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Satpal Sidhu

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

Homeless Strategies Workgroup (HSW)

Friday, July 26, 2019 Meeting #8 Summary

Time: 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.

Location: Whatcom County Civic Center Annex,
322 N. Commercial, Garden Room

Attendance:

Members

Ann Beck (for Anne Deacon), Whatcom County Health
Barry Buchanan (Chair), Whatcom County Councilmember
Hans Erchinger-Davis, Lighthouse Mission Ministries
Daniel Hammill, City of Bellingham Council Member
Michael Lilliquist, City of Bellingham Councilmember
Kelli Linville, City of Bellingham Mayor
Guy Occhiogrosso, Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce
Mike Parker, Opportunity Council
Michael Shepard, Port of Bellingham Commissioner
Riley Sweeney (for Mayor John Mutchler), City of Ferndale
Emilio Vela, Jr., Northwest Youth Services

Public

Annette Bagley, YWCA Board
Frances Burkhart, Whatcom County Emergency Management
Liz Coogan, City of Bellingham, Executive Assistant to the Mayor
Carol Frazey, Whatcom County Councilmember
Mark Gardner, City of Bellingham, Legislative Analyst
Laura Harker, City of Bellingham Council Members
Shari Lapof, HomesNow volunteer
Rick Sepler, City of Bellingham, Planning and Community Development
Markis D. Stidham, Hearts & Homes, HomesNow
Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Councilmember
Tara Sundin, City of Bellingham, Community and Economic Development

Meeting Summary Prepared By: Cathy B. Halka, AICP, Legislative Analyst, Whatcom County Council

1. Welcome and Introductions, HSW Chair, Whatcom County Councilmember Barry Buchanan
Councilmember Buchanan welcomed attendees, and members and attendees introduced themselves.
Councilmember Buchanan briefly described the history of the HSW. The HSW looked at locations for a
200 bed low barrier shelter and concluded the city and county had nothing available. Several partners

came together last winter to offer severe weather shelters. The Housing Advisory Committee Convened a Severe Weather subcommittee. There was more to do so the HSW was combined with the Severe Weather Workgroup to constitute this new HSW.

On behalf of Anne Deacon, Human Services Manager, Whatcom County, Ann Beck described recent activities of the Whatcom County Department of Health:

- Meeting scheduled the week of July 29th for the communications team to discuss how to get information out about **locations of shelters**. (includes City of Bellingham staff from communications, emergency management, health, as well as Opportunity Council). The goal is to have a main phone number with information on shelters that are open and where to go.
- Whatcom County Health is **training volunteers** to be ready with the skills to help with temporary shelters when needed, including identifying lead volunteers.
 - Whatcom Human Rights Task Force Meeting resulted in identifying volunteer training ideas (CPR, first aid, personal boundary training, etc.).
 - Meeting today with Whatcom Volunteer Center to understand their process.
- The County recently released a Letter of Interest to ask organizations that might host a temporary shelter site or provide volunteers. The goal is to identify partner organizations by October, train volunteers by the end of October, and be ready for a call to action by November.

The HSW discussed with the temperature/criteria for declaring severe weather. Clarification was offered that the **Severe Weather Shelter Guiding Assumptions** have flexibility. The Health Department Director (Regina Delahunt) has the authority to open shelters at her discretion if health and safety are at risk.

Mayor Kelli Linville indicated the main issue is **capacity**, which if addressed can reduce the need to rely on temporary shelters. Councilmember Buchanan indicated that communication is important, knowing capacity on a daily basis will be key to being successful.

Update on Winter Shelters (3-month shelters)

The City of Bellingham has identified a 3-month shelter location, but the location will not be announced until August. The site will accommodate 35-40 women. Opportunity Council will serve as the primary manager in support of the mission. City will buy all the materials to operate laundry service. Fountain Church is providing insight into operations. Clients will check in at the mission, check in service will be done by the Opportunity Council. Fountain Church will provide the vehicle to transport people to the shelter location. The budget will be larger than last \$20,000, which was mostly used for supplies and supplemented by volunteer time.

