

KINS COMMUNITY COMMENT (442-5744)

This is Ron Pierre for Community Comment.

Not too long ago, you could walk the common areas of the Bay Shore Mall with your family. In the early morning you could mall walk with your friends and then enjoy a quite cup of coffee in the food court. It was a comfortable place to be. Now, you can't even park your car in the parking lot without fear that it will be broken into. Once you leave a store, you are likely to run the gauntlet of panhandlers asking for everything from food to gas to beer. I get frustrated when there appears to be no solution to a problem that has now become Eureka's permanently stuck in "Groundhog Day". I'm mandated to live with laws and regulations, like local water rationing, that make no common sense, yet others can live outside the behavioral norms without respecting other people's rights. When the rules seem to only apply to taxpayers, employers, or the law abiding public, my frustration magnifies when there is no practical solution to fix a dying community of limited opportunity. Instead, community leadership talks and studies, hires a consultant, and then does more talking and studying.

The other day, as I was walking down the central corridor near the food court in Bay Shore Mall, I was approached by a scruffy panhandler demanding I hand over two dollars so he could buy a hamburger. I said no! Promptly, the miscreant grumbled, and offered the one finger salute. More and more, the panhandling and the endless parade of wanderers seems to multiply one order of magnitude every day. These people operate outside the law, and without respect for our community and the people who pay the bills. Take a head count as you drive down Broadway or 4th and 5th. Hard to attract new families, or encourage new business, when there is an atmosphere of an easy living, a good climate, and entitlements aplenty if you are homeless. Quite frankly, I don't shop at places where I have to contend with the cardboard card-carrying wanderers. One only has to listen to the nightly news, or read the local newspapers to get an insight into what is going on in this community. If the news leads don't contain three or more stories about robberies, assaults, or fires, then one can conclude that it has been a good day.

When you look for a root cause to these problems, you quickly get to the drug bottom line quickly. The cause goes back to the myth that the homeless are victims, and need to be gently cared for. Most of these people make their own choices. Their welfare is not my priority.

Whether it's the catch and release executive directives that opened jail doors, the State's legislative actions like Assembly Bill 718 that allows people to sleep in their vehicle in public places in spite of community ordinances, or changing some felonies to misdemeanors to free jail space, our community has become a well-known assembly point for freeloaders. There are no exemptions, even if you are the most liberal progressive. Dealing with this current state of an uneasy frustrated community living, has forced many of us to become suspicious of everything. If you are not frustrated about this community problem consider yourself lucky. Your mediation is working!

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