

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL
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Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Carol Frazey
Kathy Kershner

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

Homeless Strategies Workgroup

Friday, December 4, 2020

Meeting #33 MEETING SUMMARY

Members in Attendance:

Barry Buchanan, Chair, Whatcom County Councilmember
Tyler Schroeder, Whatcom County
Michael Lilliquist, Bellingham City Council Member
Hannah Stone, Bellingham City Council Member
Seth Fleetwood, City of Bellingham, Mayor
Michael Shepard, Port of Bellingham, Commissioner
Hans Erchinger-Davis, Lighthouse Mission Ministries Representative
Mike Parker, Opportunity Council Representative
Ann Beck, Whatcom County Health
Jenn Daly for Dean Wight, Northwest Youth Services Representative
Mike Hilley, Whatcom County EMS
Markis D. Stidham, Homeless Advocate (County Council-appointed)
Joel Kennedy, Homeless children and families (County Council-appointed)
Emily O'Connor, Homeless children and families (County Council-appointed)
Lisa Marx, Schools (County Council-appointed)

1. Welcome, HSW Chair, Whatcom County Councilmember Barry Buchanan

Councilmember Buchanan welcomed the members. HSW members approved the Meeting Summary: Meeting 32 – November 20, 2020. Councilmember Buchanan discussed the next meetings on December 18th followed by January 8th (There will not be a meeting on January 1st).

2. Discussion and Planning for Pallet Shelters (Tiny Homes)

Tyler Schroeder presented on the pallet shelter options the County has researched, including options from Pallet Shelters and 360 Modular – see attached handout.

HSW members discussed the following:

- Review of preferred shelter type
- Purchasing and bidding process
- Finalizing site location
- Considerations of different types of shelters for different uses
- Considerations for shelter maintenance and contamination (e.g. meth, bed bugs, etc.)
- Community configuration ideas (e.g. centralized kitchen and facilities with 4 villages surrounding, max 25-unit village)

Rick Sepler provided the following information:

- Site behind City Hall is the best candidate location and can accommodate 20-25 tiny houses
- A challenge is finding an operator for 24/7 operations for a community that is not pre-screened.
- Many sites require SEPA review and other processes before ready to set up.

Mayor Fleetwood discussed a recent RFP is for a different project that would have a 2-year duration. The site behind City Hall would be for an emergent use, which is different from the RFP. The City is working to identify operators for both.

HSW members further discussed the need for shovel-ready/permitted sites, option to use the Clean Green site, and emergent needs for shelter vs. long-term shelter

3. New Strategies Matrix

HSW Members discussed:

- Subcommittees asked to set up first meetings and identify chairs where needed
- Identify specific action items to present to the full group and a regular HSW meeting
- Request to share contact information of members. [STAFF TO SHARE]
- Subcommittees can bring in other voices
- List of resources (e.g. land available, community partners, others)
- Outreach to the general public

4. Year Round Sheltering for Families with children

- Discussion of updated data and needs planned for next meeting

5. Winter Shelters

Ann Beck updated members regarding no responses received for the RFP for winter shelter operators.

Hans Erchinger-Davis answered questions regarding the following

- Basecamp has 132 people (of 200 beds),
- CTK will open the Drop-In Center when Basecamp is at capacity,
- Basecamp admissions related to COVID exposure status.

Mike Parker shared a number with a daily, recorded message about sheltering options: 360-788-7983

HSW members discussed:

- Current shelter capacity, occupancy, and quarantine protocols,
- The needs of citizens camping on the City Hall lawn,
- The COVID rate among the people experiencing.

Ann Beck provided information regarding 2 additional camp attendees testing positive for COVID and transferred to the Byron Avenue Isolation & Quarantine facility. The Health Department encourages camp operators to use the library lawn as a quarantine area for those possibly exposed (but not yet confirmed), as a precaution to separate them from other camp members.

6. Public Comment

The following people provided public comments:

- Doug Gustafson
- Melissa Bird
- Aida Cardona
- Debbie Cantrell
- Amy Glasser

- Melissa Wisener
- Heather Katahdin

Responding to comments, HSW members discussed:

- Writing their elected officials in favor of continuing the eviction moratorium,
- Visits to the encampment and personal experiences with homelessness,
- Appreciation for all the comments/feedback from the public,
- Camp members that tested positive are isolating at the Byron Street facility, and contact tracers are working to identify potential exposures.

