

**From:** dbobena@yahoo.com  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 7, 2020 1:50 PM  
**Subject:** Hypothermia season is here

Dear Homeless Strategies Workgroup:

We are now a week into October, and as of the last Homeless Strategies Workgroup meeting we had nothing to promise us that any more unsheltered people will be protected during the upcoming rainy and freezing months than we did last year. We have two very visible years in a row of not having ample accessible winter sheltering. Despite much effort by the HSW, we were less successful last severe weather season in providing enough accessible shelter, than we were the severe weather season before. There is little to suggest, so far, that this severe weather season will be significantly different. Meanwhile, we have the imminent reality of more people entering into unsheltered and unstable circumstances due to negative economic impacts from COVID-19. Additionally, the health impacts of COVID-19 are still a prominent threat.

I call on all City of Bellingham elected leaders to work with Bellingham Police Department to ensure that people who are unsheltered are not vacated from unauthorized homeless camps without providing them access to a new place that is accessible to them to legally camp or sleep indoors overnight during COVID-19, especially during freezing weather. If there is not a new location provided for them, efforts must be made to help those community members to meet standards at their camps that allow them to remain there safely, per CDC recommendations.

It is critical for City and County Council Members and all County and City officials to be acting with urgency to ensure ample accessible sheltering options and services be funded, facilitated, and expedited. I call on elected leaders and City and County staff members to ensure that HomesNOW has all the information and resources they need to submit a proposal that will be approved for new tent and tiny home communities to be built by early 2021. This is an option for additional non-congregate low-cost sheltering in our community that should not be wasted.

I am calling on all elected representatives, to work with the Whatcom County Health Department to improve the severe weather shelter guidelines so that those shelters will be accessible as soon as overnight temperatures are forecast to be freezing. Also regarding guidelines, if overnight temperatures are freezing, severe weather shelters must be opened regardless of capacity at the one existing congregate shelter. When nights are freezing we need to have space available to house the numbers, and the specific needs, of all of our unsheltered friends and neighbors, many hundreds of whom have been identified by the Point In Time Count, and who, without that shelter, will have no other option than to sleep outside.

Sincerely,  
Dena Jensen  
Birch Bay, WA

dbobena@yahoo.com