

Alaska Can Do Better

Homelessness

Report by Ric Davidge/MPA, Vice President, Midtown Community Council regarding the effort by the Council and nine state legislators to push the Mayor and APD to more aggressively address ‘the homeless’ problems in Midtown/Anchorage. Ric is also the Founder of the Alaska Roundtable.

Context In almost a decade of work on the ‘homeless’ issues, mainly focused on veterans, I have not seen a more focused committed Mayor, or his team work harder on trying to deal with this issue. That doesn’t mean I have not been and remain a critic of this administration, but I believe it important to point out some of the advances Ethan, Nancy and some members of the Assembly have made these past five years.

1. The establishment of an Assembly work committee on the so-called homeless problem
 - a. This has changed the understanding of the Assembly of these problems and their responsibilities to fix them, and it appears to be making real progress as they now wrestle with diverse often complicated challenges monthly.
2. Breaking down silos of thought and process that did not integrate such toward solutions resulting in enormous inefficiency, waste, with few real results.
3. Most do not know that Anchorage remains flat in the growth of the homeless community compared to what has happened in most U.S. cities, especially in the west, with this problem.
4. The most transformative action was setting up the mobile intervention team, (APD/AFD/Mayor - a social service unified command) This structural change is significant and showing real results.
5. Restructured the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness to be more action oriented and better integrated – again structural changes towards addressing real problems
6. Each of the highest demand (top 50 in cost) homeless persons are identified and then ‘staffed’ with a multi-disciplinary team (many organizations structured specific to the base needs of a person) so the effort is ‘person focused’ not generically focused.
7. Developed a zone-based abatement approach focused on protecting neighborhoods rather than the ‘poor me’ equation.

The MOA appears to now be focusing on a few areas needing real work.

1. Housing/shelter (we have some suggestions)
2. jobs
3. a ticket home

We must do better

The Purpose and Function of this initiative by the Midtown CC: The purpose of this report is to engage the collective organized Community Councils of Anchorage, many of whom are also facing this issue and others in an ‘on paper’ open discussion of the problems and to present solutions/suggestions that appear to have merit. Those who participate in Community Councils are self-selected residents/business owners who have voluntarily committed to work together in addressing problems in

their districts. Over the past year more integration between Councils has developed in response to this and crime. We wish to take advantage of this construct not only for each District but for our community. This is not a new idea, but one initiated by the Midtown Community Council out of desperation over the past two years and significant independent research to include the ‘Broken Window’ strategy outlined by Wilson and Kelling over 40 years ago. It was then that the combined effort of neighborhoods in NYC brought Rudy Giuliani to power as Mayor and together they proved their ideas worked recapturing NYC - one of the greatest cities in the world. This success has now been tested by universities in America and in Europe and every time proven successful. Best short read is: ‘*How New York Became Safe: The Full Story*’ by Kelling in the City Journal 2009. Alas now, under Mayor Bill de Blasio, NYC is again sliding into the mess it once was. This failure in leadership is a common theme in cities with this problem.

This paper is a list of ‘the problems’ as we see them outlined with a clear statement as to what the problem is and offering functional solutions and/or suggestions.

‘The Problem’ — When we use this term, we are not suggesting that this ‘problem’ stands alone within the overall context of homelessness, when in fact more often these problems are interconnected and interdependent. What we are trying to do is present these problems in such a way as to carve out their root causes and how they interact within our community. In almost every case the problems within the homeless world are interconnected – but we need to dissect out at least some components that we can deal with and hopefully initiate some resolution in solving a problem and impacting its connections.

The Problem is not the poor. The problem is poverty.

In a recent meeting between the Anchorage legislative delegation and the Anchorage Mayor and Assembly and a couple Community Councils including Midtown, we listened for two plus hours about process, structure and restructure and ‘we need more money’ complaints. It was interesting by frustrating at the same time. It was also very revealing.

What we have discovered is that almost all the folks working on the homeless problems are social workers and, at least so far, all are female. Why? The self-selection in this profession is well known, and very self-evident in all these meetings. There is a need, a desire, a compulsion to ‘care’ and show that you care. This is fact, not opinion. There is an enormous sense of an actual ‘culture of care’ which in itself is fine, but nothing about addressing and solving the root causes of our homeless community or its individual human members.

What became clearly obvious was the enormous cost, the scale, the complexity, and the time/space needed within this construct, but in those two plus hours **no one** mentioned or provided any material that addressed the only proven solutions of poverty - jobs and education. Everything else is symptom response or enabling.

Maybe this is the root of our general problem in trying to end or at least mitigate homelessness. The job of government is not to take care of people, it is to enable people to take care of

themselves. Yes, there are those who cannot, and that is a subject of this paper, but the ‘culture of care’ that pervades the work in this area, needs to be rethought because it is not solving the problems which is evident in the total spend on homelessness over the past decade plus.

The Problem is a preference for Process not Results

The culture of government organizations is ‘process’ which is contrary to private organizations that focus on ‘results’. One of the most transformative reforms in public management, yes there are a few, is the qualified measure and programmatic reporting of results, audited, quarterly. This is NOT by organization but by program. This single act greatly enables enormously better management, more responsible and responsive spending, and over time better governance reducing the total spend for these services.

This new results culture in governance, known as Management by Results, will reveal immediate attention to the failings and/or success of programs to care for folks rather than help them care for themselves. Yes, in the mental health and addict arenas we do need care and treatment, but more immediately we need lots of professionals in these disciplines willing to live and work in Alaska, and not just in the villages. There is and remains a serious shortage of qualified mental health professionals in Alaska. I have suggested in another paper that the state and municipal governments demand immediate attention to this problem via our Congressional Delegation to ensure no less than five or more Public Health Service appointments in the range of mental health professions every year. Immediate focus is on addiction, but the full range of treatment is essential. Within ten years, this desperate void of mental health services in Alaska could be corrected – but MUST also be maintained.

As previously pointed out during a joint Anchorage legislative delegation and Anchorage Assembly meeting, well over two hours of presentations and discussion focused on process. We pointed out in the opening of this paper that the mayor and his team have done much in addressing the process problems. But they are NOT solving this problem with process they are often enabling the continuation of this lifestyle regardless of their root causes.

The measurable results must be success with a job. No longer homeless and no longer in government subsidized housing. On almost every corner in Anchorage there are signs asking for workers to apply – Hiring Now. The day labor companies almost daily have more jobs than workers.

The Culture of Care may be politically warm, but it does not solve these problems. A Culture of Work and Education are the only proven solutions. Everyone can work. Even those with disabilities. We have proven this over the past decade using day laborers assigned to appropriate jobs. And, they get paid at the end of each day via credit card deposits. Within the Culture of Work, we need to clearly understand that this does not assume an eight-hour day, five days a week. Working part time at a minimum of 4 hours a day just 3 days a week can provide adequate funds for housing and food. We have proven this with homeless veterans.

Within the Culture of Work, we also enable ‘care’ counseling etc. Its part of the matrix of restructuring lives so that they can survive in our western work construct which is often alien to those who were born and raised in remote areas of Alaska for example. But they can learn, they are very capable of work in the right jobs, and day labor enables this.

Quarterly reports from every ‘program’ (not agency) responsible for ‘solving’ the homeless problems will help guide politicians in office via election or appointment toward the actual tools that provably meet results goals and objectives – to get actual results. With this cultural transformation we are ‘doing’ something to teach human beings how to survive, not just how to exist in a process culture provided by governments.

The Problem is Governance The Municipality of Anchorage is now into its second ten-year plan to end homelessness. According to some government officials we have over 40 nonprofits and 11 government agencies involved in ending homelessness – many now for well over 20 years. One official inside a major c3 said, ‘no it was more like 220 nonprofits and government agencies.’ The Permanent Fund ‘Pick, Click, and Give’ campaign (totals usually over \$3Million) facilitates donations to 628 nonprofits statewide not all of which are focused on the homeless problems. Either way, this is far out of balance with the reality of the ‘need’ and the lack of real success. So, if you add up all the federal, state, and local government (love to have this number) and private money and/or cost of services applied to the so called ‘homeless’ problem(s) just in Anchorage over the past decade the total spent must be staggering. *(FYI: I measure everything in total spend per capita. They really are the only honest comparables)*

In context, the City of San Francisco spends over \$250 Million a year on their so-called homeless problem and reports little progress. Los Angeles spends almost \$620 Million a year, and they also report ‘little progress’. In fact, the situation in these two cities is almost unbelievable.

Maybe we should look at cities who have solved this problem. St. Petersburg, FL solved their homeless ‘on the street’ problem in six months. How? They provided a property to allow transitional camping with very good planning, management, etc. They approached the homeless as ‘persons’ not problems and structured what each needed to climb out. We have asked the city to provide us a copy of their report.

The Problem is the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals This Court has changed the rules for municipal and state governments in how they can reasonably address several issues on ‘public lands’ and how they can regulate or not homeless uses of these public properties. The best evidence of this is the growing number of western states and cities who struggle with these limitations and redefinitions by this court. Yes, there are other problems in LA and San Francisco and Seattle, and San Diego, etc but if we can get some reason and common sense back into the law as it applies, we in Midtown will take the reign and get it done – at least in Midtown.

We were hopeful that this would change with a potential decision by the United States Supreme Court (SCOTUS) on an appeal of the Ninth Circuit decision by Boise, Idaho (*Martin vs Boise*)

review of the actions of the Ninth Circuit. Unfortunately, the court punted and refused to hear this appeal. So, we are back to square one.

These court issues are:

- Enforcement against solicitation/panhandling in a state or municipal Right of Way (ROW) without a permit
 - The problem is that most ROWs are surface transportation ‘easements’ and do not change who owns the land under the sidewalk, or curb, or parkway – in most cases this ownership is still private.
- Enforcement against sleeping, living, camping on municipal sidewalks or ROWs
- Enforcement against loitering on state or municipal property or ROWs
- Enforcement against camping, with out permits, on state or municipal property (in the woods)

The Ninth Circuit Court decision on the *Martin vs Boise* case stated that unless a government has other ‘shelter’ for the poor and/or homeless they cannot force them off ‘public’ property. A part of the argument now is ‘what is shelter?’ Obviously, there will have to be some consideration of the seasons (summer vs winter) in cities that get cold. A tent camp in Fairbanks, AK would be tough to claim as responsible shelter, however in LA, not so. Some are already arguing that it must have a ‘roof’, but then we ask, what is a roof? Working words in the court and in legislatures is always entertaining if not maddening.