DRAFT

Individual Emergency Shelter Comparison



Pallet 8'x8'



360 Modular 8'x8'

Individual Emergency Shelter Comparison: Structural Characteristics



Aluminum frame, fiberglass-coated composite walls, minimal insulation / high winter heating costs, four small windows, can be disassembled for storage



Steel structure, wood frame, R13/R19 insulation / significantly lower heating costs, one 3'x3' window, LP siding, fixed structure, "forklift and crane ready"

Individual Emergency Shelter Comparison: Interior Components and Amenities

Pallet

Integrated power supply
Electric space heater
Electrical outlet
Foldable, metal-frame bed (bunk options)
Mattress
Integrated shelving system
Interchangeable bed/desk options
Easy-to-clean and -sanitize materials
Fire extinguisher, CO monitor, and smoke detector

Delivery: Dependent on order

Price: Approximately \$7500 per unit with delivery and assembly (tax included)

[100 sq ft option available](#)

360 Modular

Integrated power supply
Electric space heater
Electrical outlet with USB charging ports
Wood-frame bed
Foam sleeping pad
Various configuration options available
Vinyl-coated walls for durability and hygiene
Smoke detector
Interior LED light & exterior solar LED light

Delivery: Up to 10 units per week after one-week production ramp-up (approx. 25 units by yearend if order now)

Price: Approximately \$7500 per unit with delivery (tax included)

Larger options available (8'x12')

8'x 20' Job Shack Container



Rent: \$150 per month



Connect Shelters



Buy: \$20K per bed



Homeless Strategies Workgroup

SUBCOMMITTEES

Unsheltered (year round)	Winter/Severe Weather	Youth (year round)	Families (year round)	Funding Strategies	Communications
Hannah Stone Mike Parker Mike Hilley Michael Lilliquist Karen Burke Hans Erchinger- Davis	Hannah Stone Doug Chadwick Mike Hilley Michael Shepard Hans Erchinger- Davis	Jenn Daly* Hannah Stone Doug Chadwick Lisa Marx	Emily O'Connor* Hannah Stone Mike Parker Michael Berres Joel Kennedy Lisa Marx	Michael Lilliquist* Hannah Stone Guy Occhiogrosso Emily O'Connor Barry Buchanan	Joel Kennedy* Hannah Stone Riley Sweeney Emily O'Connor Jenn Daly

* Chair of Subcommittee

Last updated: 12/16/2020

From: [Helen Campbell](#)
Cc: [Council](#); [Carol Frazey](#); [Rud Browne](#); [Barry Buchanan](#); [Tyler Byrd](#); [Todd Donovan](#); [Kathy Kershner](#); [Ben Elenbaas](#)
Subject: Homeless Strategies Workgroup thoughts and concerns
Date: Sunday, December 6, 2020 4:27:54 PM

To the Members of the Homeless Strategies Workgroup:

I attended the Dec 4, 2020 Homeless Strategies Workgroup meeting; I've been a regular interested citizen attendee since the first iteration of the workgroup. First, I want you to know that I am grateful for all that each of you do, in your various individual capacities, to find solutions to help our unsheltered neighbors. Thank you for your dedication.

I was impressed with the research Tyler Schroeder provided on the pallet / modular structures, and agree with comments made that both models could be beneficial for our county's work to provide shelter to our friends without homes. If I had to choose one, the 360 Modular units seem the best for longer term transitional housing.

Also, I'm dismayed that the old Drop In Center is not being used as a winter overflow shelter as intended, since it can only be activated when Base Camp is at capacity. With the Covid issues, it does not appear Base Camp will be at capacity anytime soon and it's COLD outside. With volunteers at the ready (last I heard) it seems logical to allow some of the folks camping at City Hall to shelter there. Is it possible to make this happen, and sooner rather than later?

Finally, I have concerns about the disruptive (and frequently off topic) comments made by Mr. Stidham at the HSW meetings. During the Dec 4, 2020 meeting he also gave a dismissive rebuttal to one commenter, a homeless ally working with clients at Camp 210. If I recall correctly, his rebuttal to their testimony was "worked hard to dig up that information". He appeared to say the commenter was telling a tale. That is totally unacceptable behavior for a workgroup member, not to mention from a fellow homeless advocate.

Mr. Stidham should be reminded of the County Council & County Executive Expectations for Boards and Commission members, as he appears to be failing to meet this specific expectation:

"Individual board and commission members and the collective group will be fair, impartial, professional and respectful of the public, staff and each other."