The City of Ferndale is working (not finalized yet) to convert Pioneer Pavilion into a severe weather day shelter.

Last winter the Mission was at capacity even with the temporary shelters operating at Fountain Community Church and the Library. The Bellingham downtown library is not available this winter as it

will be under renovations. Based on trends, the need continues with the drop in center numbers 20% higher than last year. The Lighthouse Mission anticipates turning people away this winter. Approximately 40-80 additional beds (year round) would likely meet the need.

Organizations, like the Port of Bellingham, can offer shelter space but that doesn't come with financial support for operations.

The majority Whatcom County Health Dept. resources go to permanent supportive housing. The Health Department can offer money for water/snacks and volunteer training. Ann Beck will provide an update at the next meeting.

Mayor Kelli Linville said permanent housing is the answer. Permanent shelters are expensive and take a long time to build. Waiting for permanent shelter needs to be part of the housing first. It's important to look to the model continuum from street to permanent housing.

Legislation

The HSW discussed legislation that could result in funding opportunities. SHB 1406, the sales tax rebate recently authorized, can't be used for shelters. It can provide funding for permanent housing. House Bill 2263 (2016) is for one tenth of 1% for mental health.

List of Alternative Strategies and Responses (meeting packet)

Councilmember Buchanan asked the group to review the strategies developed last year by the Workgroup and think about ranking and priority of each item.

- Rest Stop
 - Peace Health is working on a respite facility – 24 hr. stay for specialized medical care.
 - Unity Care is working on a rest stop with laundry, showers, bathrooms, etc.
- Barge: HSW members recalled this was a challenge to implement.
- Laundry Program
 - o First Congregational Church opened its ground floor to Northwest Youth Services in January. They are open from 10am-2pm and are looking to be open longer, especially for winter.
 - o Over 150 people stay at Lighthouse Mission daily. Linens are done daily. Not enough capacity for personal laundry. Lighthouse Mission is looking at trying to offer a laundry trailer alongside their currently operational shower trailer. It would be cheaper to buy everyone memberships to the YMCA but providing services through Lighthouse Mission is better for relationship building and getting people into more services.
 - o The City of Bellingham considered vouchers to nearby laundromat vs installing washers.
 - o A recent public health outbreak (scabies and lice) necessitates more shower and laundry services.
- Camping
 - o There was a camping area behind city hall, and now behind the 911 center on Alabama at James.

- Rick Sepler, Bellingham Planning Department, provided an update on a recently approved permit submitted by HomesNow for 6 tiny homes in Unity Village (Post Point location). Construction will begin in August 1st. HomesNow will go into winter without any tents and use only the permitted tiny homes. The buildings will be up to code and heated.
 - The timeframe for Unity Village is 9 months. The model is great because it's a temporary solution and residents are moving out into permanent housing. The City of Bellingham does not have a plan for assisting after 9 months, and has not signed up for the long term.
 - HomesNow is looking for another potential location.
- Council Member Lilliquist asked if there were other partners looking to help establish additional locations for encampments? Others agreed this should be an item for the HSW to explore
- Mike Parker indicated the HSW could look at Health Dept. Homeless Housing Resources chart and use it to look at subpopulations and assets.
- Restrooms
 - The City put in a permanent restroom facility at Maritime Park and reconfigured it to eliminate unwanted activities. Restrooms are a priority because of what happens when they are not available.
 - The Lighthouse Mission has three outhouses. They lost their contract with SSC because of trash in the toilets. If there were no toilets, neighbors would complain about lots of toilet use in the bushes.
 - The Portland Loo can have a washroom on the outside and is sometimes solar powered. The City could create permanent public infrastructure (permanent plumbing required), a 24-hr facility for everyone. HSW members discussed using an off-the-shelf options, rather than designing something unique or unusual.
 - A 24-hr bathroom is located at Star Park in Ferndale. It's been successful because of there is a lot of foot traffic for the park and the park staff works nearby and checks it often.
- Showers
 - Lighthouse Mission had their 1,000th shower in their shower trailer, which averages 16-18 showers per setting. The mission advertises the schedule and locations (4 different sites a week at various church parking lots and every Wednesday in the Mission parking lot. At the drop in center, there are not any showers, and people are not getting daily showers.
 - HomesNow has a shower truck service for residents of tiny home encampments. HomesNow also takes the shower out once a month, typically at an event such as the summit event at Maritime Heritage Park. The shower trailer operates approximately 1,500 showers per year.
- Lockers
 - A cement pad was poured at the police station. The City of Bellingham agreed to purchase lockers. Safe Storage PNW is interested in leading the project. Protocols and operational models need to be in place to move forward. The HSW can provide additional support to the Safe Storage PNW, and requested they present on progress at an upcoming meeting.