“So long as there is no option of sleeping indoors, the government cannot criminalize indigent, homeless people for sleeping outdoors on public property.”

- Again, consider the question of ownership below the surface transportation easement that enables the sidewalks, parkways, curbs, bike paths, etc.

The decision of SCOTUS on the Boise, Idaho’s appeal of the 9th Circuit decision to not hear it is very disappointing, but we still have options. Collectively we can find a new case and walk it up to SCOTUS again with facts that might push them to listen. In the meantime, America suffers with these problems, including increasing deaths by drugs and diseases that were once thought eliminated. Many public health officials warn that the plague is not far away in places like the streets of LA or San Francisco given their rat infestation. We have already identified some new opportunities on the state or municipal transportation ROW issues that may even enable a class action case. More on this as it develops. Now, we are stuck with the 9th Circuit decision and still most do not understand what it says and how it impacts Anchorage or Alaska.

The Problem is the Homeless Industrial Complex When there are economic and/or political incentives to not solve a problem – you may see/hear lots of rhetoric, lots of social welfare process, but you will not see the problem, certainly not its root cause, and never actual results. Why? Because the money is pushing everything the other way. Keep in mind that a \$150,000 annual salary for an Executive Director of a so-called nonprofit in

Anchorage, whose total budget is possibly \$300,000 is not considered excessive. On a cost per homeless person invested in, we could have provided lots of subsidized transitional shelters or housing, (although that is not THE solution) to hundreds – but we haven't. Why not? So, what is the economic/fiscal incentive to solve this problem when you have hundreds of nonprofits and dozens of government agencies and a hand full of private designers, engineers, general contractors, etc. 'living' very well off the problem. The incentives are wrong. The money went to 'managing' even enabling the homeless not 'solving' the root causes. Why have these combined entities, highest number per capita in America, not realized more progress?

Remember that nonprofits don't have to pay property taxes. The reason for this, and it is long standing, is that well over a hundred years ago communities realized that 'charities' as they were called then, provided services in the community at a much lower cost than government could. Wow, that has changed if you compare 'total spend' per capita today. Some of us at the Midtown CC have called on the MOA to audit all nonprofits who pay no property taxes to determine their actual economic contribution or 'value' of the services they claim to provide to Anchorage. Having spent too many hours in meetings with dozens of these organizations, this audit could be very revealing.

There is a large list of reports, studies, interviews, etc. on the *Homeless Industrial Complex* on the Net if you do a Google search. Last count was about 20, then ask for *The Homeless Business* and you get lots more. So, is there a problem here? The only way you can determine this is to measure audited results of private/public entity spending compared to total spend per capita and persons 'served'. Does anyone want to try and organize jobs for the homeless so they can take care of themselves?

Again, maybe we need to **rethink the incentives**. There is currently no **economic** incentive to 'fix' this problem. The homeless industrial complex is attempting to 'manage' the symptoms of the problem, not address the root causes there by maintaining 'process' and a very good cash flow and, for some, political leverage. This is not to suggest that you don't need to address symptoms, but unless you put some effort, some money into identifying and then fixing the root causes, you are just 'managing' even enabling the symptoms. There have been some significant efforts in the past 5 years that have made some changes, but the problem continues although the MOA reports the total number of 'homeless' in Anchorage remains flat – no increase for the past couple years. They claim to have stopped the growth. But in context, the population of the state and Anchorage is also shrinking, based on PFD applications alone. My intel agrees this trend is flat. Let's see how many 'visitors' show up again this October after they get their PFD and come to Anchorage - the big city – but then join the Second and Third Ave subculture generically referred to as 'the homeless'.

There is a state legislative move now to require no less than 80% of the funds provided by the state via grants etc. to nonprofits to directly apply that amount (80%) of these funds to those receiving services and NOT for administrative overhead. Some nonprofits have staff with large salaries who have little to show in actual results within the scope of the funding provided. Yes,

they may attend lots of meetings a week, but can they show actual root cause impact/results? We are monitoring this legislation.

The Problem is, just who are the homeless? One of the problems we have in this discussion is that the term ‘homelessness’ is inclusive of a number of groups of persons with significantly different root causes. To identify and address their root causes, you need to know and understand each group, each person and then craft specific proven strategies that fit that group’s or that person’s root cause, if legally possible.

- Persons with mental health disabilities (many can be treated but courts have made this very difficult) read: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3392176/>
- Persons addicted to drugs and/or alcohol - both of which are symptoms not the root causes
- Persons who are displaced in our western 9-5 culture without the personal or job skills to survive here. But if you are clean and sober you can work in Anchorage via day labor.
- Criminals, some organized
- Persons who have been pushed out of their home community and/or ‘shunned’ often facing legal problems that require them to remain in Anchorage until resolved
- Persons who will not live in any type of structured environment. “I don’t want to live there, they have too many rules”. This includes some who refuse to stay, even overnight, in the shelters, in the VA Domiciliary, temporary housing, permanent long-term supportive housing, etc. ‘Too many rules’ - they chose to be ‘free’ but at a significant cost to the community.

Each of these groups present different challenges that really must be crafted specific to their general and personal root causes, not just their symptoms.

The homeless includes lots of different folks with different problems in different intensities at different times in their lives and with a wide range of health issues. Are they alone or part of a family? Some who are not even homeless but find being in the homeless world enables enormous criminal opportunities and income and a lifestyle that they consider ‘free’ rather than structured.

Myth: The majority of the homeless in Anchorage are Alaska Natives.

- NOT TRUE!

We have known this for many years, but this myth continues. It may be because there seem to be more “Natives” on the street corners or in the camps especially in Midtown, but according to all the ‘counts’ only about 40% of the homeless in Anchorage are Alaska Natives, and most come from villages in remote parts of Alaska, mainly the north-west coast. They came to Anchorage for many reasons, then get stuck here with little understanding of how to survive here or any skills they understand that enable them to work here or any reason to go home given that there is often no longer any economic purpose for their home community. This is a serious statewide problem that our state government needs to address, sooner. Recreating remote community economies has been an interest of mine for decades, but no one wants to listen or honestly engage in the root causes of this dilemma – most of which are government related. Bob Atwood and I wrote a book about this decades ago, but there was no interest. If Alaska really wants to solve many of these socio-economic, public health, addiction and suicide problems in

rural/remote Alaska, this – recreating an economic purpose for a community - is where we need to start. This must be a priority for our Governor and Legislature, but first they must read and understand the nature of this root cause. There are solutions, but there are limitations.

The classification of persons who claim to be homeless is in part already done to some extent with the ‘Point in Time Count’ twice annually. We need to make this attempt at ‘knowing’ the ‘homeless’ as distinct persons and then connecting them to services that are appropriate for their root cause. Then, importantly, following up so that we can accurately measure results and continue to monitor for at least 3 to 5 years. We need to understand the numbers and the needs to construct comprehensive solutions. Anchorage has made some real progress here, but we must do more if we are honestly going to ‘fix’ this.

Assign each person to a focused effort via intervention consistent with their needs.

Example: Mental health disabilities (not just ‘immediate’ harm to self or others) but any mental health disability that keeps someone from reasonably surviving in Anchorage is such a group. Many can be treated but given the ‘case law’ that doesn’t allow you to require anyone to take their medications even though the meds bring them back to a safer even functional reality. Taking their meds really is in their own best interest in surviving. This is a long and detailed complicated problem that I will mention later.

Read: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3392176/> Even Supreme Court Judges have called for serious process and structural reforms at the federal and state levels. This reality has been with us now since the 1960’s and what have we done holistically to deal with this human tragedy? Not much.

Since the laws changed closing many state/private mental ‘hospitals’ significantly impacting persons with mental health disabilities, this period is often mentioned as the ‘beginning of our national homeless problem’. Yes, thousands of mentally ill/disturbed persons were left on the streets as homeless and your read of the mentioned summaries will illustrate the need for competent comprehensive reform at the national and state levels IF we are to ‘fix’ this.

The ‘social program epidemic’ In the process of my research, having read almost everything published on homelessness by or to Congress, by national nonprofits, and on the Net since 1965, and the multiple dozens of meetings I’ve attended local and national - this phrase comes up occasionally. The concept is that the more programs or services you provide the more demand you encourage, and you will never finish providing more and more services so long as you have ‘sufficient’ funds to provide them. But again, are you solving the root cause or trying to manage the symptoms? Think about housing here. I believe you can build subsidized long-term housing for the homeless in Anchorage forever and still have homeless on the street. Why? Because that is not ‘the root cause’ of the problem. Again, root cause, must be the target and we **MUST** seriously start work on several **day/night shelters** and **transitional housing** locations if we are to seriously begin. Yes, we are treating the symptoms but maybe not ignoring the root causes if these are designed properly. The homeless need to be warm and safe and then you can

be successful with intervention. There is much about this ‘social program epidemic’ on the Net. Anchorage has more nonprofits per capita than any other city in America. Wonder why? It’s not always about the need, more often it’s about the money.

Solutions: We have provided a list of solution suggestions that our community should openly and collegially consider and debate – towards constructive changes. We welcome all constructive ideas in this discussion. Each will be reviewed, honestly considered, and referenced in our proposed resolution and this appended report. (the original report was formally approved on September 26, 2019 by the Midtown Community Council and has been provided to all Anchorage Community Councils and about five have taken action to pass their own resolutions.