It's painful as a citizen to listen to folks spewing hostility and misinformation during the comments. Please know that there are a great many more of us out here who acknowledge the hard work and care you all give to the Homeless Strategies Workgroup and our neighbors without homes.

Again, thank you for your hard work and compassion.

Best regards,

Helen Campbell

Whatcom County District 3

From: Christine Mansfield
To:
Subject: For public comment and public record>>>> Enclosure/Link PETITION Bellingham City Council: DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY - Homelessness Response in Bellingham, WA - Whatcom County
Date: Monday, December 14, 2020 9:19:51 AM

chnng.it/GF8TM5ps9C

HSW please review this timeline of crisis responsiveness and identify a Plan of Action for beginning of year, January 2021:

When there are people that exceed the available space for sheltering in CLEAR & PRESENT FULL VIEW, we no longer need a winter weather "TRIGGER" to be the only deciding factor for prompting emergency opening of overflow sheltering (!) The bodies that are PRESENT on City Hall in FULL VIEW give real-time evidence that sheltering is needed. The current KNOWN visible houseless community exceeds Base Camp capacity not only in headcount/bed availability, but in critical urgent care capability and accessibility to and for various demographics of homelessness. Emergency sheltering is an URGENT PRIORITY.

Emergency sheltering is needed for the current visible population headcount in real-time; point-in-time count that is present and viewable exceeds sheltering capacity that is currently available.

TIMELINE-

WA state guideline for ending homelessness (2005 - 2015)

Emergency sheltering was needed in 2016. The City of Bellingham created an emergency ordinance to use the Drop-in Ctr to host emergency overnight shelter for headcount in distress.

Drop-in Ctr was over capacity by 2017. Local unhoused residents testified publicly at City Hall the risk to their health and safety when staying at the Drop-in Ctr. and expressed on public record WHY sleeping outdoors was less a risk to their safety and well-being than sleeping at the Drop-in Ctr.; however, no alternative provision for sheltering was made by local government and campers were directed to go to the Drop-in Ctr. for shelter relief regardless of reported risks. Allegations publicly announced re Drop-in Ctr sheltering included theft, unsanitary restroom access, unsafe personal conditions resulting in physical and mental abuse, and accounts of rape.

Homes Now provided winter weather emergency support 2018. Winter emergency need has prompted Gov to expand a Workgroup for homelessness solutions, Homeless Strategies Workgroup (HSW).

City and County coordination with local agencies to host emergency shelter winter 2019.

Winter sheltering is tentative yearly, as of 2020 dependent on local community partnerships and winter weather conditions.

OVERVIEW-

The PEOPLE have offered multiple solutions for addressing homelessness since 2017. We need the political will to initiate ACTION to house the people stranded outdoors. It's our ethical and moral community responsibility. Initiation of action for sheltering solutions for immediate relief is not debatable; it is a matter of urgent care and human sustainability. Current shelter options are not sustaining our unhoused community who are living in tents throughout Whatcom County.

Base Camp is an expansion of the Drop in Ctr. The Drop-in Ctr emergency ordinance was renewed three years from 2016 to 2019. The expansion of the Drop-in Ctr to Base Camp was initiated to meet Covid19 sheltering guidelines for 2020. This arm of urgent care was executed in alignment with CDC protocol, Whatcom Unified Command partnership, and the CARES Act fund.

Base Camp does not sustain the entirety of our overflowing population in need of sheltering despite intentions to do as much as possible; nor will Base Camp sustain any additional homelessness strain on the city and county as we move into the new year. This is a FACT confirmed by the population currently residing at City Hall in Bellingham, Whatcom County seeking emergency shelter, as well as a decade of debilitating rise in housing costs, and a year of economic stagnation due to global pandemic precautions.

The anticipation of rising costs, unemployment, absent services, and housing evictions must be met with a plan of action if we are to sustain our growing community.

The diverse socioeconomic challenges our city and county faces requires diverse solutions to sustain human life. The constant in the human condition is instability and change which requires opportunity and equitable access to life-sustaining resources. People incapacitated by life circumstances that destabilize their security are relying on the kindness of strangers to respond and intervene on their behalf. Displacement is a human condition. Crisis responsiveness arises from fervent concern for the community at-risk (ex. displacement) to ensure the well-being and security of the community at-large is sustainable.

