter, talked about having seen people achieve stability after being given shelter. She asked for support for a low barrier year round shelter.

Kelly Miles, former intern, volunteer and board member at New Hope Family Shelter, and now an employee, spoke about the difference it made in people's lives to have a safe place to sleep. She called for the city to take action on providing shelter for the homeless.

Jim Hart, volunteer and board member of the Interfaith Winter Shelter, talked about the sickness of civilization that we had in so many forms. He said that homelessness, as we knew it today, was of a different order that created an enormous challenge for the victims on the wrong end of the economic stratum. He insisted we not wait for an ideal solution, but do *something* about homelessness, specifically providing a low barrier shelter.

PUBLIC COMMENT (cont'd)

Ryan Conway, a political scientist, talked about his recent conversation with two educated homeless persons and his realization that he too was just a step away from being in a similar position, if it weren't for the people in his life that actively cared about him. He found it disturbing that more people didn't engage with people they saw as "different".

Joe Vargas pointed out that the policy prohibiting backpacks in the council chambers meant that homeless people were not able to attend council meetings, and that the excessive police presence also discouraged participation. He referred to Mayor Kruzan as a hypocrite, and called homelessness a humanitarian crisis and an emergency situation. He demanded that the council and administration "find the [expletive deleted] solution."

John Daudarian, social worker, participated actively in the charrette process. He praised the long term planning that took place, but criticized the lack of immediate action toward a short term solution such as a year round, low barrier shelter. He emphasized that this movement for social change was one of unity and collaboration, not meant to be divisive or corruptive to the social service agencies already in place.

Laura Lassertmer, member of Bloomington Catholic Worker / Christian Radical Community, appealed to city council to respond to the urgent need for a low barrier permanent shelter for our brothers and sisters out on the streets. She said it was shameful that this had been a problem unaddressed by the city for so long. She criticized the city for having quashed a community effort to help the homeless while they sat by and did nothing. She urged the council to use all the political power they could to come up with a real solution.

Latina Andrews, social work intern at New Hope Family Shelter, spoke on behalf of homeless veterans, the chronically mentally ill, those who suffered from untreated substance abuse, and the 1 out of 50 children who were homeless. She said that now was the time for the city to either step up or step out of the way.

Peter Oren, 21 years old, told his story of being homeless for one night in Oslo. He said that in the USA, we lived in a society that was unfairly divided for the sake of the dominant class. He stated that economic opportunity should be a basic human right.

Marc Haggerty told council members that they had the power to do whatever they wanted with this public meeting, but that they were missing a real opportunity if they did not work with the passionate advocates present to provide shelter for Bloomington's homeless. He was ashamed to be part of a community that used the law and the police to keep people from having shelter.

Chris McKelly stated that 6,500 people were one paycheck away from being homeless in Bloomington. She criticized Mayor Kruzan for having shut down the temporary tent shelter erected by local citizens for the homeless, and said that political power should be used to help members of the community not divide them.

Maria, 6 ½ years old, said "let the people put up tents in the parks".

COUNCIL SCHEDULE

Scheduled for May 8, 2013 was a budget session, special session and committee of the whole.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:57 pm.

APPROVE:

Darryl Neher, PRESIDENT
Bloomington Common Council

ATTEST:

Regina Moore, CLERK
City of Bloomington

Statement read at the May 1, 2013 Regular Session of the Bloomington Common Council just before the Public Comment section of the meeting.

As the current chair of the Jack Hopkins Social Services Fund committee on the Bloomington City Council, I put my personal and professional interests to work in serving the public good. The issue of people experiencing chronic homelessness is something I've faced in front line work as a former case manager with Children and Family Services and as a volunteer with New Leaf/New Life. I currently serve on the advisory committee for Centerstone and their Project Care, a Department of Labor funded program that provides counseling and transitional services for those returning to our community from incarceration. A great contributor to recidivism rates in our society is addiction. This is a difficult disease to manage in the best of circumstances, especially when paired with a variety of other mental illnesses. Homelessness is a hard reality to accept and even more difficult to prevent with so many gaps in federal and state funding for mental health and addiction treatment programs. All social systems struggle for adequate funding to support their missions.

It is a privilege to live in a community like Bloomington filled with activists willing to put their resources, volunteer time and expertise to good use for a number of local nonprofit organizations and programs that serve the underserved. Bloomington is head and shoulders above many other Indiana cities and towns when it comes to supporting social services. We proudly help to fund nonprofit organizations at the very top of what is allowable by law. Where other cities may choose to distribute those funds elsewhere, we invest in programs that serve our greatest needs.

With the CDBG (the federal Community Development Block Grants) decreasing, the Kruzan administration, with the full support of the Bloomington City Council, has steadily increased the Jack Hopkins Social Services Fund. Currently at $257,500, this is a higher local allocation than we currently receive from the federal CDBG to distribute for social services funding. The Jack Hopkins Fund represents your tax dollars at work to help lift people out of poverty, invest in youth development, support food providers and improve healthcare options. While the Jack Hopkins committee tends to prioritize basic food, shelter and healthcare grant applications, we also recognize innovative non-profit programs that fill gaps and provide long-lasting community benefit to low-income residents. We have invested these funds in both low-barrier shelters AND emergency housing programs with stricter drug and alcohol standards for individuals needing clean and sober shelter.

We are known as a community blessed with a wealth of anti-poverty resources for those who struggle. Many of the social service providers we help to fund work outside of the Bloomington community and into neighboring counties. We take that into fair consideration. One of the Jack Hopkins projects we funded last year was to help gather regional data needed to leverage more state or federal funding. The City of Bloomington, through our limited social service funding resources, attempts to prevent social ills including chronic homelessness.

This year, our Jack Hopkins Social Services Fund committee is reviewing 30 grant applications from local nonprofit service providers. We are facing $383,786 in social service grant requests for the $257,500 budgeted to allocate among those worthy applications in 2013. That will leave a disappointing $127,286 out of the running for many organizations and agencies to receive City of Bloomington grant support. These decisions are always heartbreaking for those of us serving on the grant allocations committees. We always recognize growing need with not enough dollars to distribute, and there's not a single one of us who serves on the CDBG and the Jack Hopkins grant panels who doesn't wish we had more to offer. Not a single one of us!

Even as we face budget shortfalls and look to other funding streams to maintain excellent city services, our commitment, along with the Honorable Mayor Mark Kruzan's commitment to increase Jack Hopkins Social Services funding, has been unwavering. It is a source of great pride that Bloomington is a community that cares about social justice and economic opportunity. As members of the legislative body for Bloomington, we cannot scoff at our own laws that are in place for good reasons – to elevate the common good, to protect and preserve the safe and civil city we all want to build and maintain.

Problem-solving requires civility and a willingness to come together in good faith to discuss reasonable solutions. Thank you to everyone here who is willing to engage in the larger community discussion that requires bigger systems beyond the jurisdiction of the Bloomington City Council.

With all due respect,