- Car/RV Parking
 - o Safe parking in a church parking lot is a possibility. Overnight parking in public rights of way is also an option. (Lilliquist).
 - o The City of Bellingham allows for 8 hours parking on the street unless signs prohibit it. . The City is focused on cars and not RVs, which can be problematic because of visibility of activities in the RV.
 - o Ferndale has a big need to address people living in cars, many of whom stay overnight in park parking lots.
 - o Eugene, OR is a good example. The City used a large city park parking lot. Residents agree to do their own neighborhood watch. The city put in dumpsters, port-a-potties, grey water removal station. The stable spot allowed for collective security and community. There is a self-screening function for selecting residents. The vehicles have to be movable/drivable, and include RVs and cars.
 - o San Diego models are successful. A social worker engages the car camping camp. RVs are prohibited because there is less motivation to take next steps out of homelessness, and it is difficult to prohibit illegal activities in the privacy of RVs.
- Camping
- Garbage Collection

2. Discussion of Next Steps

- Resolution to Amend the Homeless Strategies Workgroup addressed changes to the membership and the purpose.
- Next Meeting (#9)
 - o Councilmember Buchanan discussed meeting every two weeks until an action plan is identified. Invitations will be emailed for the next meeting.
 - o The HSW agreed to six meetings to develop a list and prioritize action items.
 - o HSW members would like to invite guests to provide updates and identify needs to move forward (e.g. Safe Storage, Unity Care)
- Additional Handouts:
 - o County Council and Executive Expectations of Board & Commission members
 - o List of Homeless Strategies Workgroup Members

3. Public Comment

- Councilmember Satpal Sidhu - Pre-permit facilities to shelter 4-5 people so sites are available and prepared when the need arises. [Riley Sweeny noted that the City of Ferndale implemented that approach last year.] Additionally, in Trinidad, a permanently anchored cruise ship was a solution to temporary shelter.
- Shari Lapof – Food needs to be considered in any decision we make. If someone has not eaten in a few days, food is a huge consideration. It's a big consideration, logistically and financially.
- Markis Stidham – Regarding capacity issues, we've understated capacity issues at the mission. We were housing 150 people who were not able to go to the mission. There are a lot of people who are unsheltered, and it should not be a death sentence. On safe parking,

we should copy the HomesNow model. Our outreach was primarily at night, and we avoided cars for safety reasons.

- Riley Sweeney – North Whatcom Poverty Task Force is meeting monthly to discuss at issues at the small city level, including Ferndale, Lynden, Birch Bay, and Blaine. The Task Force meets the first Wednesday of the month at 6pm in the Ferndale City Annex. The goal is to deliver a list of recommendations to the Ferndale city council early next year.