The Problem is Panhandling Our legal construct (case law) i.e. panhandling:

1. *You can’t stand on the sidewalk and ask for a ride, but you can stand on the sidewalk and ask for money. But no one else can solicit in the ROW without a permit.*
2. Panhandling is now ‘case law’ protected as a form of ‘free speech’ so long as it is passive (a small hand-written sign on cardboard) not actual speech/voices (could be too loud or considered threatening i.e. not considered passive to some) on the sidewalk. A host of court decisions in a wide variety of situations around the country make this now clear. The Ninth Circuit has the most impact on Anchorage. This needs to be appealed.
3. We allow panhandling, but we don’t allow people in vehicles to hand them money and we don’t allow the panhandler to take money from a vehicle. That is against the law. The concern is public safety, but this is totally disregarded by the panhandler, the donor, various charities, and law enforcement.
4. We also don’t allow a person in a vehicle to get out of that vehicle, when on a street, and walk up to a panhandler who stays on the sidewalk and hand them money. The concern is again unsafe vehicle/public safety issues.
5. We also don’t allow ‘solicitation’ within the ROW or roads i.e. the MOA ROW by anyone else accept the firepersons once a year to ‘fill the boot’. If a permit was required for such solicitation, some communities have found that very successful.

Example: The placement of For Sale signs for homes and businesses. They can only be on private property, and although the area between the back of a sidewalk and the curb (which can include a ‘parkway’) is privately ‘owned’ by the home or business owner and is taxed by the MOA as the property of that owner, they cannot put a sign in the MOA ROW – it must be behind the ROW usually behind the sidewalk. If you put a sign up within the MOA ROW, it will be removed without notice by the MOA and/or the state if adjacent to state roads/highways. If you continue to do this, you ‘may’ be cited for violations. Again, putting a sign (passive soliciting) on your property that you pay taxes on but is within the MOA transportation ROW is illegal. So, you are denied your right to free speech on your property that you purchased and pay taxes on, but panhandlers are not so restricted. Why?

6. Generally, the police do not ticket persons who violate these ‘lesser’ laws – regardless of the public safety concern and the fact that panhandlers will not often pay these fines or appear in court to address them. APD did advise in our first meeting that in 2019 they have issued more citations for panhandling related violations than ever before, most to those who give. But if the citation is not paid, it is then another violation of law. We constantly hear that ‘we need more data’. If you don’t cite someone as ‘required’ by law, you can’t initiate or build a good data base, can you?

So, we have a legal construct that allows passive ‘free speech’ to panhandlers but they can’t be handed anything/money from a motorist while that vehicle is in traffic. ***So, we in fact encourage/enable the ‘ask’ but do not allow the ‘get’.***

Also note that there are now food trucks that ‘service’ the panhandlers with free prepared food in a bag handed directly to the panhandler out of the drivers’ window in the street. I have witnessed this several times at intersections in Midtown. Again, this ‘transaction’ is a violation of law. Wonder if they ever get cited?

Solution: We either need a new legal construct or easier/more creative governance

Let’s say that APD forms a two-person team to monitor panhandling in those intersections (we are providing APD with a map illustrating those in the Midtown District and suggest every Council do the same monthly) that are of highest concern. No, they are not in uniform with lights flashing, but a little more discreet. Whenever someone offers the panhandler money requiring the panhandler to step off the sidewalk and likely into the street, the driver is stopped by APD and cited with a fine of, we suggest, \$100. This fine should then be doubled each time they get caught up to \$400 and then a court appearance should be required, and the fine is then \$1,000 and a full day’s class on road safety. These fines should be tracked to show the ‘offset’ of cost/income for APD and other services.

Obviously, this will require some time/cost, but not that much against the value of the results. Panhandlers are generally not at ‘their’ intersections all day. They are there when the stopped and waiting traffic is enough to provide an income. And, yes, we know that if people didn’t give them money they wouldn’t be there and if the trucks don’t give them sacked lunch, they wouldn’t be there either. Now, if you rotate the APD team’s targeting different days and intersections, it will become known that these are not good Midtown intersections to get money. They will move to new intersections and then you do it again. Eventually, if they are not collecting enough income, they will find new ways to make money. How about a part time job? When we designed VetVillageAK we asked and got written commitments for up to 150 jobs a year committed – we asked for jobs not money.

If you look at the intersections with the panhandlers who are ‘making money’ there are lots of opportunities for the MOA to post a sign advising drivers – ‘Fine for giving money to panhandlers from your car.’ I know, simple – but I suspect effective and not that expensive against results. As that driver is reaching into their pocket for change or a bill, they see the sign and realize the risk they are taking. The signage will have an effect. Why not at least try this?

The point is that over time it becomes generally known in Midtown that you might get caught if you ‘give’ and must pay a fine starting at \$100. So, is it worth it for a moment of ‘feel good’ about yourself? Add some solid media marketing on this initiative with the signage and you will further reduce the ‘give’ and thus the ‘ask’. You have not interfered with the panhandler’s right to passive free speech, but you have made it not very rewarding – in selected intersections. The Midtown District has five such intersections.

This is just one suggestion/idea of what our governance and law enforcement could do. APD advised in our meeting that they have issued more ‘give’ citations in the first six months of 2019 than ever in the past. We certainly want to encourage this effort, but we can do better.

The Problem is Disorder/Lawlessness lesser laws are not being enforced?

Every month, over the past 24+ months, the Midtown Community Council has heard from independent business owners, building managers, homeowners, property owners, store employees, etc. that when they call for APD assistance for what they describe as ‘obvious’ crimes (trespass, assault, theft, open use of illegal drugs, etc), it takes forever to get a response and often, upon arrival, the police officer says they can’t do anything because the MOA prosecutors, or the mayor’s office, or someone has instructed - ***“we have been told not to enforce these laws”***. This is the beginning of lawlessness which is ***the most common denominator in every city in America that has a massive homeless***, drug/alcohol abuse/addiction, crime, and growing frightening public health problem. ***It all starts with lawlessness or the perception there of.*** What we might call ‘soft on crime’.

[Go on the Net and watch all the documentaries on San Diego, L.A., San Francisco, Seattle, etc. They tell essentially the same story. Best is Seattle is Dying because of its in-depth confidential survey of police officers. There is a new one on **Anchorage** that I recommend at alaskalandmine.com.]

From our point of view, what this means is that law enforcement (APD officers, prosecutors, MOA Admin) has decided that some laws (of less concern when violated) are not going to be enforced. This category of law is thus no longer relevant within our legal construct, so they effectively don’t exist. If you pass a law and refuse to enforce it, that law does not exist, or there is ‘contempt of the law’. This governing philosophy is directly contrary to what NYC finally did in its application of the ‘Broken Windows theory’. Why not learn for those who have changed things for the better?

The APD has advised that this ‘understanding’ is not quite correct. The officer has the ‘discretion’ to apply the law or not. What is the training for officers on their use of discretion? We understand the concept, just not sure of the application based on the long list of statements made at our Council meetings.

Let me point out that APD says this ‘refusal to enforce’ cannot be true. They specifically ask, and so we have informed those who attend the Midtown CC and others, that if a police officer

tells you they have been instructed not to enforce the law, **APD wants that reported** ASAP to dispatch. Most police have business cards, so get their card and then report. If you don't want to do it yourself, ask your Community Council to do it.

The problem we have is that these stories are almost always the same and from what we can figure most of these persons who bring such complaints to the Council do not even know each other. It is just not probable that they are coordinating their stories, it is far more likely they are true – at least to some extent. It will be the policy of the Midtown CC to advise anyone who reports such conversations with officers to report it immediately to the APD dispatcher. Name, badge number, date, time, location.

At one Council meeting a man told the story of calling APD for help due to several people trespassing on his private property even though there was a fence, locked gate, and the appropriate signage. When the two officers arrived and investigated, they prepared to issue trespassing citations, but one officer decided to call his supervisor about the circumstances because one of the trespassers was a 'public person'. When he hung up, he informed the property owner that he had been told not to issue any citations. This property owner who is well known in that community and well respected and asked, "So, what do you do then? These people are illegally on my property and I'm legally and financially responsible if anyone of them gets hurt. You don't think this impacts my general liability insurance?" What about my rights?

Another residential rental owner told of discovering a 'gang' had moved into one of his rental properties. He approached and told them to get out. A member of the gang hit him in the face, he fell back and left the property and called the APD. When the officer showed up, the owner was told that since there was no blood on his face, the officer could not verify the assault. When the owner showed the officer a large quantity of what appeared to be new bicycles in the back yard, the officer said he could do nothing as they may have been found rather than stolen. (this was just days after the robbery of the bicycle store in ANC) The officer also advised that he could do nothing about the trespass as the gang is legally considered to be 'squatters' and the owner would have to file in court for an eviction – a process that would take months and cost the owner. By the time the owner finally got his property back it had been purposefully demolished from the inside out, so he chose to tear it down and rebuild. *The problem is lawlessness.*

Solutions: Call APD dispatch and REPORT what the officer has told you. Get name and badge number if possible – but ALWAYS report. Give them a couple days and then call dispatch (907-786-8900) and ask for a written statement of what APD has done in response to your report. Then bring it to your next Council meeting and report so that the Council is aware and can also follow up. We most often have state legislators and assembly members at our monthly meetings and most have been VERY concerned with these stories and have followed up with APD and reported back to the Council.

But, given where we are at this point- given the number of stories we have heard from independent individuals in our district, the Midtown Council has asked our Assembly Representative for a list of the MOA laws that are apparently no longer 'enforced' allowing

‘discretion’ and under who’s authority they have been ‘set aside’ from their intended application although formally passed by the Assembly and signed by a mayor. Our Assembly person has advised that: “It’s not that APD has been told not to enforce laws. She provided a list of potential violations, generally citation offenses, that APD may in its discretion choose to issue.” This is consistent with what APD has said, but it is ***critical that you report*** and follow up. Based on many of the stories we have heard at Council meetings, the use of discretion by a police officer certainly didn’t look like it was the correct choice. We will continue to monitor – but it is essential that you report such events if we are going to make any progress – and share them at your Council meetings.

We will continue our cooperation with the Anchorage Police Department to discuss our concerns and request answers to our questions and report complaints. Our first such meeting was very helpful, and we plan to continue these meetings. It is also critical that the assigned police officers to each of our district councils attend our meetings so that they can report to their superiors what we are hearing on this and other subjects. We are delighted to report that two officers showed up to our August meeting and the discussion was very productive for both our members and the officers. In addition, while attending the Campbell Creek CC three officers showed up and engaged with the community – again very productive. These monthly interactions must continue and help mold a ‘sense of team’ and trust between citizens in Council Districts and the APD.