BOTTOM LINE-

Life is messy. We are all interconnected as beneficiaries of shared resources. Depriving a person of legal space to occupy and shelter themselves in accordance to mutual acts for human survival which we all require and share in common (no matter our personal preferences or lifestyle), is unconscionable.

No human being can sustain their life or livelihood without proper care and resources to do so. Shelter is necessary for all people regardless of mental, physical, or financial status. Improper care impacts us all.

What constitutes "living" is a quality of life, our human occupancy of self and the right to survival, including access to food, water, shelter, and healthcare needs. Poverty is not a crime. Poverty is a default of hardship, hardship that diminishes earning ability which determines economic survival. Displacement is a hardship which destabilizes a person's security and ability to meet their highest potential.

EVALUATE-

How are we providing ongoing opportunities for people to reclaim security and function to the best of their ability when they experience irreversible loss, trauma, and/or chronic pain?

What is the bottom line functionality of the HSW?

I am of the understanding that real time data of assessing the needs of the people, addressing these needs by promoting opportunity, and initiating action to create solutions is the function of the HSW work group.

PLEASE make these considerations:

Local agencies serving the same population of unhoused residents need a United network and registrar to collect all vital data of people in crisis in our region uniformly. Service providers networked together could identify unhoused residents and essentially shoulder the task of also identifying urgent need; ensuring community responsiveness is effective and initiating uniform protocol for responsiveness.

A homeless registrar would serve to assess demographics of need and identify services required that exist or are lacking.

I recognize that some existing agencies do alert the public to shelter locations, housing opportunity, waitlists, applications, and social services via on-site locations and online; however, these points of reference only work in autonomy and semi-connectedly with other corresponding agencies. This network is not harmonized to best serve the public.

An interconnected network of all agencies and services would better connect people to services they need and as such, identify services that are lacking (example: mental health care, assisted living, etc). Missing services could be prioritized based on data of registered homeless population.

HOUSING and homelessness solutions are not a workable formula without coherent data. Where is data being uniformly collected and analyzed?

Current data collection is personified by the autonomy of each agency focused and prioritizing their own arm of homelessness relief. Ideally, the county needs a synchronized system for maximizing effectiveness and interconnect all county (cities) agencies.

*How is current homelessness data uniform? Where is data uniformly entered and collected? (Beyond the annual PIT count...) cross-referenced? charted? reported? analyzed?

These suggestions are a firm reiteration of ongoing public comments that I continue to assert in all venues addressing homelessness in our region.

Public registrar, kiosk, interconnected cooperative of all homeless and housing agencies locally is needed.

REQUEST-

1) Please coordinate a plan(s) of ACTION for our local government to shelter ALL residents; with urgency and

PRIORITY to properly heed public measures that sustain human life.

2) Please assume the task of introducing vital plan(s) of ACTION to city and county councils and offices to initiate

a) immediate sheltering (reaching all demographics of care as identified by population needs)

b) longterm housing (reaching all demographics of care as identified by population needs)

c) uniform data network of all housing and homeless outreach resources (centralized accessible housing and resource website, kiosk, database for public use and critical two-way communication for information distribution and information retrieval to troubleshoot displacement)

Thank you and with best regards,

JC Mansfield
Bellingham, WA resident

From: Tina McKim
Subject: Emergency shelter needed NOW!Tuesday,
Date: December 15, 2020 12:04:55 PM

Dear Homeless Strategies Workgroup,

I am baffled that the county has not purchased the 50 shelters currently available for delivery and set up by Christmas from the Pallet Shelter Company in Everett. The health authorities recommendation for social distancing has been in place since the start of the pandemic and the county has known all year that winter sheltering would be needed (as it is every year). At least one member of the workgroup investigated these shelters months ago and found them suitable and comparably priced the shelters currently being purchase from the company in Ferndale. We've seen how well tiny home programs (such as Homes Now's Unity village) work in keeping people safe and transitioned into permanent housing. We know that there around 1000 homeless people in our community and that that number is expected to rise significantly due to the pandemic. Bad weather exacerbates vulnerability to disease and hypothermia- none of this is new. Emergency shelter is needed NOW and in far greater numbers than the 150 shelters currently planned to roll out slowly. Once the temperatures drop again, more people will will seek out emergency shelter services. Not everyone can go to base camp or the mission- many are banned, have had their stuff stolen, were assaulted or worse. These people need shelter too. Please, please get emergency, socially distanced shelters up and running much faster before more people get sick, sicker or die.

Sincerely,
Tina McKim
Bellingham, WA