COMMON COUNCIL MEETING
GENERAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Jack Flynn, Chair

DATE: Tuesday, September 5th, 2023

LOCATION: Council Chambers-2nd Floor, City Hall

TIME: 5:30 PM

TOPIC(S) OF DISCUSSION/CONSIDERATION:

- RESOLUTION 88.82.23R (Pending Amendment 9.7.23)
  A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL ENCOURAGING THE PUBLIC TO, IF
  ABLE, SUPPORT STRUGGLING INDIVIDUALS BY DIRECTING THEM TO SOCIAL
  SERVICES OR GIVING TO NOT-FOR-PROFITS

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: YES
Council Members Flynn, Anane, Balarin, Clarke, Hoey, Keegan, Kimbrough, and Zamer introduced the following, with the support of Council President Ellis, Mayor Sheehan, City Treasurer Shahinfar, and City Auditor Applyrs:

RESOLUTION 88.82.23R (Pending Amendment 9.7.23)

A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL ENCOURAGING THE PUBLIC TO, IF ABLE, SUPPORT STRUGGLING INDIVIDUALS BY DIRECTING THEM TO SOCIAL SERVICES OR GIVING TO NOT-FOR-PROFITS

WHEREAS, the Albany County Department of Social Services provides housing vouchers to those in need, and the City of Albany has allocated funds from the American Rescue Plan to assist with the rapid rehousing of those who have been evicted from their homes; and

WHEREAS, virtually all of these services are provided by not-for-profit community-based organizations that need financial support from the public; and

WHEREAS, more than 1,500 units of affordable housing have been created or renovated since 2015 however there is still a high demand for more, the City is home to hundreds of units of supportive housing with a concentration in our historically underserved neighborhoods and more than a dozen treatment centers for those struggling with addiction, as well as home to homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and food pantries; and

WHEREAS, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, the complications of that public health crisis have significantly exacerbated existing problems of homelessness, mental illness, addiction, and individuals seeking money from others, sometimes referred to as panhandling; and

WHEREAS, although every American has a recognized constitutional right to ask for money in public in a non-threatening manner, the increase in individuals seeking money from others – particularly in an aggressive manner – over the past several years has significantly impacted public spaces throughout the City of Albany, together with the businesses that exist in and around those public spaces; and

WHEREAS, many individuals seeking money from others operate in some of the City’s busiest roads and intersections, behavior which significantly increases the likelihood of vehicle accidents and injuries, putting themselves, drivers, and passersby at risk;

WHEREAS, it is more effective for members of the public to assist local service providers than for them to place themselves and the community at risk by handing money directly to individuals standing in traffic;

WHEREAS, the City of Albany is home to resources that assist those struggling with homelessness, hunger, substance abuse, mental illness, and other difficulties; and

WHEREAS, the City recognizes there is still work to be done related to affordable
housing and other topics to address those struggling; and

WHEREAS, the City is currently reviewing possible legislative actions to help deal with the current prevalence of aggressive and/or dangerous attempts to seek money from others;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Common Council of the City of Albany, with the support of the Mayor, the City Auditor, and the City Treasurer, hereby encourages the public, for the safety of the community, to refrain from giving money directly to individuals seeking money from others and to, instead, give to local organizations that work to assist those struggling with homelessness, hunger, substance abuse, mental illness, and other difficulties; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Albany shall create pamphlets detailing available services that can assist individuals seeking money from others and which shall be made available for members of the public to distribute.
To: Shaniqua Jackson, Acting City Clerk

From: Brett Williams, Sr. Asst. Corporation Counsel
      Jake Eisland, Research Counsel

Re: Common Council Legislation
Supporting Memorandum

Date: August 10, 2023

Sponsors: Council Members Flynn, Anane, Balarin, Clarke, Hoey, Keegan, Kimbrough, and Zamer introduced the following, with the support of Mayor Sheehan, City Treasurer Shahinfar, City Auditor Applyrs, and Council President Ellis

RESOLUTION 88.82.23R

TITLE
A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL ENCOURAGING THE PUBLIC TO REFRAIN FROM GIVING MONEY DIRECTLY TO INDIVIDUALS FORCED TO SEEK MONEY FROM OTHER RESIDENTS

GENERAL PURPOSE OF LEGISLATION
This resolution discourages members of the public from giving money directly to individuals seeking money from other residents, a.k.a. panhandling, and encourages them, instead, to give money to community organizations which provide assistance to those suffering from homelessness, hunger, substance abuse, mental illness, and other difficulties.

NECESSITY FOR LEGISLATION AND ANY CHANGE TO EXISTING LAW
See above.

FISCAL IMPACT
None.