We are fully aware that these ‘lesser’ laws are not ‘arrest’ laws, only ‘citation’ laws. We understand that, but you can’t build an administrative record or data base of violations of law or any sense of cost if you don’t even issue a citation, so you can begin to ‘measure’ the size/scale/cost of illegal realities here. For years we have heard the mantra that ‘we need more data’. In this case, the citation and its appended report is where data begins. In addition, if the citation is not paid, then you have a further law violation that can require a court appearance – more data. Why not? Our courts are just too busy? This is where we suspect the MOA prosecutors complain. NYC is a good case study of how important the enforcement of the ‘little’ laws is to the culture and civil order of a community. That single decision started a revolution on the streets of NYC and moved them back to sanity. I have personally experienced this change while serving with the Reagan Administration and then later as a private visitor almost every year. NYC was dramatically a different and very welcoming city – as it was supposed to be.

Look it up: *How New York Became Safe: The Full Story/Restoring Order in NYC*
<https://www.city-journal.org/html/how-new-york-became-safe-full-story-13197.html>

And, does this **have to be** a state responsibility? Honestly, yes! Anchorage has become the chosen center of homelessness in Alaska with hundreds arriving from outside of Anchorage – and no, not just from the bush – from all over our state and the nation and some from outside of our country. We have worked with several who got ‘taken’ by the old North Slope job scam on the Net only to find that the job was not real and then were stuck here without adequate funds to get home. Again, ‘would you like to go home?’ has been a very good and most efficient tool.

Solution: One of the suggestions I have heard while attending other Council meetings looking at this report and at the Midtown Council DRAFT Resolution and how they want to ‘take action’, is the suggestion to APD that officers ***walk through the camps often*** – at least once a week. Ask to see IDs and engage with those in the camp. Look for evidence of drugs, crime, public health concerns. and report. We agree and think APD should consider this ‘tool’ as soon as possible. Yes, public safety has priority, but if you can see something coming it just might be more effective then responding, ‘after the crime’.

NOTE: When I began trying to understand the homeless problems in Anchorage, it quickly became clear to me that what I was being told, was not the whole truth. Not that I was being lied to, but I was not being given all the facts or their critical context. Of specific concern was the St Francis shelter. To address this, although we had alternatives, a homeless veteran agreed to remain in the shelter. He had been there for a couple weeks already and was very observant and capable of this mission. He would call me daily or if something had developed at the shelter and share his observations. He is now working out of town in his skill area and very happy. The path to getting him there was long, difficult, but eventually successful. He had very specific jobs skills and finding those openings were difficult. But the visceral insight he provided, almost daily, to life in the shelter, was priceless in our design and structure for VetVillageAK.

What I learned was that drugs and alcohol were readily available **on the property** for a price (dollar shots) every am. I also learned about the organization of women/girls and boys for prostitution. When I reported this to APD I was told they didn’t have the manpower but were aware of it. Further, I personally witnessed the extraordinary impact that bed bugs can have on people in the shelter as I watched a man remove his long sleeve shirt and saw most of his skin come off his arms due to bed bug bites, infections, etc. I took him immediately to the hospital and got all his bites and infected scares treated, arms, legs, and waist. When I reported this to the nonprofit responsible of the management of the shelter, I was told that they didn’t have bed bugs. They had traps out. When I asked a professional exterminator I know, who deals with just this bug, he advised that the traps don’t work. Wonder who paid for them?

I bring this up to expose the need of our municipal officials to learn from within the shelter culture but also to point out that this too is ‘lawlessness’. Human beings being harmed by incompetent shelter management paid by so called nonprofits underwritten with grants from government agencies is a crime against persons and the people of Anchorage. Trust is a victim as well.

The Problem is a threat to Public Health Significant contamination of the rivers and streams, as well as public places in Anchorage, may be causing deadly communicable illnesses that can spread quickly across Anchorage and even Alaska

Most are unaware of the growing surface and subsurface contamination of the natural waters, streams, and creeks in Anchorage. This has been monitored for many years but lately an initiative to better identify and understand contamination sources using DNA in problem areas

was started. This group has already discovered that the areas of water contamination are NOT coming from livestock sites as those properties are generally well managed. **NOTE:** We were recently informed by our Assembly representative that the MOA does not have an organizational construct through which it can address these immediate threats to public health.

Solution: The Midtown Community Council is coordinating with other CCs and the ongoing research of our surface water sources to help identify specific source locations, many believe in proximity to illegal camps, that are not only disposing human waste in the streams but also drugs and drug related vessels that sink into the sand/mud at the bottom of our streams. After reading some of this intel I would not let my dog enter these waters and if she did, I'd take her home and wash her and then I would take a shower.

We will work closely with this initiative with specific concern of those water sources in our District but only as a part of the larger research. This cooperation will enable the larger group to report directly to the Council on any discoveries that impact the Midtown CC district businesses, residents and their children, and pets.

The current level of fecal coli contamination alone in some areas is cause for a public health alert. Most of these sites are already 'classified' as unusable, but we still see people and their pets in these waters, boating through them, and even drinking the water.

Solution: The MOA must make this a high public health concern and establish a multi-agency governance team with the CDC and the state to monitor and address this growing public health threat. As part of this initiative the MOA should strongly support this research and include it in any of its surface water management programs.

Solution: In addition to the water contamination issue is the general human waste and drugs or needles left on public properties in the MOA. This too is a public health concern. Building managers who regularly attend the Council report that they must now hire specialty crews to handle the 'crap' cleanup. One building manager recently reported that human waste was spread on the outside wall of their building (very prominent in Midtown) and lit on fire. Other building managers' report constant urination through locked doors and/or human waste at or on the front door. This is obviously a 'statement' of some sort and not just a personal disposal issue. If we had public toilets maybe this would stop, but it just doesn't seem to be the only cause. There is an apparent anger here that needs to be investigated and understood. Are they angry at the building owners/tenants because they, the homeless, are not allowed to use its toilets whenever they want – especially at night? We recommend that any such activity be reported to the Anchorage Police Department so that no less than a data source is created allowing tracking of these behaviors and the places and levels of concern. It is also important that each building manager or their private security report these incidents to the police for record. We also recommend that a camera be placed so that the faces, date, time of these actions can be gathered helping inform both private security and APD enabling response. Again, a sign pointing out "you are being videotaped" could be a deterrent.

Caution: Most Alaskan's are unaware that the homeless sidewalk encampments in L.A. have given rebirth to over 150 confirmed cases of Typhus carried by rats and flees. Essentially, from a public health standpoint, LA has regressed a few hundred years into the slums of old Europe. Do we have rats or other vermin in Anchorage? In Alaska? Yes, of course we do, and you can find them along streams and in encampments all around town. Maybe the MOA needs to hire a rat exterminator as part of their illegal camp cleanups. I know, prevention is so boring.

Anchorage's residents are also unaware that Anchorage had two confirmed cases of Typhoid Fever, a deadly communicable disease, in Anchorage last year. Their specific cause (generally contact with someone who has the bacteria, it can also come from contaminated water) and source are not known, but this should give the MOA enough notice to begin getting serious about the contamination of our natural freshwaters.

The Problem is the Environmental impact of contamination of our stormwater and the dangerous collective discharge of both contaminated 'freshwater,' stormwater (which is contaminated), and 'treated' sewage into the inlet

This is a huge problem and one that the MOA has finally seriously begun looking at. The MOA has a total discharge permit from the EPA/DEC that, if violated, could cost the MOA billions and require immediate action or face more fines. Hello property owners who underwrite our municipal government, are you listening?

Think about the environmental impact of just the illegal drug devices (that leak) in our stormwater and the impact on fish, wildlife, the belugas, etc. When stacked on top of the massive MOA sewer discharges, also under a very liberal/exception permit from the EPA/DEC that puts millions of gallons of 'treated' sewage full of pharmaceuticals, micro plastics, etc. into the inlet daily, is there any real surprise that the belugas, our salmon and other species are having problems?

The Problem is a lack of low-income Housing: The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals found that *government cannot criminalize homeless people for surviving in public without providing alternative places or shelter*. Shelter is defined as: 'a place giving temporary protection from bad weather or danger.' This is a key legal point in the struggle of communities to address the 'homeless' problem. It comes in two parts:

1. Temporary or transitional supportive housing/shelter

The MOA has refused to 'invest' in any temporary housing or shelters. As a result, again within the 9th Circuit ruling – we do not have 'alternative shelter' for them to go. Because we do not have 'shelter' for them we cannot force them off 'public property' due to its common ownership. There are several shelter options that have been presented to the MOA, but none have been seriously considered to date. The only one endorsed by the Assembly is the VetVillageAK project presented by the Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc. This is a small cabin 'village' in the woods that starts with 25 cabins and a Veterans

Service Officer to help with services. This is shelter - both temporary/transitional housing and long-term supportive housing for homeless veterans and families depending on the need of the veteran and/or their family. BUT – **you must work** to live in this village.

Anchorage needs to look at other sites across America and design options for ‘temporary’ shelter(s). (more on this later)

2. Long term/permanent supportive housing/shelter

Yes, we need more low income/cost “housing”, but (let’s be honest in the use of the term ‘low income housing’ when what we honestly need to call it is ‘**government subsidized housing**’ because that is what it is and that better reflects public (federal, state, local) spending through the homeless industrial complex. The private sector cannot afford to provide so called permanent ‘low income housing’ because their cost (40+% of the cost of a new home in a new subdivision in the MOA is directly caused by MOA regulations, delay, and uncertainty – and it has very little to do with ‘health and safety’) In most cases, long term supportive housing for the homeless is a very good dependable income source for the owner(s), most often nonprofits, because what is not paid by the tenant (not more than 30% of their income whatever it may be) is ALWAYS paid by government which covers, with a minimum 15%+ administrative margin, the cost of this housing - so long as the government subsidies exist. We do need more low-income housing – but we also immediately need temporary/transitional housing and we need jobs of various types.