DRAFT

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Last Updated 08/08/2019

HOMELESS STRATEGIES WORKGROUP – MEMBER LIST

Barry Buchanan, Chair	Whatcom County Councilmember
Tyler Schroeder	Whatcom County, Deputy Executive
Rud Browne	Whatcom County Councilmember
Michael Lilliquist	City of Bellingham Councilmember
Dan Hammill	Bellingham City Councilmember
Kelli Linville	City of Bellingham, Mayor
Jon Mutchler	City of Ferndale, Mayor
Michael Shepard	Port of Bellingham, Commissioner
Hans Erchinger-Davis	Lighthouse Mission Ministries Representative
Mike Parker	Opportunity Council Representative
Nick Lewis	Lummi Indian Business Council
Anne Deacon	Whatcom County Health
TBD	Housing Advisory Committee Member
Emilio Vela, Jr.	Northwest Youth Services Representative
Florence Simon	Bellingham Police, Deputy Chief
Doug Chadwick	Whatcom County Sheriff, Chief Deputy
Mike Hilley	Whatcom County EMS
Guy Occhiogrosso	Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce Representative
Markis D. Stidham	Homeless Advocate

List of Alternative Strategies & Responses

Updated for 08/09/19 HSW Meeting

\$ = Less than 100k

\$\$ = 100k – 300k

\$\$\$ = 300k – 1m

\$\$\$\$ = 1m +

◆ This strategy is already listed among the priority strategies in the City’s 2018-2022 Consolidated Plan and/or Assessment of Fair Housing.

* Strategy suggested by Community Solutions Workgroup in fall 2017.

Humane responses to address public health and safety impacts associated with homelessness crisis

Response	Description	Sanitation & hygiene	Personal safety/security	Public safety	Environmental health	Level of funding needed	Underway or Planned	Partner Agencies Working on Response Potential Partners	Lead agency?	Status	Ranking?
Rest Stop	Create an Urban Rest Stop (mobile or fixed location) with showers, laundry, check-in medical screening (proposed by Whatcom County Public Health Crisis Oversight Committee). Or, laundry facilities.	X	X	X	X	\$\$, \$\$\$	X	Proposed by Whatcom County Public Health Crisis Oversight Committee. NWYS operates a Day Center from 10-2 at First Congregational Church, Serves 24 and younger. Respite Care (Peace Health) Rest Stop (Unity Care)	Peace Health, Unity Care, NWYS		
Barge	Operate a floating barge with beds and showers.	X	X					HSW agree this is a challenge to implement.			
Laundry Program	Laundry Love - former program is closed. The program may need multiple, small locations that do not rely on one facility or one set of benefactors.	X				\$ (if partnered with faith-based or agency with shared mission to allow use of facility)	X	NWYS working with First Congregational on Day Center, which will serve 24 and younger. Open from 10am-2pm. Provides laundry service Light House mission does linen laundry daily, not enough capacity for personal laundry. Interested in a laundry trailer service			

Response	Description	Sanitation & hygiene	Personal safety/security	Public safety	Environmental health	Level of funding needed	Underway or Planned	Partner Agencies Working on Response Potential Partners	Lead agency?	Status	Ranking?
								City of Bellingham considering a laundry voucher service			
Camping	Permitted camping area. Establish Safe Camps for under 15 people (smaller sizes) and distributed locations are better than one large site.		X	X	X	\$\$, \$\$\$	X	Requires on-site management, restrooms and facilities. Partners required. City of Bellingham has a camping area behind the 911 center on James St. HomesNow creating Unity Village (Post Point location) – Construction begins Aug 1 2019. City of Bellingham will assist with Unity Village Operations for 9 months	HomesNow , City of Bellingham		High
Restrooms	Bathroom facilities with 24 hour access for those who work shifts. Explore multiple locations.	X	X		X	\$, \$\$, \$\$\$	X	City of Bellingham is completing 24 hour access restroom at MHP. Porta-potties have been located in 3 additional areas. Whatcom County considering Rest Stop, which could also help with this need. 24-hour access would be very expensive. NWYS working with First Congregational on Day Center, which serves ages 24 and younger from 10am-2pm. Lighthouse Mission has 3 outhouses at drop in center City of Ferndale has a 24-hr bathroom at Star Park.	City of Bellingham, City of Ferndale, Lighthouse Mission		High
Showers	Shower facility with 24 hour access	X				\$\$, \$\$\$	X	Lighthouse Mission has a shower trailer -	Lighthouse		

