

December 7, 2017 Meeting 1 Summary

The Homeless Strategies Workgroup was formed by [Whatcom County Resolution 2017-055](#) on October 24, 2017 by action the Whatcom County Council.

Chairperson, Whatcom County Councilman Barry Buchanan welcomed the appointed members listed below, following a brief introduction to the purpose of the Homeless Strategies Workgroup. Chair Buchanan read the Resolution 2017-055 Homeless Strategies Workgroup introductory statement of purpose (noted in bold below).

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the Whatcom County Council establishes an ad hoc Homeless Strategies Workgroup ("workgroup").

Be it further resolved that the workgroup's purpose is to identify approximately two to three alternative solutions to living unsheltered in Whatcom County, with priority given to solutions that can be initiated to prevent people from having no other option than to sleep outside as the weather gets cold.

Be it further resolved that the workgroup shall be made up of:

- Whatcom County Executive Jack Louws (or Designee)
- City of Bellingham Mayor Kelli Linville (or Designee)
- Two Whatcom County Council Members:
 Councilman Bob Buchanan & Councilman Rud Browne
- Two Bellingham City Council Members:
 Councilman Michael Lillquist & Councilman Dan Hammill
- Representative from the Downtown Bellingham Partnership: Alice Clark
- Representative from Opportunity Council: Mike Parker
- Representative from Northwest Youth Services: Robin Meyer
- Representative from Lighthouse Mission Ministries: Hans Erchinger-Davis
- Representative from the Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce:
 Guy Occhiogrosso

Be it finally resolved that:

- Meetings of the workgroup shall be open and accessible to the public and shall be subject to the Open Public Meeting Act.
- The workgroup shall determine its own meeting schedule, but shall attempt to complete its work as expeditiously as possible.
- Written and audio records of meetings, resolutions, findings and recommendations shall be kept and such records shall be public.

The full Resolution 2017-055 is available on the Homeless Strategies Workgroup webpage located at url: <http://documents.whatcomcounty.us/weblink8/0/doc/4207806/Page1.aspx?searchid=6aa5b93b-9368-4909-a0b1-a00f962c1733>

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This Homeless Strategies Workgroup (HSW) Meeting 1 summary (i) documents presentations and materials provided to the HSW, (ii) highlights the workgroup's key discussion points, clarifying questions, action items, and (iii) provides a roster of members and public attendees. An audio recording of the meeting proceedings can be found on the webpage established for this Whatcom County Council ad hoc committee along with electronic copies of all presentations and handouts <http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/2747/Homeless-Strategies-Workgroup>

1. Introductions

HSW members, support staff and members of the public attending Meeting 1 introduced themselves and shared organizational affiliations, see Meeting 1 Attendance Roster on page 9.

City of Bellingham Mayor Kelli Linville provided an update on the City's working relationship with the Stop the Sweeps Now homeless camp located on the lawn of City Hall across from the meeting location. The City allowed a demonstration to take place at City Hall, as was done last year, originally for a weekend. Normally, City does not allow people to camp on City Hall property, an exception was made for these demonstrations. The nonprofit group, HomesNow requested that the City find a camping spot where they can be before they leave City Hall. The Mayor is going to meet with Jim Peterson, and is sympathetic to the facts of the issues they are raising. The City staff has had a very respectful dialogue with people there.

- The original plan was a one weekend demonstration then it was extended one day (to a Monday) so people could speak to City Council at their meeting.
- This is a self-organizing team working with a local nonprofit HomesNow, volunteers and other homeless outreach, mental health and social workers who come to the camp each day to feed and support those living outside at this site.
- The City has provided toilets and dumpsters on site. Mayor Linville and Rick Sepler talk daily with the proponents of the camp protest regarding conduct for being on site: use port-potties and garbage cans; do not cause fights or other disagreements; maintain access for others to come to City Hall.
- The City has requested they apply for permit and they will waive the fee. Permit applications were issued and filed, with an extension provided after 1 week, 10 days. The re-application is underway.
- The Mayor will review the group's list of demands and the feasibility/ practicality of doing what is requested by the group. A letter will be sent, which the Council will see first.

2. Confirm Workgroup Charge & Meeting 1 Objectives

Facilitator for the HSW, Mary Dumas, Dumas & Associates, Inc, reviewed the structure of the ad hoc committee, which is supported by both City of Bellingham and Whatcom County staff.

The objective of the HSW's first meeting was to bring all members to a common understanding of their charge and the information available to support the ad hoc committee.

