

Vicki Kondelik
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Ann Arbor, MI 48104

City Council
Guy C. Larcom, Jr. Municipal Building
Council Chambers, 2nd Floor
100 N. Fifth Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

April 19, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to call your attention to a problem that I believe is of great concern to citizens of Ann Arbor. Over the past year or so, I have noticed that the number of panhandlers on the streets has greatly increased, and that the panhandlers have become more and more aggressive. I know that many people feel sorry for them, and I do, too, but some of them are so aggressive that I feel threatened when I walk around the city.

In particular, one man has been especially aggressive towards me. He is African American, not very tall (I'd say between 5'7" and 5'10"), stocky build, probably in his 40s or 50s. He usually wears a black jacket (but takes it off in very warm weather) and a backwards baseball cap and carries a clipboard. This man says that he is collecting for a food drive; usually when people go by him he says, "Would you like to donate to the homeless food drive?". I have noticed this man for several years, in the State Street area, on campus, and in front of Espresso Royale on South University, and usually try to avoid him. But he seems to have taken a dislike to me, probably because I avoid him, and I have had three very unpleasant encounters with him. The first was in November 2008, when he was standing in front of Borders on Liberty. I went past him to go into the store and he yelled at me, shouting insults and foul language. I spoke to a manager at Borders, and she called the police, but the man disappeared before the police showed up. The managers also told me that he insulted her, and that his food drive is bogus. The second incident occurred a few months later, in February or March 2009. He was sitting on a bench at the corner of Liberty and Maynard, and once again he shouted insults at me. But I was going somewhere and didn't have time to call the police. The most recent incident took place just last week, on April 14, 2010. He was sitting on a bench outside Michigan Book and Supply on North University near the corner of State Street. I crossed the street to avoid him, but he shouted insults and foul language at me across the street. I would have called the police except that I had a dinner reservation and didn't have time. Since then, I have been told to avoid this man whenever possible. But it seems to be my avoiding him that sets him off.

Couldn't anything be done to put a stop to this? I have read in an article in AnnArbor.com, September 29, 2009, located at the following Web address: <http://www.annarbor.com/news/the-panhandler-vs-charitable-organizations/> that it is best not to give to these people, and that Ann Arbor's homeless have many places they can go. I know, from a recent article in the Ann Arbor Observer, that some of them even live in free apartments downtown. I really do feel sorry for the people who are truly homeless, but this man is just a menace. I don't know if he's a physical threat to me, but I have heard that some of these people are very unstable. If his food drive is bogus, does that constitute fraud? And if I have been

misinformed and he's working for a legitimate organization, shouldn't this organization be told that he insults people?

Would it be possible to post signs around the city, telling people not to give to this man, and that his food drive is bogus (if that is truly the case)? Also, could the merchants keep him from panhandling outside their stores?

Ann Arbor used to be such a pleasant place in which to take walks. But because of this man, and others like him, I feel threatened when I take a walk. I hope that something can be done about this problem.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Vicki Kondelik".

Vicki Kondelik