Response	Description	Sanitation & hygiene	Personal safety/security	Public safety	Environmental health	Level of funding needed	Underway or Planned	Partner Agencies Working on Response Potential Partners	Lead agency?	Status	Ranking?
	for those who work shifts.							<p>serves 16-18 showers per setting. Moves to 4 locations a week and recently served their 1,000th shower</p> <p>LMM will include shower facilities in new permanent shelter facility.</p> <p>NWYS working with First Congregational on Day Center, serves 24 and younger.</p> <p>YMCA offers a limited number of shower passes – they are at capacity.</p> <p>HomesNow has a shower truck for tiny home residents. Once a month takes shower trailer to Maritime Heritage Park for a summit. Offers 1,500 showers per year.</p> <p>24-hour access VERY challenging.</p>	Mission, HomesNow		

Response	Description	Sanitation & hygiene	Personal safety/security	Public safety	Environmental health	Level of funding needed	Underway or Planned	Partner Agencies Working on Response Potential Partners	Lead agency?	Status	Ranking?
Lockers	Lockers for storage of valuables (24 hour access). Locked Storage - a location has been identified, additional locations are needed that can accommodate a 120 square foot unit that can placed on to site.		X			\$	X	Safe Storage PNW Non-profit to lead effort with support from COB and other agencies City of Bellingham identified a location near the police station and poured a concrete pad. City agreed to purchase lockers. Operational models need to be in place. Whatcom County has been working with Safe Storage PNW to identify location for lockers on County property. County has budgeted \$20,000 to assist in this effort. Additional partners needed.	City of Bellingham Whatcom County		
Car/RV Parking	Establish Safe Parking designated for those who have "some level of shelter" with rules to mitigate impacts, amenities nearby with signage with parking time duration limits. Spread out parking across the community. Lighting and security are a concern, and if COB can help with these, some organizations and entities might be able to offer parking sites.		X	X		\$\$, \$\$\$		Requires on-site management, restrooms and facilities. Partners required. City of Bellingham allows for 8hour parking on-street, unless otherwise marked. City of Ferndale acknowledged many park overnight in parking lots at parks.	City of Bellingham, City of Ferndale		
Camping	Use campgrounds in the off season, this community resource already exists.	X		X	X	\$\$, \$\$\$		Requires on-site management, restrooms and facilities. Partners required.			

Response	Description	Sanitation & hygiene	Personal safety/security	Public safety	Environmental health	Level of funding needed	Underway or Planned	Partner Agencies Working on Response Potential Partners	Lead agency?	Status	Ranking?
Garbage Collection	Dumpsters for homeless community to discard their belongings when needed				X	\$	X	The City has provided dumpsters in several locations around the City for this purpose			

Strategies to End Homelessness – even IF temporary or temporary for the individual