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The HSW's charge is to:

- Identify 2-3 alternative solutions to living unsheltered in Whatcom County, with priority given to solutions that can be initiated to prevent people from sleeping outside.
 - The City and County have agreed to focus on siting the low-barrier shelter first so HSW Meetings 1-3 will focus on this topic and information.
 - The HSW will also explore additional solutions that can be implemented to address the "acute need" (includes impacts in the new 3 months). HSW Meetings 4-6 will focus on these additional solutions and compiled information.
 - Every HSW meeting will include time to gather ideas on "additional solutions".

A draft communications agreement to guide participation during HSW meetings and communication outside the meetings was presented for review and discussion. HSW members reviewed, amended and approved the participation and communication agreement as follows:

Homeless Strategies Workgroup Participation & Communication Agreement - December 7, 2017

Participation

- Meetings of the workgroup shall be open and accessible to the public and shall be subject to the Open Public Meeting Act.
 - All emails, correspondence to HSW are searchable, retrievable and accessible to those who request them.
 - Information presented to and reviewed by HSW will be cataloged and listed in basic summaries so information is transparent and accessible to members and the public.
- The workgroup shall determine its own meeting schedule, but shall attempt to complete its work as expeditiously as possible.
- Speak one at a time. Identify yourself first for those listening on audio.
- Allow each person a first turn to speak before you take a second turn.
- Listen to learn. Clarifying questions will be asked first.
- Chairperson Barry Buchanan will serve as lead for decision-making junctures and HSW communications.

Communication

- Written and audio records of meetings, resolutions, findings and recommendations shall be kept and such records shall be public. See Whatcom County Council's Homeless Strategies Workgroup webpage url <http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/2747/Homeless-Strategies-Workgroup>
 - Audio will serve as recording of the public record for the HSW ad hoc committee.
 - The basic summary will be developed by the facilitator with Tara Sundin, HSW staff lead and Chairman Barry Buchanan. Summaries will outline information presented, key discussion points and action items.
 - All summaries are draft until approved by HSW.
- Chairperson Barry Buchanan serve as the lead for HSW communications and public spokesperson.

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ACTION:

The Homeless Strategies Workgroup approved the HSW Participation & Communications Agreement.

Meeting 1 Agenda Review included addition of items 7 and 8, approved by the HSW.

1. Introductions
2. Confirm Charge of Workgroup & Meeting 1 Objectives
3. Overview of Homelessness in Whatcom County & Local Resources
4. City of Bellingham (COB) Partnership Opportunity with Lighthouse Mission
5. Interim Low-Barrier Shelter and Drop-in Center and Other Services offered by the Lighthouse Mission Ministries (LMM)
6. Review Meeting 2 Agenda and Objectives
7. Public Comment
8. Review Stop the Sweep Camp Protest Letter to the City.

HSW Questions & Additions

- *Is there a low-barrier shelter action expected of members at today's meeting?* No, this is an overview so all members have common picture to work from. Meetings 2-3 will focus on low-barrier shelter siting criteria, options explored by COB-LMM and ranking discussions.
- *Will there be time to discuss safe camping, safe parking options?* While not the focus of Meeting 1, every meeting will have time allocated to gather input and ideas for alternative solutions that the HSW can review and discuss.
- *Will HSW work with homelessness issues, not just shelter issues, and when?*
These issues will be focused on in Meetings 3-4.
- *Add the Stop the Sweep camping protestors list of demands to the end of Meeting 1 Agenda?*
This will be added to the end of the agenda.

3. Overview of Homelessness in Whatcom County & Local Resources

Anne Deacon, Whatcom County Health Department, and Samya Lutz, City of Bellingham Planning Department provided an overview of available information on homelessness and efforts already underway by Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham. See HSW webpage December 7, 2017 Meeting 1 Presentation 1: [Homelessness Strategies Workgroup Powerpoint](#) . Highlights were provided on the [2017 Whatcom County Point in Time Homeless Count](#).

The January 2017 Count found:

- 742 people experiencing homelessness (includes people in shelters, transitional housing (not permanent supported housing) plus,
- 272 people unsheltered (sleeping outside or in cars or places not inhabitable), plus
- 220 sheltered at the mission at the time of the count (Note: count under by 100 at LMM per LMM Director presentation points during HSW review).

The gap in beds for those unsheltered is approximately 300-400 people unsheltered.

