

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

## WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

# Homeless Strategies Workgroup

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**Friday, April 16, 2021 Meeting #40 SUMMARY**

Time: **1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

Location: Remote online meeting, for more information visit

### Members in Attendance:

Barry Buchanan, Chair, Whatcom County Councilmember  
Rud Browne, Whatcom County Councilmember  
Tyler Schroeder, Whatcom County  
Michael Lilliquist, Bellingham City Council Member  
Hannah E. Stone, Bellingham City Council Member  
Seth Fleetwood, City of Bellingham, Mayor  
Riley Sweeney, City of Ferndale  
Michael Shepard, Port of Bellingham, Commissioner  
Hans Erchinger-Davis, Lighthouse Mission Ministries Representative  
Teri Bryant for Mike Parker, Opportunity Council Representative  
Ann Beck, Whatcom County Health  
Jason McGill, Northwest Youth Services Representative  
David Crass for Florence Simon, Bellingham Police, Deputy Chief  
Doug Chadwick, Whatcom County Sheriff, Undersheriff  
Guy Occhiogrosso, Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce Representative  
Markis D. Stidham, Homeless Advocate  
Emily O'Connor, Homeless children and families  
Michael Berres, Special populations  
Lisa Marx, Schools

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### **1. Welcome, HSW Chair, Whatcom County Councilmember Barry Buchanan (5 min)**

Barry Buchanan called the meeting to order and welcomed members, including returning member Council Member Hannah E. Stone. HSW members approved the Meeting Summary, Meeting 39 – March 5, 2021 (Hannah Stone abstained).

### **2. Review of Shelter Inventory and Data, Anne Deacon**

Anne Deacon discussed the handout 'Whatcom County Shelter/Interim Housing Inventory' (see attached), and a correction was provided to revise Basecamp census to up to 200.

HSW members discussed:

- Appreciation for the work of Health Department staff
- How many people are banned from Basecamp
- Motel Stays are not listed because they are not year-round, 60-80 families per
  - Some of the motel stays are permanent through funding period

- Coordinated entry is a direct connection. Any shelter the county supports has a performance measure that people using shelters must be connected to services for permanent housing

Anne Deacon reviewed handouts: 'Point-In-Time Count Data and Identified Shelter Needs and Gaps' (see attached).

HSW Members discussed:

- Tiny homes are considered shelters, not transitional housing.
- Flushing toilet will not give tiny home villages the status of housing – it would remain a shelter
- Percentage of people unsheltered who don't want any type of shelter offered – data not available
- Basecamp has 4-5 people not able to get into basecamp due to previous behavior. Some people are exited for a period of time but can get back in after a wait period.
- Methamphetamine use is a major challenge as government has a responsibility to create a safe space for those seeking shelter. Contamination can occur of shelter space, and aggressive behavior can be dangerous for others.

Anne Deacon reviewed handout 'Recommendation for Consideration by the Homeless Strategies Workgroup' (see attached).

HSW members discussed:

- Getting other jurisdictions involved could be possible through the American Rescue Plan Act
- There is a pandemic emergency underway and people are unsheltered
- Add a recommendation to develop the partners and people we need to run the programs
- GRACE program has worked with some people with substance use disorders and has been able to assist them into stability
- Focus on what we can do to prevent people from having to seek shelter

Michael Lilliquist made a motion (Browne seconded) to formally recommend that the Whatcom County Council adopt the three long term recommendations as proposed:

1. Interim housing units for families with children
2. Establish shelter and services for people who are medically fragile
3. Relocation of Base Camp to permanent home

Motion passes (David Crass, Markis Stidham abstain)

Michael Lilliquist made a motion (Markis Stidham seconded) to recommend to Council the short-term recommendation #4: 'Establish a data collection process to assist in ongoing analysis and planning' with the addition to reassess available data regarding unsheltered and those unable to take advantage of current services.

Motion passes (Rud Browne, Ann Beck opposed)

Tyler Schroeder moved (seconded by Buchanan) to recommend to Council approval of the remaining short-term recommendations.

Motion passes

Jason McGill indicated an effort to establish a year-round shelter for young adults ages 18-25.

Emily O'Conner suggested that the HSW get a full report from the city and departments regarding the sweeps so the HSW can determine what we can do better.

Markis Stidham moved (seconded by Jason McGill) to recommend a temporary moratorium on sweeps in the County. Barry Buchanan moved (seconded by Browne) to hold until more information is available Motion to hold passes (Hannah Stone, Jason McGill, Markis Stidham opposed)

### **3. Subcommittees (Unsheltered, Winter/Severe Weather, Youth, Families, Funding, Communications)**

HSW Members discussed:

- Council reviewing recommendations and providing guidance for the HSW
- Subcommittees can convene to see if the subcommittee has any unfinished business in their categories. Then the subcommittee could disband.
- Any action going forward.

Emily O'Conner discussed that subcommittees she chairs will only meet when called on to act on an item, but otherwise will stand ready to hear from full HSW or Council for direction.

### **4. HSW Meeting Schedule**

HSW members discussed the following:

- Short term recommendation was to review of the data and identify numbers in shelter gaps.

Barry Buchanan made a motion (seconded by Browne) that HSW meetings occur monthly. Motion passes (Markis Stidham, Michael Lilliquist opposed)

### **5. Public Comments**

The following speakers provided comments:

- Behnoosh Armani
- Doug Gustafson
- Kelly Bachman
- Lucy Morse
- Von E. Ochoa
- Desiree Espericueta
- Sanja Pitsker
- Heather Katahdin