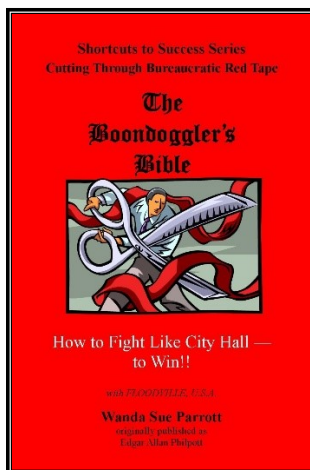


HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Column #65



FIRST NATIONAL BOONDOGGLE-BUSTER

By Wanda Sue Parrott

A BOONDOGGLE-BUSTER destroys barriers so critical issues that are dragging on can be resolved once and for all. Starting now!

In my book, *The Boondogglers Bible*, boondoggery is simply defined as: Useless work = time and money wasted.

Best-known boondogglers are politicians and other public servants, but a boondogglers can be any influential person who uses stall-and-delay tactics to delay ending public, private or personal issues.

Across the nation, homeless people are dying while arguments continue in city halls about how to solve homelessness. Justification by boondogglers for such deaths is usually: They exercised the freedom to choose to sleep outside in the cold.

Gov. Cuomo cut through bureaucratic red tape by reaching a one-man decision about statewide homelessness, then announcing it as a mandate that challenges the law. It was a do-it-now-and-face-legal-consequences-later moment, the outcome of which won't be known for some time.

He overrode the individual's right to choose by acting like a benevolent dictator, in lieu of going through the slow process of getting a state law passed.

Stay Tuned: This Should Be Good!

Meanwhile, the explosive impact Gov. Cuomo's announcement may have otherwise had from Maine to the Monterey Peninsula was mitigated by the timing of his announcement.

As the New Year's weekend was winding down on the west coast Sun., Jan. 3, and the TV-viewing public settled in to watch reruns of the 2016 Tournament of Roses, football highlights, or the 9 p.m. premiere of season six of *Downton Abbey* on PBS, this news flashed online as a major Associated Press breaking news headliner dated 1/4/16:

New York Governor: Take homeless inside as temperatures fall

NEW YORK — Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Sunday signed an order requiring communities statewide to take homeless people from the streets to shelters when temperatures reach freezing, saying he was ready for a legal challenge from anyone who believes “people have a civil right to sleep on the street and freeze to death.”

Cuomo said his executive order, which took effect Tuesday, will protect the state's growing homeless population.

Do People Have A Civil Right To Sleep On The Street And Freeze To Death?

Here in Monterey, the governor’s comment came on the heels of a debate among social justice activists who met Sun. afternoon at the Unitarian Universalist Church. They questioned an individual’s right to refuse help if his or her life would be endangered by the decision to sleep outdoors.

One case involves an elderly homeless woman who uses a walker and wears a knitted stocking cap. She tried participating in women’s shelter programs but went back to sleeping outdoors rather than following rules required by help-giving agencies: no drug and alcohol use allowed.

Although she had been beaten in the past while she slept on the beach, she elected to spend the frigid New Year’s weekend outdoors because she wasn’t willing or able to forego a drink of alcohol.

Suggested solution: Non-profit agencies that don’t allow drugs or alcohol consider bending or relaxing rules that prohibit their total use during inclement weather.

A second case involved many homeless men and women who have pets. Mainly dog owners, they are unwilling to part with their animals because they have no place to put the pets if they stay in shelters.

Suggested solution: Start an Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program (I-Help) additional plan for homeless persons’ pets, possibly by allowing animals to sleep in crates on the premises of shelters where their owners are staying. Problematic are the questions: where would crates be stored during the daytime and who would provide pets’ meals?

Suggestions are welcome. E-mail me at the address below this column.

While these issues were being debated in Monterey, Gov. Cuomo’s order came as temperatures in parts of New York state were dipping below 32 degrees, calling for police departments and social services agencies to move people into shelters, including those reluctant to go.

"I want this done statewide," said Cuomo, who believes the law is on his side. "By the way, there is a philosophy out there that says people have a civil right to sleep on the street and freeze to death if they want to."

The same problems exist in homeless communities all across America. If Gov. Cuomo’s mandate that all homeless people be sheltered indoors during freezing weather works, New York will likely become a role model for boondoggle-busting across the nation.

Monterey’s Homeless Decedents Identified

Refocusing the non-viral spotlight on two unidentified homeless men who did freeze to death on the Monterey Peninsula, reporter Ana Ceballos says in Monterey County NOW (Dec. 29, 2015):

Authorities have identified the two homeless men who died near downtown Monterey two weeks ago as Trevor Hanson, 38, and Jonathan Richards, 56, of Monterey.

The men were found early in the morning in a dirt lot across Trader Joe's in Monterey by a pedestrian who called paramedics for help. Although a cause of death has yet to be determined, police suspect they died due to the cold weather the night before.

Police say the men were offered "resources" the night before but declined to be helped. A couple days after the men died, the City of Monterey unanimously voted to allocate \$28,252 to homeless support services, with an emphasis on creating an emergency warming shelter.

In a follow-up e-mail, Monterey's affable mayor Clyde Roberson says, ". . . As you know, at our last meeting (Dec. 16, 2015), our council unanimously contributed \$56,000 towards homeless shelter services to non-profits. We are regional partners with other jurisdictions and non-profits.

"At our last council meeting, one person mentioned that sites for homeless shelters this winter were being looked at in Seaside and Ft. Ord. Pastor Storrs from the Methodist Church in Monterey mentioned her trustees voted to use their church as a temporary shelter.

"Everyone is working together on a solution. . ."

That's not boondoggling. It's good business.

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