The point is that if folks have money, they most often find shelter. This is most obvious in the month of October after receipt of the PFD. **So, lets enable work.** Work can be defined, for example, as 4 hours a day, 3 or more days a week not just 8 hours a day, five days a week. Day labor is the most immediate available option IF the worker is sober and clean. Often these private companies have more jobs to fill then they have workers. No one will accept the insurance risk of folks who are drunk or high to work with their clients. I have used day labor from a national organization with offices in Anchorage and only twice in a decade had a problem. I have found these workers to be capable and willing to work.

In a recent interview with HUD Secretary Ben Carson, he pointed out that the biggest obstacle to their efforts in cities like San Francisco and L.A. is the overwhelming cost and restrictions of their municipal regulations. Most dealing with esthetics not health and safety. He referenced the National Homebuilders Association who tracts the cost of municipal regulations on new housing and reports that on average 25% to 30% of the cost of new homes – even those subsidized by HUD – is municipal regulation. And again, they are more about esthetics, space, and not health and safety.

As a result, several state legislatures are now taking back the general authority previously granted to municipal governments to regulate new construction and only allowing them to deal with the health and safety concerns. Then you have the struggle of agreeing on a legal definition of safe, safer, or safest. The point is that each level of ‘safe’ adds often significant additional

cost. Given the regulatory cost impact in Anchorage (40+%), this is something the MOA should quickly explore, seriously assess, and fix. Let's roll back some of the esthetic municipal regulations as they may specifically impact low income housing or shelter. And, this time let's not hire an expensive consultant from Denver. Let's reach out into the development (residential and commercial) community who have extradentary skills and experience (Anchorage Homebuilders Association is a good source) and put together a 90-day task force of municipal and private entities to 'work this problem' starting with low income housing, and seriously reduce this cost.

And let's be honest about what 'health and safety' really means. The local acceptance of national safety standards is – sorry, ignorant of the realities of Anchorage, and lazy governance. If the MOA Mayor/Assembly were to demand a comparative analysis of so called national health and safety standards with other geographies like Anchorage, such as Canada, northern states in the lower 48, they would find lots of municipal variables that are far more realistic in application and cost. In an experiment, I sent the MOA road standards to the Alaska Department of Transportation and asked for their opinion. I was advised that the State of Alaska could not build roads to these municipal standards because it would be far to expensive and not really alter any safety issues. Do your own homework, and you just might learn something before you vote to approve a new 'national health and safety' standard.

There are several local initiatives to provide lower cost shelter if the MOA would allow them. Secretary Carson reported that San Francisco was building, at \$700,000 per living unit cost, new low-income housing. He made it very clear that HUD would not participate in this kind of exorbitant government spending when there are many far lower proven cost options. There are lots of examples in other communities that have faced this challenge. Get staff to ask them.

We thus have:

1. **Temporary or Transitional/shelter** (some 90 days, but others 24 months) in the Housing First model (warm & safe) '*we take them as they are not as we wish them to be*'. We get name, phone number, and background intel that will be of assistance later. We get them off the street out of the camps, but do we get them work? Why not? They pay only 30% of their income, whatever that is, towards rent and the government (HUD) pays the rest, at least until the tenant doesn't pay their portion and then they are evicted and back on the street. Again, 'jobs' are so critical to 'fixing the root cause'.
2. **Small homes/cabins/shelter** The Alaska Veterans Foundation has designed and is in the process of providing 25 one room cabins in Anchorage for homeless veterans and their families, and yes, work is a requirement. In addition, the 'Bird Houses' built by Cook Inlet Housing years back is an enormous success. Go look at it just off the Strawberry turn-off from Minnesota going south. And there is Rose Hubbard's, Anchorage Communal Homeless Village Project off Tudor, is another. There are more. Why doesn't the MOA have a meeting and invite these ideas to the table for serious consideration. And, please invite the media so that the residents of Anchorage can learn about these options too. And yes, NIMBY is a problem, but we can work out of that.

3. **Tent City/shelter** (very low cost but warm, clean, and safe) Again we can collect data with the permit. The key here is that it **MUST** be well designed, must be well run, and you must require a dollar a day and a permit that can be revoked if there are violations of the rules. This is how St. Petersburg, FL got started, but now many there have built their own small cabins and a sense of community has been established. Good leadership, good planning, good management. (more later)
4. **Long term supportive housing/shelter** (far more expensive but it **MUST** integrate ‘work/jobs’ to really be successful in ‘solving’ their needs.) And why not fully integrate this housing into new subdivisions? It doesn’t have to look like low cost housing. There are lots of very successful models like this in other communities. Again, this is subsidized housing with the tenant paying up to 30% of their income and the federal government paying the rest. But there is high turnaround as some don’t pay their portion because they stopped working and get evicted.

The Problem is a lack of Funding? No, it’s how it is appropriated and how it is used. Alaskans have lost confidence in the way their ‘investments’ are being wasted. They just keep getting asked for more money but there is **NO** evidence of any significant results.

At a recent meeting on the new/second MOA ten-year plan to end homelessness in Anchorage the common theme or complaint was that the city needed ‘larger bags of money’ – yes from the state of course. It is very clear from what we have already learned that throwing more money at symptoms is not the solution if your goal is to significantly reduce even end homelessness in Anchorage. Applying more money on processes is not yielding any real results. We must address root causes. Its far more successful and often far less costly over time per capita.

One of the innovations by the Mayor of St. Petersburg, FL to help enable donations not only from residents but also from visitors (think Anchorage tourists), was the conversion of old parking meters into bright yellow ‘donation’ meters to help the city deal with their homeless problem. These were placed strategically in places that were often used for panhandling as well as other locations to entice visitors to give. This simple innovative idea generates thousands of dollars a year for a specific purpose and helps those who want to give a dollar or a quarter toward this end, to do so within the law. You can also add a credit card mechanism into the meters to allow larger donations.

Today, we don’t have enough MOA funds (or assist from Juneau or Wash DC) to provide an agreed need for a (150) Adult Day Shelter (no job options yet that we can find). A number of buildings have been found in midtown that may be acceptable in that location. The largest and easiest to remodel is the old Alaska Club facility on Tudor. A Day Shelter would help reduce the number of homeless on the streets (NYC example) and provide an opportunity to get to know each person in more depth to help determine next steps, their needs, and general intervention, and yes very importantly, jobs. It functionally offers the MOA an opportunity to try and line them up for work (not just government work) at some level and enable immediate income so that they can afford at least a hostel (\$25 a night) which is often the choice of panhandlers.

Solution: State Alcohol Tax - spending needs realignment (this is not to have the state 'dedicate funds' it is to 'designate' or 'transfer' funds, at least that's what the courts have said is allowable) to very specific 'results' oriented purposes/uses.

- Alaska collects \$48+M a year ANC consumes about \$300,000,000 in alcohol a year. How much of the \$48M comes from the MOA area? We have asked this question, but still no answer. We believe that the Anchorage market generates at least 60% of this annual state income for the purpose of dealing the addiction and homelessness. Why can't so 60% of this annual income be 'transferred' to the MOA via a negotiated MOA (Memorandum of Agreement) structure for very specific purposes – like a day shelter in Midtown - other than just counseling which doesn't seem to be showing very good results, and we suggest the 'counseling' provided by some nonprofits needs to be 'results' audited. Billing by these nonprofits is based on one counselor providing a 50-minute session, but if they provide a group session of, let's say ten, each is billed at the same standard. The group session generates ten times more income to the nonprofit within the same time allocation. So, maybe we should have two cost standards, one for individual counseling and one for group sessions. Why not?
- Currently 50% of this \$48M goes to the state general fund and is used for whatever the legislature and governor decides. 50% goes to alcohol counseling/grants (so far not provably effective based on reports) and according to a legislative research report of the 50% spent on alcohol counseling only about half of those assigned this counseling finish the program and those that do are generally incarcerated, so it's a way for jail birds to get out of their cell for a couple of hours.
- ***We need externally audited results every year attached to any budget request for any of this money.*** You want this money, show us your results - every year. (Years 3 and 5 are critical thresholds in recovery that AA measures to assess sustained results) AA does an international survey on results. Most government agencies do nothing in this regard. That's one of the reasons why this spending is not being successful and why the people have lost confidence in this 'take' via taxation of 100% of those who purchase alcohol when less than 5% are the problem. We are not monitoring or reporting results so that we can adjust our spending to achieve better results.
- DRAFT legislation for House/Senate bipartisan bill to change the transfer/allocation to each municipality in the amount of the funds collected from that jurisdiction, for their use w/specific requirements (via a negotiated MOA updated regularly). We have requested a bipartisan group of legislators to organize and craft this bill for the next regular session.

Solution/Suggestion: Adult Day Shelter Given the SCOTUS refusal to hear the Boise appeal, we immediately need a full-service day shelter to house, warm, intervene and match for jobs, and help connect those in need of rehabilitation who will not or cannot do so themselves. This could be either/or an open facility or a lock down facility specifically responsive to citations that are not paid and/or multiple citations/arrests for the lower range of crimes that fit this purpose. The purpose/function of the day shelter is to get them off the street

and into a culture of intervention thus enabling job placement, rehabilitation and/or building enough skills that enable at least part time employment. Placement could be based on violations of law or volunteer commitment (free choice) for a specific time. Based on very successful programs in other states/cities, this also needs a relationship with ongoing medical treatment for addiction and follow up/monitoring services after release. Once sober or clean, if they go back out into the community, they need ongoing support much like a weekly visit with a counselor like a 'parole' officer concept. This is an open discussion now underway in the MOA and nationally.

Solution: Midtown Day Shelter (capable of housing 200+)

The old Alaska Club on Tudor is an excellent opportunity for the municipality to set up an easily remodeled facility to an effective day shelter. This gets them off the street and puts them in front of a professional with the applicable training to determine fitness for work, provide direction to drug/alcohol treatment/counseling services, direct them to educational opportunities that provide job related skills, and even some minor medical attention as may be needed. This building already has locker rooms, showers, laundry space, plenty of room for sleeping, storage of personal stuff, and work cubicles. A special area for job search efforts which includes a couple of computers to look at job opportunities which can be coordinated with People Ready and/or Goodwill Jobs, etc.

