

**Copied and pasted from an email received on May 29, 2011**  
**Robert Simms**

What Should We Do about HOMELESSNESS in Ashland? There's no simple answer to this broad question.

Some persons appear to be homeless in Ashland, but they are not. They are merely poor. Others who are homeless don't appear to be. Homeless persons are families and couples, many are solo. Most are looking for any kind of work to earn a little money, others either refuse to work or they are mentally/physically unable to work. Some have cars, most do not. Some need the company of others, some do not. Some choose homelessness, many do not.

While local bus tokens, access to telephones, laundry vouchers and hot showers are helpful for most, others don't need these "conveniences." A few have no real complaints about sleeping - night after night - under bridges or in the bushes, others could not tolerate this indignity.

The Commons no longer exists here. Private landowners and the city's watershed occupy the land in and around Ashland, and the homeless are barred. So where are these persons to sleep without breaking the law? Are they to leave Ashland for another town where they'll experience similar problems?

What is a human life worth? Are some lives worth more than others? Is a pet's life worth more than a homeless person's life? What's the difference between pet owners allowing their dogs to pollute our watershed/waterways and homeless persons doing the same because of the lack of public toilets?

Does it make sense for Ashland police officers to issue expensive tickets to homeless persons who will pay them off only after hell freezes over? Couldn't "community service" tickets be issued instead?

Are the persons who need and want to move beyond their miserable situation getting real help? At which point does the bureaucracy become an insurmountable obstacle for a homeless person? Do the persons working in local government and nonprofit agencies - the ones purporting to help the homeless - genuinely care? Are they competent? Do they actually contribute a positive change to a homeless person's life?

A necessary step in the right direction: public meetings exploring these and other issues surrounding homelessness in Ashland.

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