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Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
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Carol Frazey
Kathy Kershner

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

Homeless Strategies Workgroup

Friday, February 19, 2021

Meeting #38 SUMMARY

Time: 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Location: Remote online meeting

Members in Attendance:

Barry Buchanan, Chair, Whatcom County Councilmember
Rud Browne, Whatcom County Councilmember
Michael Lilliquist, Bellingham City Council Member
Seth Fleetwood, City of Bellingham, Mayor
Riley Sweeney, City of Ferndale
Michael Shepard, Port of Bellingham, Commissioner
Bridget Reeves for Hans Erchinger-Davis, Lighthouse Mission Ministries Representative
Teri Bryant for Mike Parker, Opportunity Council Representative
Anne Deacon and Ann Beck, Whatcom County Health
Jason McGill, Northwest Youth Services Representative
David Crass for Florence Simon, Bellingham Police, Interim Chief
Markis D. Stidham, Homeless Advocate
Emily O'Connor, Homeless children and families
Michael Berres, Special populations
Lisa Marx, Schools

12 members is a quorum

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

HSW approved Meeting Summary: Meeting 37 – February 5, 2021 (Markis Stidham abstained)

2. Scope and Purpose of HSW (continued)

Anne Deacon led HSW members in a discussion about short term objectives, including the following:

Short term goals

1. Completion of tiny home villages under way (70 new units)
2. Improve education and community communications efforts (identify problems, research-based solutions, and the role of government and private enterprises)
3. Review currently available quantitative data
4. Collect and analyze qualitative data
5. Focus on medical/health responses
6. Consider effective strategies for working with people who are camping
 - Campers use Basecamp laundry and shower facilities
 - Locker storage discussions reinitiated with provider

Long term goals

1. Interim housing for families with children that will allow for longer-term stays
2. Create additional specialty shelters
3. Consider whether additional capital projects should be constructed/rehabilitated

Additional topics discussed by HSW members include:

- Induced demand related to locker services
- Funding allocation based on justification of need
- HSW can make recommendations to Council for funding (e.g. HB 1590, Allowing the local sales and use tax for affordable housing to be imposed as a councilmanic authority)
- Costs of shelter vs rapid rehousing (case management with rental subsidy in private housing)
- Balance required: Augmenting pathways to housing, rather than increasing shelter.
 - o Need for crisis-based sheltering, the right mix of crisis shelter options.
 - o If we begin to surpass that, how can we increase rapid rehousing.
- Use CARES dollars now for tiny home villages
- Need to have capacity to move people up the continuum of care

Anne Deacon summarized:

- Qualitative work on who is homeless now and what are the barriers to housing they are facing, how long have they been homeless
- Look at rapid rehousing
- Quantify those that have high barriers to shelter (can't live in congregant setting) – what are their needs
- Disaggregate data by race, look at households with kids
- Look at what it might cost to buy all the supportive housing we need

HSW members discussed potentially assigning tasks to subcommittees.

The following committee members volunteered to participate on a subcommittee focused on data collection and reporting: Lisa Marx, Teri Bryant, Emily O'Connor, Markis Stidham, and Michael Barres. The Health Department will facilitate this subcommittee and convene the members soon.

Councilmember Buchanan announced that HSW member Joel Kennedy resigned.

3. Public Comments

The following speakers provided comments:

- Doug Gustafson
- Amy Glasser
- Katherine Orłowski
- Dianne Foster
- Desiree Espericueta
- Heather Katahdin
- Behnoosh Armani