The purpose is to get them off the street, into shelter (meeting the 9th Circuit mandate) and move them into day labor as quickly as possible. There is a MOA bus stop too. Follow up is essential in keeping them working and able to provide their own temporary housing such as existing hostels at \$25 per day, or \$125 a week compared to the \$51 per night at the St Francis Shelter.

Solution: Rehab: The Palmer Prison/shelter (empty, daily costing the state for maintenance and security) *[from Nick Begich (the other one) in Eagle River]*

- Capable of housing **800** persons with adequate space and facilities to rehab violators and volunteer commitments. They are off the street, out of the camps, and in rehab.
- We must include 'jobs' as a critical component of this rehab initiative so they will have an income to provide for their housing when they leave. This could include jobs within the facility that would enable a savings account toward their release. Keep in mind that like most of America, there are more jobs in need than workers willing or able to work. Many business owners claim their first problem is finding people who want to work. The second is training them for their specific job.
- We should also always offer 'a ticket home' for those who voluntarily want to go home. Again, this is not a coercive action, it is totally voluntary. If there is a cost for this one-way standby ticket home, it can be repaid out of their next PFD if it requires state/municipal spending.

Solution: Transitional Housing/shelter Although the Mayor’s office continues to say they are **not** interested in investing any funds into transitional housing (they mean structures) the VA for example considers this type of housing – up to 24 months -basic to the **immediate** effort to get people off the street and into a warm and safe environment (Housing First) that then enables them to make ‘better choices’ and helps get them a job. The VetVillageAK project of the Alaska Veterans Foundation will provide both transitional housing and long-term supportive housing based on the need and ability of the tenant. They are all small one room cabins. Also, the Anchorage Communal Homeless Project is one of many examples that should be considered by the MOA – soonest. Again, getting the homeless to shelter, allows the MOA to legally get them off the street and out of the woods. They can start feeling warm and safe, a sense of community which is critical, and then begin the climb towards recovery with a job and the ability to survive in Anchorage – or go home if they want.

OPTION: Historic Anchorage Tent City/shelter The notion of a ‘tent city’ has been suggested to the MOA for decades – but pushed away as not worth the cost or time. “We are only interested in long term supportive housing” is the answer you get from the MOA. [look closely now for the homeless industrial complex] We suggest they don’t understand or appreciate the need nor the opportunities this tent city provides in ‘beginning’ to end homelessness in Anchorage. Again, it allows you to get them off the street or out of the woods. Or you can do as the MOA is now doing and leave them on the street or in the camps and remain unable, legally, to do anything because you have NOT provided any other ‘shelter’ options. A tent city or small cabins allows the type of proven intervention that can identify root causes and start solving them. As APD said in our meeting, ‘If there is no place/shelter for them, what can we do?’ A well designed and managed ‘historic looking’ Anchorage Tent City provides such a place between living on a street, in a camp, or very expensive long term permanent subsidized supportive housing.

1. First, the MOA Assembly and key MOA staff need to go to other cities who have done this and learn. Assemblyman Weddleton has, and it changed his understanding of this idea. He visited a site that started 19 years ago in Portland, and it is doing very well. There are many others like the newer one in St. Petersburg, FL. There are others that didn’t do so well, visit and learn what works and what doesn’t. It’s not the idea that fails, it’s the failure of management.

KEY: The one we suggest should be a planned, well organized, professionally managed, and a constructed replica of the original ‘Anchorage Tent City (1915)’ using reinforced white canvas for the tents, board walks, toilets (not portables) showers, laundry, etc. It should all look 1915. Main office to issue weeklong permits and collect \$1 per day. If the person does not have the \$1 per day, a work agreement can be entered with that person to ‘work’ in the tent city to offset this bill. Some of these ‘villages’ require 10 hours of work per resident per week to help ‘build’ a sense of community. This does not have to be a municipal facility. It in fact should be a shared (state, local, private)

development taking advantage of the various nonprofits who get government funds to help end homelessness and even many businesses in Anchorage who wish to contribute. The original concept was developed and presented to the Assembly by the alcohol beverage distributors decades ago, who were willing, at that time, to help underwrite it. But alas, they were turned down. Think of what a difference these possibly 100 tents could offer today. We are ready to help.

2. The location needs to be in town, so the tent residents have access to friends and services and importantly JOBS. This also provides the opportunity to gather information on each person for further assistance if asked for or necessary. This should be a **starting point**, not the only option.
3. The location also should be within the older section of town, even close to the original Tent City where Anchorage was first formed. This then sets up a response to visitors, ‘it is a recreation of our original tent city that we now use to help the homeless’.
 - a. It is often suggested that the old Native Hospital site on 3rd and Ingra be a tent camp, because it is close to the Brother Francis Shelter, Beans Café, and the Soap Kitchen. It is also already owned by the MOA, Land Trust.

Problem: The city has already sent hundreds of people into this area which is and has for some time been a mess. There is some planning underway with the move out of the auction yards, but it is not appropriate for all the homeless in Anchorage to be ‘put’ into one corner of one district of our town. Other people live and work in this area and their property values continue to be harmed by putting more homeless in this area. **The consolidation of homeless persons is not a good or workable idea.** Smaller well-designed camps offer much better management, targeted services like jobs, and responsive law enforcement. Our neighbors in this area who own property or work there think it only fair that other neighborhoods in Anchorage take on some of this burden. Why not?

4. The availability of the Tent City provides an option when APD or others are dealing with a homeless person and there is not available shelter – temporary or long-term. This is a key issue when citing a homeless person who is in trespass in the MOA ROW or in muni parks or woods for example. ‘Where else can they go’ is the question asked by the courts. When you provide a very low-cost week-long and renewable location that is warm and safe you are providing a temporary shelter option – but you get them off the street and into a warm safe community. If they choose not to accept this option, then you may have a legal action you can take because you have offered shelter, and the homeless need to understand this.
5. Those who choose to live in the wild. We know Alaskans like this and have worked with men (no women yet) who are so far, all combat veterans who live in the wilds of Alaska, as their home of choice. They often come to Anchorage in the spring to make money

over the summer to underwrite their cash needs the rest of the year. They don't want to stay in expensive hotels because that defeats their effort to save their income. They almost always have a large dog or two. And besides, they will tell you, there are too damn many of 'those tourists' there. The Tent City may offer them an option – and they may be excellent 'workers' for the City allowing them to stay at no cost but to contribute to the value of this community and save their money.

When recently asked about our Tent City option, during an Assembly Committee meeting on Homelessness, the representative from the mayor's office said, and I paraphrase: 'Alaska's winters make a tent city complicated if not untenable. *[comment: so just leave them out on the street or in the camps?]* 'There are liabilities that must be taken care of with training and other measures,' she said. 'There are rules about sanitation and safety.' 'The cost of putting one together is "almost what it would take to do a 50-unit apartment building", she said. "There is a lot that goes into structuring something that you can say is safe." *[comment: so just leave them out on the street or in the camps? Or put them in very expensive subsidized housing?]*

St Petersburg, FL did it in six months with little public funds, and it is working very well.

The tent shelter camps suggested in this report will cost money, but nothing close to what the MOA/ state/ and HUD have spent on 'long term supportive housing'. For example: The recent conversion of the John Thomas Building, which used to house various nonprofits and was owned by the MOA for some time, was instructive. Or consider the cost of redoing Karluk Manor specifically for chronic inebriants. Where are those 'audited' total spend numbers? What is the annual cost per resident? What were their results?

No, a tent city built to appear like the original 1915 Anchorage Tent City will not cost that much per tent (put out a challenge to anyone who wants to try, to present designs, costs, etc.), it will be a very small fraction of that, but we get them off the street and out of the camps in, yes 'temporary shelter' but that is at least a start in helping homeless persons take the first steps to getting back into a functional civil society.

Long Term Supportive Housing 'shelter?' Work must be a requirement which it is not at this time, or you are not 'solving' the problem - you are enabling continued disfunction and public dependency within the often-perverse culture of the homeless community. Work can be defined as 4 hours a day 3 days a week given the person sufficient funds for food and shelter for example. It doesn't have to be 9-5. And they get paid every day they work. There is no wait for a two-week paycheck. They are required to pay up to 30% of their income (whatever that may be) toward the cost of their housing when they are working. If someone refuses to work, they are put into temporary/transitional housing and receive counseling on how to find, qualify for, and keep at least a part time job in Anchorage. There are those who say you can't require work for 'disabled' people. Look at the programs in Anchorage and nationally that train disabled kids and adults for jobs. We have met very few who can't work. Work is a general term that can be adjusted to 'accommodate' (ADA) disabilities, but it gives

them a sense of purpose, of personal value, independence, and importantly *hope* something they do not generally find otherwise. Work is critical to real long-term functional recovery.

The Problem is a lack of services/facilities for Mental Health

Disabilities The legal framework of our mental health treatment construct is an absolute mess. That's not just my opinion, it is that of former judges on the US Supreme Court and others. Most of the foundation of these mental health laws were crafted based on an understanding of the brain developed in the 1950's that we would now consider primitive. When you add to this the complex mix of case law (<https://mentalillnesspolicy.org/legal/mental-illness-supreme-court.html>) both in actions and in legal definitions – we are in real trouble. We cannot fix these problems – unless:

Solution: I, along with many others, have called for a national/state/local government organized Presidential initiative to fix this mess. No, I'm not talking about some conference back east. I'm talking about a Special Task Force initiated by the President and federal agencies (WH and HUD) critically in cooperation with states to reconstruct our mental health laws with the integrated critical assistance of mental health and addiction 'experts' on the problems, the solutions, and the significant changes we need to make in federal and state law. You need people who understand the brain, the medications that work, and the law. Lawyers who specialize in mental health law know what the problems are. The task force should list them and offer options for new laws. And, no, we don't need politicians – just recognized experts in mental health and the law from key states and communities to be challenged, directed, and motivated to solve the construct of our laws in this area.

And they do not need more than a few (3) months to do this. I have chaired national/federal and state taskforces, I'm good at it and always on time and under budget. Why? Membership selection based on skills not politicians, and a VERY strong direction/commitment by the President and the National Governors Association to 'get er done'. Believe me, they know what the problems in law are, they just need to push and the vision to do it. It all has to go through federal/state legislators, so there is lots of time for political discussion.

