

Squad 99 Police Blotter

Duluth Police
Department

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Panhandling

Is it just a Duluth issue?

Panhandling, maybe you have noticed the seemingly overnight increase in this activity in the downtown area. Panhandling is an issue facing communities across the country and is not unique to our downtown community.

A U.S. Supreme Court decision allowing an Arizona pastor put up signs directing people to church services has become the basis for many lower courts across the nation to allow broader First Amendment protections, overturning anti-begging ordinances on the grounds that the government generally can't outlaw speech on particular subjects.

So what does this mean for our community? These decisions have essentially determined the act of holding a sign and asking another for money is free

speech and therefore protected by the 1st Amendment. With that being said, we are unable to enforce our current City Ordinance which addresses begging in public.

While panhandling, or asking people for money, is protected by the 1st Amendment, there are things that one cannot do while panhandling. People are not allowed to violate other City Ordinances and State Laws while asking for money. Soliciting in the roadway is not legal for obvious safety reasons and is prohibited by State Law. Furthermore, obstructing traffic, blocking sidewalks and creating disturbances and/or being aggressive and alarming others are actions that are not legal either.

As a Police Department we need to balance the rights of

Fun Facts from July



Miles Walked- 56.44

Miles Biked- 16.64

Miles on Horseback- 10

Business Contacts- 120

Parking Enforcement
Contacts- 10

Meetings (hours)- 18

Self-Initiated Field Activity
and Community
Engagement Events- 14

Citations- 6

Arrests- 2

Traffic Stops- 2

all citizens of our city, businesses, tourists and panhandlers alike. This creates a situation that can be difficult to navigate at times. Obviously enforcement action is part of what we do, but we also balance enforcement with education and connecting those in need with resources. The end goal is to hopefully resolve issues on a long term basis. There are meetings scheduled in

the near future to discuss this subject with Community Leaders, Business Leaders and City Staff to seek a solution that is beneficial for all.

As a police department our mission is to provide a safe Duluth for all by strengthening relationships and serving in a respectful, caring and selfless manner. With that being said, if you

find yourself wanting to help a panhandler, we ask that you make that donation to the CHUM, Duluth Gospel Mission or another organization that helps those in need. Donations to these organizations will ensure that donated money is providing much needed shelter, food and personal care items!

Pictures From the last few weeks....



Here are some pictures from various activities over the past few weeks. The first picture was taken of Sgt. Zwak and a young child catching a fish at the "Get Hooked On Fishing" event for youth. I was also able to head out on Patrol a few times working with our Mounted Unit. "Jimmy" and I are providing some back-up on a traffic stop. A few Officers were able to help the Special Olympics raise money at a fundraiser and a lot of fun doing it!! Last but not least is a picture from Canal Park on a day when the weather was PERFECT! What a great office I have!