



# OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

DAWN M. JONES, CITY CLERK

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HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY

JULY 20, 2023, 5:00 P.M.

Committee Members Present: Eli Wax, Karen White, Rachel Tomas Morgan,

Committee Members Absent: Troy Warner, Canneth Lee, Desmond Upchurch

Agenda: Bill No. 47-23 – An Ordinance Adding the State of “Homeless” to the Protected Classes of Persons

Members marked with an asterisk (\*) are present digitally

Please note the attached link for the meeting recording:

<https://docs.southbendin.gov/WebLink/browse.aspx?dbid=0&mediaid=366231>

Committee Chair Eli Wax called to order the Health and Public Safety Committee meeting at 5:00 p.m.

## **Bill 47-23 – An Ordinance Adding the State of “Homeless” to the Protected Classes of Persons**

Council Chair Wax noted that this is an information session and there is no public comment. This was heard in 2017 and did not receive traction. However, now there are significant concerns regarding homelessness with approximately 600 homeless individuals in South Bend. There has been significant community engagement, including support from Indianapolis, which has done work on homeless issues. It was noted that not having an address can be an issue for individuals.

Discrimination against the homeless happens everywhere, as they are not wanted in private and public areas. It creates issues for homeless individuals to rent apartments, apply for jobs, maintain jobs, find shelter, etc. There are many myths and misinformation regarding the homeless population such as they are unemployed and uninterested in gaining employment. Statistically, one third of homeless individuals have jobs. Many homeless individuals are educated. There is infrastructure in South Bend that will provide more access to showers and basic amenities. There is a misconception that homelessness is a choice. Shelters frequently have regulations that do not allow personal belongings and pets, making them a difficult choice for individuals to utilize. Some also require sobriety and divide family units based on gender. Additionally, some have bed bugs and are violent. Frequently, homeless individuals are not covered by other classifications such as disabled, minority, etc.

This classification will allow homeless individuals to file HCR complaints. It will decrease discrimination and support them to mitigate their homeless situation, such as being able to find and keep employment.

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There was discussion regarding the choice to not use shelters for the reasons stated above. There was discussion regarding homelessness not being protected as a federal class. These classes are considered an immutable characteristic. Homelessness is something that can be changed, while most protected classes are characteristics that cannot change. There was discussion on proving that discrimination is related to homelessness. There was discussion on how one would know that someone is homeless. There was discussion on the HRC's capacity to address complaints. An additional investigator would be needed, as the staff does not have capacity.

With no further business, Committee Chair Wax adjourned the Health and Public Safety Committee meeting at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Eli Wax, Committee Chair

**NOTICE FOR HEARING AND SIGHT IMPAIRED PERSONS**  
Auxiliary Aid or Other Services may be Available upon Request at No Charge.  
Please give Reasonable Advance Request when Possible