One of the best examples of these problems is the redefinition of '*immediate threat to self and others*' and how that twists the use or not of proven very effective medications which were absolutely unknown in the 1950's and 60's. The definition of 'immediate' is the problem. That means 'now' not in 10 minutes or later in the day or tonight. So, the legal application of this definition is the biggest pebble in the shoe that must be adjusted. We can do this; we must, or we leave them on the street because their brain is not working. To do nothing is inhumane.

We now have the proven ability to help adjust chemical imbalances in the brain that can quickly change behaviors. This is transformative, and we know that most of those with mental health needs who are homeless can be 'treated' if allowed - if required. But rather than just consider the 'rights' of the mentally ill, can we not at least consider the rights of the people who must interact/live with them too? This must be a balance if we are going to make any real progress

helping those with mental disabilities who are on the street which is the last place for them to be safe. Most often these citizens are the easiest victims of crime. This is especially true for young girls and boys who ran away from home and are now on the streets. Many are not 'dangerous' just in need of treatment which may include medications that brings them back to functional reality.

This is a difficult transformative problem and we can expect more advances in medicine and treatment that may again require legal adjustment. But there are very good recommendations from the US Supreme Court and many others over decades past that no one is paying attention to. It is time to act, not argue.

I recommend we, this Community Council, take the initiative and formally call on our mayor, our Assembly, and Alaska's governor to request the President call for the formation of this national task force to move this mess into a workable responsible solution. This single action will save hundreds of lives, thousands of souls, save huge amounts of public funds, and the sanity of those who live with persons with mental disabilities. This is not another function for social elites, but a short-term working group of proven professionals opening willing and capable of applying their professional skills to craft new legal options. Again, this would be hugely transformative not just in the homeless struggle, but for all of humanity.

The other Problem with Mental Health Disabilities We need **professionals in Alaska.** As pointed out in the opening of this paper, Alaska has long had difficulty recruiting and then keeping mental health professionals. Why? Because they are not often attracted to the Alaskan lifestyle and they can make a lot more money in less challenging (cold/dark) locations in other larger markets. Many are not interested in hunting or fishing or skiing or doing Alaskan stuff. Maybe a hike or two. They just don't seek the Alaskan life, a few do and really make a difference, but most must be paid very well with lots of goodies like free condos, cars, etc. to get them to come, and to stay for at least a few years.

Solution: The Alaska Congressional Delegation needs to focus on, even prioritize, this problem and do whatever they can to get the U.S. Public Health Service to recruit, educate, and place mental health professionals in Alaska with a minimum 5-year contract. And don't send them all to remote villages. We need some in cities too. The Public Health Service has done this in other areas of medicine in Alaska for decades and it works. We have several prominent doctors in Anchorage who came here that way, and they stayed because it wasn't about the money, it was about the lifestyle (hunting, fishing, skiing). Alaska's governor should request this assistance. Alaska is not the only state with this problem. It is a growing national problem predicted in 'Future Jobs' an extraordinary forward-looking book that will change the way you think about not just our future but that of the world. But we have a good team in Wash DC who can 'work' this in the subcommittees to ensure we get at least five new mental health professionals a year for ten years or until we don't need any more. And then monitor retention.

Another strategy would be for the state, via the University of Alaska, to join with campuses in those smaller states in America that educate/train mental health professionals and then help underwrite their cost with a contract that requires they must work in Alaska for 5 years based on this state underwrite. This is not a unique idea.

The Problem is Cultural Disabilities We have a growing number of Alaskans who come to visit ‘the big city’ often using their PFD on a one-way flight, most coming in October. They know Anchorage from watching TV but that’s all. They initially stay in low cost hotels or with friends until they run out of money or welcome. Their expectation is that Anchorage will be a great place to visit and live especially since there is no longer any economic purpose in their home community. The problem is they have no job or even the personal skills to enable their survival in a western 9-5 work construct. The other problem is they came from a ‘sort of communal’ society but are now in a fully western entrepreneurial capitalist culture. **This is NOT their fault. This is NOT about race. They are not ‘bad people’.** It is the result of where they were born and what they didn’t learn because their area was not a western 9 – 5 capitalist work culture, but most likely a lifelong federal welfare and subsistence communal culture. They are not lazy, they just learned a different set of work skills and different life skills, they don’t understand the western notion of time. None of these ‘skills’ work well for them in the big city.

Solution: Revamp the old Department of Labor Program that provided training in the schools starting at about 14 years of age. How to survive in a western 9-5 work culture. There is no pressure to move out of their remote community, but to learn the skills they will need IF they chose to move from their remote village to the big city. Please understand that many remote communities no longer have an economic purpose and haven’t since most of the commercial fishing ‘limited entry permit’ holders discovered that their permit was worth over \$250,000. We have a way to fix this as well, but that is a separate paper. There really are no ‘jobs’ available to them where they grew up. As my old friend Willie Hensley said to me decades ago, the two most damaging things to the traditional Alaska Native culture were: 1. Lifelong **federal** welfare that injected a dependable cash flow into their lives and their future, and 2. TV. Most Alaskans do not know that live TV was not in the villages until the mid-1970s when satellite TV was beamed down to Alaska.

This initiative to teach young people the skills necessary to survive in a western 9-5 work capitalist culture, must include the ‘craft trades’ most of whom are in desperate demand as skilled craft workers not only in Alaska but across America. I am confident the craft unions will join this initiative. IBEW already has. With the reinjection of craft skills into our schools, we should find remote Alaskans more capable of fitting in with the qualifications necessary to survive if they come to Anchorage or any big city. If they don’t come to Anchorage, their skills will not be wasted if our state does what it must do to recreating economies in the Alaskan bush.

I received a note from an old associate who lives in the bush that one of the reasons the state stopped providing these job and life skill training programs was an objection from local school

boards who only wanted the local culture taught. Subsistence and ‘Native’ culture. I have also been told that some of the elders in some villages complained that too many of their young were leaving to get work in the big cities. They were needed at home to care for the elderly. The political decision was thus to cancel the program.

Now we have one of this highest per capita number of suicides, drug overdoses, and alcohol/drug problems in America - across remote Alaska. And I thought it was ‘for the children’. Obviously, we need to have some discussion between cultures about a strategy, but we need to do something to help those young Alaskans who want to leave remote villages and find a different life. What about starting with at least a part time job so they can learn the culture as they collect their skills?

Think about the young man who came to Anchorage from the Yukon-Koyukuk area and got into trouble in Anchorage ending up in jail. He’s back home now, but with the craft skills he learned in prison that now allow him to support his family and be a contributing member of his community. Does a child at 18 not have the inalienable human right, protected by our constitution, to ‘pursue happiness’? We need to enable this if we honestly care about our First Alaskans.

The Problem is open Human Waste The growing illegal deposit of human waste and other contaminants continues, and as mentioned is measurably polluting our waterways throughout Anchorage. This is also causing significant and costly problems for building owners, managers, cleanup crews, employees, etc. In fact, many ‘janitors’ now refuse to deal with this, and the owners are having to contract expensive ‘specialty crews’ with specific training and equipment. Often the waste is left at a front door of a business or under an overhang. We also have people urinating through the crack in the locked front doors of businesses. Both require immediate and distasteful attention at the start of every business day.

Although we have heard about this problem for some time and the problem is generic to the so called ‘homeless’ problem, there just doesn’t seem to be a solution. When asked about this the representative of APD assigned to the ‘homeless’ problem(s) said, “Where else are they going to poop?” What used to be generally accepted as public toilets at gas stations for example, are now closed, locked for obvious reasons, and no longer available unless you purchase something in the store and are provided the key. These spaces are often illegally trespassed, used for overnight stays by the homeless who sneak into a building and hide in closets, stalls, or under staircases until the building is empty. Portable toilets have been tried in many areas in the MOA via the municipal park and recreation office, but again the vandal damage to them causes the vendors to not participate. The vendor’s cost goes up, but the MOA needs to keep the cost down.

Solution: This is not a problem limited to Anchorage. It is an old and international problem. Let’s look at what other cities have done, but not just in the USA, let’s also look at Europe, for ideas that are successful and try to apply, at least as a pilot project, an initiative that may reduce this problem – and this health risk. Many cities provide public toilets along

sidewalks or ROWs whose surface is owned and operated by a municipal authority. All the utilities needed for these small buildings are already present in most locations. We recommend that this option be seriously and quickly explored and tried with a good measurable result report every quarter. So, we not only need to provide ‘shelter’ we need to provide a place to ‘poop’.

The Problem is ‘I’m Stuck in Anchorage’ Folks are sometimes stuck in Anchorage without the funds to return home wherever that is. During the initial interface (intervention) with a homeless person, it works well to find out where they are from and then ask: Why’d you come to Anchorage? How did you get here? Now, listen to what they have to say and then, at the right moment ask, “Would you like to go home?”

Solution: “Would you like to go home?” *This is NOT a coercive act.* We are not ‘forcing’ anyone to leave Anchorage, but we have often found many do in fact want to go home but have no way to realize this. Just asking this question often triggers the notion that this is a viable solution to many of their problems. To just go home and start over. Why not enable this choice when we otherwise enable so many other vastly more expensive options? The MOA or a group of nonprofits should negotiate a standby ticket package every year with the airlines to help provide low cost one-way standby tickets home. We’ll wager that if you offered some very positive media for the airline’s support, the price per ticket will go down maybe even to zero.

But first, we have learned, you need to call ‘home’ and find out if they are welcome or if there is some reason not. Our experience has revealed that this contact is most helpful. When we agree, the homeless person is personally transported to the airport, given a standby ticket with their name on it, then clears security (you observe) and is on their way. You don’t want to allow the ticket to be sold. If they come back to Anchorage, they are no longer eligible for another free ticket home. Also, consider doing some public service ads on radio and TV so when/if they get their PFD and get stuck in Anchorage, they know where they can get a ticket home with some of that money. Remember, if this is done by the MOA or APD, the cost of these tickets can be attached as a reimbursement from their next PFD. *This remains the most cost-effective responsible workable tool to shrink the Anchorage homeless population.*

The ‘coercion’ concern. In our effort to find out what APD needs to fund their once structured program for tickets home it was expressed that if the APD provides a ticket home ‘someone’ will assert that they are forcing people out of Anchorage to solve the homeless problems. What we suggest is a joint venture between one or more responsible nonprofits who have proven the capability of making this work and APD in applying this program. Obviously strict process narratives must be used so that it is VERY clear to the homeless person that we are NOT forcing them out of town but only enabling them to go home IF that his what they want to do.