Strategy	Description	Funding Level	Underway or Planned	Partner(s) Agency or Agencies Working on Strategy	Lead?	Ranking?
◆ Case Management	Identify available beds that could be available if sufficient case worker support were provided; then triage these available beds to match levels of service needs with case workers and/or funding for case workers	\$\$, \$\$\$	X Room for expansion	Opportunity Council's Homeless Services Center / Landlord Liaison program. Lydia Place – City entered into an expanded case management program. NWYS, CCS, and above agencies could expand further.		
Triage Facility	Triage Facility for mental health will be ready by next fall.	\$\$\$\$	X	Whatcom County is Lead – Project is funded and underway.	WC	
Private Mental Health Facility	Private mental health and potential partner for site by hospital, which would be bigger than current triage facility.	\$\$\$\$		Would require a private partner.		
Purchase Hotel	Buy a hotel and house people temporarily until they move into housing.	\$\$\$\$		Would require a partner agency to manage hotel / provide case management.		
Satellite Shelters	Site county satellite shelters for severe weather (winter shelter closed Feb. 28, 2018).	\$\$ per year				
Additional Specialized Shelters	Specialized shelters with staff to support special populations (e.g., dual diagnosis of mental health and substance abuse; medical recovery).	\$\$\$		(Note: NWYS PAD program, DVSAS, YWCA, Sun Community Services and Interfaith/Family Promise operate shelter beds today)		
Additional Small Shelters	Smaller scale shelters, e.g., four bedroom duplexes, which are easier to find. And signing leases and supporting people in them, e.g., like the NWYS approach that uses a master lease.	\$\$\$, \$\$\$\$				
Drug Court housing	Speed up Drug Court housing.		X			
◆ Rental	Expand resources for rental assistance vouchers		X			

Strategy	Description	Funding Level	Underway or Planned	Partner(s) Agency or Agencies Working on Strategy	Lead?	Ranking?
Assistance						
Landlord Liaison	Find willing landowners who can be matched with houseless person to offer appropriate shelter within zoning that currently exists.			(Note: Landlord Liaison program is operational, works with landlords who have existing units. Both the City and County are funding this position through the OC. BHA also has a similar position specific to their voucher programs.)		
* Landlord Incentives	Landlord incentives can help to get people into housing more quickly.		X	OC will convene a small group of local experts to examine the feasibility of using existing programs for this recommendation		
◆ Supportive Shared Housing	Optimize current market rental with shared housing strategies (use HUD resources we already have.			This is similar to the “Additional Smaller Shelters” item above – a strategy in which nonprofits would operate small group-style homes with supports, and fewer rental assistance resources needed (with lower cost of shared housing).		
Tiny Homes	Per Whatcom County Council 2018 action					
Re-entry	Expansion of re-entry options (e.g., Dept. of Corrections half-way house, sober houses)					
Smaller shelters	Expand number of "family home shelters" for a smaller scale and less intense setting than a 200 bed shelter setting.					
<i>The Strategies listed below were not suggested by the HSW, but were prioritized by the City’s Community Solutions Workgroup.</i>						
* Community Liaison/Health Worker	Develop a community liaison or trained peer health worker program to help keep people in housing and integrate within the broader community		X	Chuckanut Health Foundation and PeaceHealth have funded the Whatcom Alliance for Health Advancement to explore and establish a Community Health Worker model		
* Social inclusion	Coordinate among services and programs to promote social inclusion and community building among formerly homeless population		X	Lighthouse Mission Ministries started Street Connect early intervention relationship program in Feb 2018. Starting mentorship aftercare program in fall 2018.		
◆ Light-touch case management	Light-touch case management services available for those with lower vulnerability, more social/job skills to get them on their feet and housed quickly		X	Opportunity Council pursued and received a capacity building foundation grant to pay for 0.5 FTE of light touch services. The City is considering additional funding for light touch services.		

Strategy	Description	Funding Level	Underway or Planned	Partner(s) Agency or Agencies Working on Strategy	Lead?	Ranking?
* Supported employment programs	Assess existing workforce development programs, cultivate relationships with employers and/or develop linkages among programs to better serve clients who are homeless and formerly homeless			Opportunity Council is in the process of two related initiatives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expanding employment services in a new dedicated space at 625 Cornwall Ave. 2. Exploring the feasibility of adding a new Supported Employment program as part of the WA State Healthcare Authority's Medicaid Transformation initiative. 		
* Insurance for landlords	Create an insurance or damage mitigation fund to minimize the risks to landlords renting to tenants with no/poor rental history			Opportunity Council is investigating the feasibility of establishing such a fund in Bellingham, and will draft a set of recommendations early this year.		