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Changes in homeless population numbers and demographics over the past years are featured in the presentation slides. The next Point in Time Count takes place the last week of January 2018. This year the question *Would you like to use a low-barrier shelter* will be added.

Samya Lutz distributed City of Bellingham infographics providing context on homelessness in our community. These handouts highlight economic and growth trends that are impacting access to housing and homelessness issues in the City of Bellingham. The Whatcom County 10-year Plan to End Homelessness outlines key populations in need and available local, state and federal funding and services provided. The first 10-year strategy focused on case management (WC), rental and capital (COB) and coordinated entry (WC, COB, partners).

A copy of the 2018 Whatcom County Homeless Housing Funding Budget was distributed and reviewed. Partners and related advisory committees were identified to illustrate the many funding sources for special populations, emergency shelters, rental assistance, and motel vouchers. See HSW webpage December 7, 2017 Meeting 1: [Handouts 1, pages 7-10](#) for scanned images of the 2018 Whatcom County Homeless Housing Funding Budget and City of Bellingham infographics.

Clarifying Questions

- *What is the Housing Advisory Committee, how can I learn more about their meetings and decisions?* COB representative to this advisory body is Samya. She meets the 2nd Thursday morning every other month. Next meeting is Dec. 19, 2017. See [Whatcom County Health Department website](#) for agendas and decisions on strategic plans, regional partnerships, coordination across systems and best ways to leverage funding, grants and budgets.
- *Approximate dollar figure for package of Housing Advisory Committee leveraged funds.* Anne Deacon will get this information to the HSW after the meeting.
- *What does the Bellingham-Whatcom Housing Authority do, how do they fit in?* [Bellingham-Whatcom Housing Authority](#) provides funding for rental vouchers. Housing system partners link their residents to these resources to help them stay in available housing. There is no case management in this funding stream, so the Housing Authority always partner with other agencies who provide those housing case manager services.
- *So the Bellingham-Whatcom Housing Authority supported residents have case management, but they are not the providers?* Correct, they provide funds to subsidize rent. They do have some dollars that are available for homeless populations when they can be supported through partnered case management.
- *4.9 million is referred to in the budget, is the housing levy collecting 5 mil or 3mil per year?* It is the 3 million collected per year, the annual performance report gives the leverage number.
- *We're spending 10 million dollars to address homelessness, how many people are being provided services?* Refer to the 2017 Point in Time County Report which outlines the available data from the Homelessness Management Information System on numbers impacted by services. The City touches 25,000 people, but it's hard to tell if this includes doubled counts.

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ACTIONS:

- Anne Deacon will get information to the HSW after the meeting regarding the approximate dollar figure for package of Housing Advisory Committee leveraged funds.
- Samya Lutz will add the Housing Authority to the community system partner diagrams.
- Samya Lutz will prepare information regarding the City of Bellingham Housing levy and leverage.

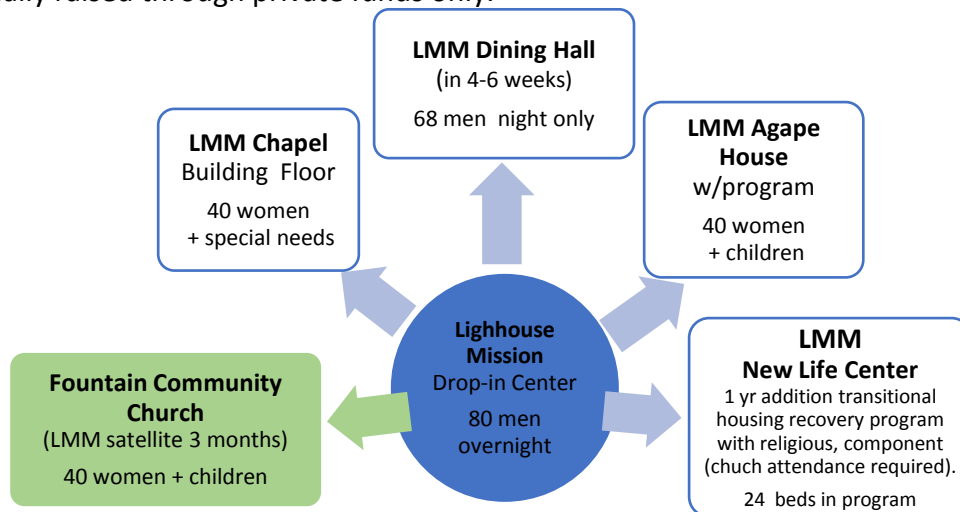
4. City of Bellingham Partnership Opportunity with Lighthouse Mission

Currently, the City of Bellingham does not provide any funding to the Lighthouse Mission Ministries. A partnering opportunity has been proposed that could leverage the City's investments in reducing homelessness. The approach is expressed in a City of Bellingham letter of intent to LMM.