Why should we not try this option? Given our experience at the Alaska Veterans Foundation, we have found this a very workable, results focused too. Why should the MOA not try this?

In Sum; a quick review

The MOA has enormous control over what you can do with your private land but because of the Ninth Circuit Court can't require someone to get a permit to camp on municipal property – not even in our parks. You can't stand on the corner and ask for a ride, but you can stand there and solicit for money – but you can't hand them money from your car. Such is the legal complexity of this problem and one that must get substantive, deep attention by all who have a creative mind and an understanding of the need for common sense and balance in the law and in public land management. The recent action by SCOTUS to the appeal by Boise, Idaho of the Ninth Circuit decisions is very disappointing, but it is. We now need to cooperate with other cities/states to find a new case that is stronger for an appeal of the 9th Circuit rulings. When we do, the state and the MOA should join in an amicus brief in support of such an appeal.

We have been told and lectured to for years that **the problem is a lack of housing**. And that the lack of housing is due to the failure of the state to provide more money. But the MOA has refused to consider any proposals for temporary transitional shelter other than VetVillageAK. If we want to get the homeless off the street humanly, we must have shelter (9th Circuit Court) in which they can be safe and warm, or they must be allowed to sleep on the sidewalks or in the woods until. This is not just an Anchorage problem; it is a state and national problem. But some communities have solved it and done so rather quickly. Options have been presented but are not being considered by the MOA in deference to 'long term supportive housing' and we suspect the lobby of the homeless industrial complex. We need immediate transitional shelter (day and night) not expensive subsidized apartments, and we need jobs. Its not like there aren't any available in Anchorage – almost every store front has a sign saying they are hiring.

Yes, we need more low income, unfortunately government subsidized, housing. But part of the problem is MOA ordinances, policies, delays, lack of staff discretion on new housing that greatly (40+%) impacts costs, very costly delays, and industry frustration. Additionally, we must stop pushing all new low-income housing into one district or downtown. Low income housing must be fully integrated into our community. Any development of residential housing of ten or more units should be challenged to integrate some of this type of housing. You won't even know they are 'different' because if done properly (very good examples in other cities) they fit into the design of the residential development and are not esthetically apparent as subsidized housing. This includes what look like large single-family homes that are in fact fourplexes. The success of this idea is tested and available in communities that have done this for decades. Living and working in a nice middle-class neighborhood gives the low-income resident **hope** and they intuitively desire a better life. It places them in a community that lifts them up out of poverty. Helps them plan again for a better future for themselves and their families. To again be proud of who they are and what their future can be. ***It offers hope***. But the problem is **not** the lack of housing.

In addition, go visit the Strawberry Village on Strawberry Road just off Minnesota going south. Built by Cook Inlet Housing Authority it has been hugely successful in results and low in cost.

We should enable the development of more of these small ‘villages’ with AHBA competition for structural and site designs. No, not expensive homes, but small/tiny yet very livable attractive ranch and two-story homes that can be rented and then even sold to the renter after a few years of being a good tenant. This concept better fits the need and the cost realities of this solution – ‘lower cost shelter’ but with an attractive sense of community and real hope.

The problem is the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals who have changed the rules affecting how states and municipal governments can manage their public lands and road ROWs. We hope to find another appeal and hope to see some common sense applied to – soliciting without a permit on public lands/ROWs; sleeping or camping on sidewalks, public lands, or ROWs without a permit; defecating on public lands or ROWs; loitering on public lands or ROWs; etc. With a positive decision by SCOTUS to return common sense to these issues and others, this will immediately enable cities and states to quickly address their respective homeless, crime problems that now plague them. Both the MOA Mayor and the Governor of Alaska should cooperate, so they are ready to file a support motion when we have such an appeal before SCOTUS.

The problem is the lack of transitional/temporary housing w/services. Until states and cities are allowed by law to responsibly deal with the host of issues poised by the homeless, we must legally provide ‘shelter’ or appropriate transitional housing. Cities who have done this, like our example in Florida, have solved the vast majority of their homeless problems in just months. It can be done; it just requires our state and local governments to do it.

The problem is the homeless industrial complex. The economic incentives are not working for the community, but they are working for a few. I’ve mentioned this and continue to find this one of the biggest obstacles in the current construct because the costs (although often camouflaged) are huge per subsidized resident, and the results clearly appear limited. Consider that if the federal government subsidies end, what happens to these projects and their tenants?

The number of nonprofits in Anchorage is the highest per capita in America – why? This will require strong deep courageous thinking and political action from outside of the box, but it is essential if we are to more efficiently use the limited funds we have. We must solve at least this part, providing transitional shelter vs long-term supportive shelter, to solve the housing problem. As the Secretary of HUD has discovered very often the cost barrier are municipal rules that just don’t make much sense in this application. Again, check the Net, there are dozens of reports on this problem that warrant serious consideration if not even some investigation. You will be shocked. Google “the homeless industrial complex” or “the homeless business”. *Best is a very detailed paper by Edward Ring, July 2019 America’s Homeless Industrial Complex*

The problem is the total failure of our federal and state laws that address **mental health** thresholds and how persons with such disabilities should/can be treated. We know so much more now about the brain and how to help it than we did in the ‘50s and ‘60s when most of these laws were written or twisted by the courts. The inability to require treatment results in terrible human tragedy, not only for the person with the disability but too often many others, think school

shooting. But the failure of our courts to apply reason and wisdom and proven science continues. We also desperately need more mental health professionals in Anchorage. We have offered some suggestions.

The problem is drug and alcohol abuse and addiction and the total failure of state and federal initiatives to deal with it. Remember, the abuse of drugs and alcohol is more often about self-medicating to mute some sort of pain which is most often the root cause. Find the bases of the pain, and you just may start solving the underlying problem. We have done this for a long time with combat veterans and PTS. Remember that once addicted, brain cells are changed and rarely fully recover. The problem is the absolute failure of state and federal programs who claim to be trying to honestly measure results but create straw men or redefine words. AA measures their results internationally every couple of years. Their reports are very telling especially their notion of recovery thresholds at years 3 and 5. State funded alcohol counseling uses half of the \$48M a year the state ‘takes’ from alcohol consumers (the clear majority of whom do not abuse it), applies only 50% to the problem i.e. counseling with no real cost-effective measured success. Why are we not applying all of this \$48M to the problem? These ‘results’ reports are critical in understanding and adjusting effectiveness and the proper allocation of funds, raising public confidence in this spending of a tax taken from **citizens who are not the cause of the problem**. We know that almost half of those required to take alcohol counseling never finish it, and those that do finish it are almost all incarcerated at the time. But how are they doing year 3 and 5?

The problem is cultural disability that has nothing to do with race only where you were born and the skills you didn’t learn. This we, the people of Alaska, can fix quickly. The problem is the failure of our K-12 system to teach the skills, including the crafts, essential to survive in a western capitalist 9-5 work construct. **The problem is the failure of the state to recraft a vibrant base economic purpose** for many remote communities who have lost them – often due to actions by the state or federal government. **The problem is the structural lack of attention this issue is given at the state level**. These are all solvable problems with some leadership, creativity, and political courage.

The recent initiative by a few Alaska Native corporations to bring groups of remote students to Anchorage for several weeks to learn how to survive in its western capitalist 9-5 work culture is very hopeful. We will continue to monitor this effort and its results. Pay attention – this can be transformative to hundreds of young Alaskans looking for a future.

The problem is lawlessness. I think this may be turning in our favor based on our many meetings with APD and their experts. ‘REPORT’ is the key to making this work. It starts the data from which we are now so appropriately dependent. And remember, if an officer says they have been told not to enforce, REPORT that to APD and then follow up. We need some light on this problem, but I’m willing to wait a little and see how APD makes progress. Again, it is essential that the APD assigned officer attend your Council meetings every month. If they don’t show up, REPORT and send them a written summary of citizen concerns from the meeting. Help build the data base.

As a part of this concern, the Midtown CC has long requested a **monthly crime report from APD** using the data base they already have in their 'crime map' presentation on the Net. We suggest that code be provided by someone that can help APD provide these detailed reports monthly to every CC in Anchorage. A missing data point is the time of the crime. We have found that when we get this data, it changes how we respond to crime centers.

Seeing these reports, which Midtown is currently doing on its own, illustrates where, when crime happens and provides focus to a wide range of options. This is NOT an expensive challenge as all the data is already collected by a well-established process. They do need to add the time when a crime happens, but the graphics are very impactful.

The problem is that we continue to spend limited public funds to address symptoms, not the root causes. Yes, we must address immediate needs/symptoms, but unless we also invest wisely into knowing and understanding and then fixing the root causes of these socio-economic and mental health problems, we will not fix this. This must change if we are honestly going to seriously fix these problems and greatly reduce the so called 'homeless problem'. We can at least make it a transitional problem rather than a lifestyle and for some a death sentence especially at -20F.

**This report was prepared by Ric Davidge, MPA/PM
Vice President, Midtown Community Council**

also

**Founder, Alaska Roundtable
Founder, Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc. & VetVillageAK**

Following the death of five homeless veterans on the street/woods in Anchorage, the Alaska Veterans Foundation was requested by the Alaska Legislature, to provide a proposal to end veteran homelessness and suicide in Alaska. This proposal was approved by the MOA Assembly and has been received by the AK Legislature per their request. It is now under consideration by a land owner to allow development.

This report was formally approved by unanimous vote on 9-26-19 by the Midtown Community Council. Several other Anchorage Community Councils have also used this report to craft their own resolutions calling on the Mayor, Assembly and the Alaska Legislature to take immediate action consistent with this report. The report has also been shared nationally in response to growing requests. If you would like to comment on the report, we welcome your constructive participation and look forward to hearing from you.

Midtown CC believes we can do better!