5. Interim Low-Barrier Shelter and Drop-in Center and other services offered by the Lighthouse Mission Ministries (LMM)

An overview of the City of Bellingham's March-May discussions with Hans Erchinger-Davis, Lighthouse Mission Ministries (LMM) was provided by Tara Sundin. COB staff was tasked with examining options that could be accomplished to address the needs of those who are living unsheltered in our community. The HSW is invited to help the City with considering site for a low-barrier or easy-access shelter that can help address gaps.

Hans Erchinger-Davis, Lighthouse Mission Ministries (LMM) provided an overview of the current services LMM provides and their overall objectives. Drop-in Center Guides and brochures were provided. Hans also summarized the work completed to date through the potential COB-LMM partnership discussions and site review. See HSW webpage December 7, 2017 Meeting 1: Presentation 2 [Lighthouse Mission Ministries](#) and [Handouts 1, pages 11-13](#). Lighthouse Mission Ministries provides 24 hour engagement to 332 people through the following programs through a 2.2 million annually raised through private funds only.



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Clarifying Questions

- *Do you have showers, laundry or other services that address some of these barriers?*
No, LMM does not have showers for the Drop-in Program. There are no personal laundry facilities at LMM. The main building at LMM has showers that can be used occasionally. Passes can be provided to the YMCA for showers.
- *Do you have any information on the general age of those who are using drop in services and other LMM programs?* We don't have that information, generally its 30-60 year olds. LMM ratio is approximately 75 % men and 25% women; 80% were Whatcom County residents prior to seeking shelter based on the LMM's own count.
- *With the men's space and the women's spaces at LMM, how do you address the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender folks? Do you let individual self-identify?*
Transgender folks can identify where they would like to be placed, but LMM does have limited space to accommodate special needs.
- *What is happening with the dorm facility at the LMM?* There are 40 dorms for men, 10 for mental health, 10 for special needs, 4 in a special cove for families and 1 room with stabilization and medical respite.
- *Seems you have 300 served at LMM daily, plus approximately 150 more on unsheltered. If we had apartment spaces, how many would be successful from your view?* From LLM perspective it's a "housing next" approach with getting people on a good trajectory before providing homes for the chronically homeless. The graduates of the LMM programs would be successful, but not likely the Drop-in Center visitors. Remember half of the unsheltered folks won't come into a shelter. LMM is starting a street connect program in the evenings to invite and transport people to the Drop-in Center. From Opportunity Council perspective rental assistant resources include chronic needs funding. These programs require a lot of service intensity (1-2 case managers), and participants make it past their 6 month benchmark. The lift, in terms of services, means it is important to support people.
- *Samya noted that a survey was conducted with people on the housing pool and close to 80% of the people had 6 or more service needs.*
- *How many people would prefer to live outside unsheltered in camps and secure parking? If there are 10 people is different that folks with no outreach yet or needs identified?* Some of the folks counted in the 272 are not likely to come to the shelter and then they remain unsheltered.
- *Caution that people be aware of the terms used in the HSW, as those experiencing homelessness are not likely living exactly as they want.*
- *What are contributing factors to those who are stuck in homelessness, as the 2015-2017 and how can a city and county help?* Opportunity Council responded that there are many drivers that keep people stuck. Economic drivers of affordability correlations to rental access. Other behavioral health issues, such as opiate and meth addiction, may keep people losing their housing. Opportunity Council finds people's needs intensify the longer they are unsheltered.

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- *What about something before low-barrier shelter, such as a safe place to put their valuables, e.g., warm jacket, blankets, places to shower. Is there anything in the community that does that? Would increasing this be a help as this is a low-cost solution and use of tired retail properties that are declining in value for commercial uses.* The LLM Drop-In Center does not have security places. A new nonprofit is trying to secure lockers though security may be challenging. YMCA, NWYS and Mission have showers. The COB would like to explore options for these types of supporting services, as the low-barrier shelters will need to be addressed.
- *Does the YMCA have capacity for showers like this?* The voucher program is well-used at the YMCA. LMM is looking into getting a mobile 2-shower unit that can be pulled by a truck.
- The oil exploration has generated a transportable housing resource that is available at low cost, e.g., sleeping, kitchens, showers. These could provide immediate relief on vacant sites.
- Add a new category of property to the criteria and research for a site, tired retail.
- *Are the definitions of permanent housing and stable housing the same?* Stable housing could be with a relative term that is a good fit. The terms permanent and stable relate to funding sources. Permanent housing is a federal funding goal, so local plans use that term. There is nothing permanent, as these are rental units.

ACTION:

- Samya Lutz will provide a copy of the survey conducted of those individuals on the housing assistance list.

6. Review Meeting 2 Agenda and objectives. Members concurred with the proposed agenda.

1. Draft Location Criteria, Properties and Analysis prepared by City of Bellingham and Lighthouse Mission Ministries (LMM)
2. Review of Identified Potential Sites and Initial Pros and Cons
3. Recap and Plan of Action for Meeting 3
4. Public Comment

7. Public comment.

The good work of the many volunteers and organization who contribute to the Lighthouse Mission Ministries many programs was noted.

8. Review Stop the Sweep camping protestors letter.

Meeting time was not sufficient to provide this update verbally. The [HomesNow December 4, 2017 letter to the City of Bellingham](#) outlines specific strategies suggested by the protestors camped out at City Hall in December 2017. This letter was made available following Meeting 1. See HSW webpage December 19, 2017 [Meeting 2: Handout 2](#).

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Meeting 1 Attendance Roster

Present:

Barry Buchanan, HSW Chair, Whatcom County Councilmember
 Rud Browne, Whatcom County Councilmember
 Jack Louws, Whatcom County Executive
 Michael Lilliquist, City of Bellingham Councilmember
 Dan Hammill, City of Bellingham Councilmember
 Kelli Linville, City of Bellingham Mayor
 Alice Clark, Downtown Network
 Guy Occhiogrosso, Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce
 Hans Erchinger-Davis, Lighthouse Mission Ministries
 Mike Parker, Opportunity Council
 Robin Meyer, Northwest Youth Services

Public:

Cindy Louws, Sara Knuckles

Support Staff:

Dana Brown-Davis, Whatcom County, Legislative Support. Contact HSW at <DBrown@co.whatcom.wa.us>
 Jenny Winesteen, Opportunity Council
 Tyler Schroeder, Whatcom County Administration
 Ann Deacon, Whatcom County Health Department
 Liz Coogan, City of Bellingham, Legislative Support
 Tara J. Sundin, Christopher Behee, Samya Lutz, City of Bellingham Planning
 Mary Dumas, Dumas & Associates, Inc., Facilitation Support

December 7, 2017 Meeting 1 Information

Presentations and Handouts	Source	Webpage Location
Presentation 1: Homelessness in Whatcom County and Local Resources Presentation	Samya Lutz, COB Anne Deacon, WC	Dec 7, 2017 - Meeting 1: Presentation 1
Presentation 2: Lighthouse Mission Ministries workgroup 12-7-2017	Hans Erchinger-Davis, LMM	Dec 7, 2017 - Meeting 1: Presentation 2
Handout: 2018 Whatcom County Homeless Housing Funding	Anne Deacon, WC Health	Dec 7, 2017 - Meeting 1: Handouts
Coordinated System Flow Chart	Anne Deacon, WC	Dec 7, 2017 - Meeting 1: Handouts
Handouts: City of Bellingham - Community Impacts Infographics: (i) Housing: No Place to Call Home; (ii) Working Hard, But It's Not Enough (2000-2016); and (iii) Progress Towards Solutions	Samya Lutz, COB Housing	Dec 7, 2017 - Meeting 1: Handouts
Handout: Lighthouse Mission Programming Community Partnerships List	Hans Erchinger-Davis, LMM	Dec 7, 2017 - Meeting 1: Handouts
Handout: LMM Outreach Kit: Guide to Drop In Center card	Hans Erchinger-Davis, LMM	Dec 7, 2017 - Meeting 1: Handouts
Resources cited in Presentations	Source	Webpage location or <filename>
Report: 2017 Whatcom County Point in Time Count	Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness	https://www.whatcomhsc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/FINAL-Whatcom-2017-homeless-count-report_07252017.pdf
Letter: Homes Now to City of Bellingham re Stop the Sweeps Camp Protest, December 4, 2017	HomesNow	December 19, 2017 - Meeting 2: Handout 2