

December 19, 2017 Meeting 2 Summary

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

Chairperson, Whatcom County Councilman Barry Buchanan welcomed the appointed members and public participants, see Meeting 2 Attendance Roster on page 7. Chair Buchanan re-stated the purpose of the Homeless Strategies Workgroup (see introductory statement 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.

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>

This Homeless Strategies Workgroup (HSW) Meeting 2 summary (i) documents presentations and materials provided to the HSW, (ii) highlights the workgroup's key discussion points, clarifying questions and 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. Draft Location Criteria, Properties and Analysis prepared by City of Bellingham and Lighthouse Mission Ministries (LMM)

Tara Sundin, City of Bellingham Planning Department and Bridget Reeves, Lighthouse Mission Ministries (LMM) reviewed the COB-LMM partnership concept for an easy-access emergency shelter and the Draft Location Criteria 1-8 (see box on right) identified to guide site review for a 200-bed easy-access shelter.

Criteria 1 addresses the immediate City and LMM partnership opportunity and proximity to LMM as a cost-reduction measure (facility and staff). Criteria 3-5 seek to maintain consistency with City of Bellingham adopted Plans and Criteria 2, 6, 7 and 8 are practicalities related to user accessibility, site usability and readiness.

Easy-Access Shelter DRAFT Location Criteria

- 1) 5-10 minute walk from Lighthouse Mission
- 2) 5-10 minute walk from downtown core
- 3) Away from residential
- 4) Permitted by current zoning
- 5) Compatible with City of Bellingham current plans and regulations
- 6) Access to transit
- 7) Potential available for use (vacant or under-developed public land)
- 8) Meets required criteria for vacant site and/or building.

*2017 Draft Location Criteria prepared by COB, with LMM

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Scoring results for the top sites were presented by City of Bellingham planning staff. One point was awarded per criteria. Sites with a composite score of 7 or higher were grouped for further review and evaluation. The first group, Tier 1 & 2 sites included City-owned sites and other public agency properties. These were evaluated by City Planning staff, then by a broader City inter-departmental team, and finally by staff from the Lighthouse Mission. Tier 3 sites included Vacant or under-developed public sites, currently for sale and Tier 4 sites included re-developable private property. The Tier 3 & 4 analysis did not identify a property that met the location criteria.

Questions, comments and discussion re criteria:

- Early partner LMM offered ideas for quick opportunity, with accessibility (5-10 minutes to downtown core), hoping for site identified within the analysis for the easy-access shelter.
- *Are there other external restrictions when siting a shelter, e.g., distances to schools, adjacent uses?*
- *Were private properties considered or owners engaged by the City during the early efforts with the LMM-COB partnership concept? Yes, lots of an appropriate size with vacant buildings were considered; owners were interested at the time or properties weren't for sale.*
- If we want to acquire a private property, we have two options, purchase or swap with current City of County-owned property.
- *What happens if Criteria 1, 5-10 minute walk from LMM and Criteria 2, 5-10 minute walk from downtown core are dropped? Will the analysis net more properties city-wide that fit for the other 6 criteria?*
- *Could weighting be added to the criteria to see if analysis generates more sites?*
- *Many of the properties are located in proximity Whatcom Creek, what requirements do we have on these? Shorelines management requires a 150 foot setback for the buildings, which can be accommodated on these sites, even with a 5000 square foot building.*
- *What happens if scale of shelter size is smaller for specialized populations? Does this increase the number of possible locations?*
- *Could residential criteria be opened up to allow more possible sites in the City? If the area is broader, the LMM-COB partnership may not work, accessibility to downtown-based services may be reduced and lot sizes may not be sufficient in or near residential zones.*
- The area by Cornwall Avenue is not included, as its more than the 5-10 minute walk from LMM. This area meets a lot of the other criteria, has vacant lots and buildings. Extend map.
- *Could LMM be moved to a new location all together with more centralized site and setting appropriate for individual populations?*
- *Could the Peace Health facility, the old St. Luke's, be used for this purpose or other Port properties near Cornwall? The City reached out to Peace Health with this request in the past and they declined. The Port declined on use of an identified property for this purpose.*

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- *What is the acreage needed for the 200-bed shelter site if it were one-story building or a two-story? A 10,000 square foot (sf) size building will need a quarter acre; 15,000 sf will need a 1/3rd of an acre, and 2-story would need a 1/16th acre. It was noted that a 2-story shelter increases staffing costs and building costs.*
- *How long are we planning to use the sites for a shelter? Is this a short-term solution while working on long-term resolution? We don't know how long there will be a need. As soon as we can build better housing for people or housing is built by the private sector. It's not clear how long we'll need it. Maybe we won't need as big of a facility and other services can be located in the building. It's more a temporary place for people in need.*

Other trends seem to indicate that these shelter beds will be an ongoing need. The WA Dept of Commerce found that when rents increase by just \$100 so does homelessness. Continuing income disparity is adding to the disconnect between income and rent. Statistically speaking, the U.S is due for another recession.

- *What does success look like? For each HSW member the goal might be different. For the Mayor, the goal is that people have a place to go and do not have to sleep in the street or in a tent camp. The long-term goal is permanent housing, as we're a Housing First city. But we're so far behind for housing for everybody that we need someplace so people do not have to sleep outside.*
- *The idea of building a facility and using permanent building structures and meeting the demand for homeless housing long-term will be problematic. Solutions should be more engaged with using portable buildings or temporary housing to allow for the flexibility to place it where it is needed in the economic cycle.*
- *Is LMM seeking to house 200 people within an easy-access shelter? The current Drop-in Center holds 130 people; the replacement facility is targeting 200 beds.*
- *I'm concerned about under-building at these sites as we are a city. While I appreciate its easier to run a one-story facility, in core of downtown it is irresponsible to have anything less than 3 stories. A combined civic structure with co-location of government services could free up a location within the area for a shelter. Keep true urban development in the area.*

Questions for Lighthouse Mission Leadership:

1. *What number or percentage of LMM folks might be reluctant to be in proximity to a Police Department when seeking shelter?*
2. *LMM has an effort underway to get 200 people into shelter, should we look for a replacement to LMM Agape House and programming space different from the Drop-in Center?*
3. *Exactly how many men/women have moved into LMM main campus programs from the Drop-in Center?*
4. *What is the update on the security outside on the street for those that insist on remaining outdoors by on the sidewalk?*
5. *What are the metrics for success of LMM's specific programs?*

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2. Review of Identified Potential Sites and Initial Pros and Cons

The objective of the HSW Meeting 2 was to bring all members to a common understanding of the work the City of Bellingham (COB) and the Lighthouse Mission Ministries (LMM) conducted in a joint effort to identify a suitable site for an easy-access shelter in Bellingham.

Chris Behee, City of Bellingham Planning presented a summary of the site information compiled and used to explore locations suitable for the COB-LMM partnership concept. See HSW website December 19, 2017 [Meeting 2: Presentation 1](#) for map-based analysis results.

Initial Pros/Cons discussion points are provided in the table below for properties reviewed by the City of Bellingham for a 200-bed, easy-access shelter operated in partnership with the LMM. HSW members discussed potential impacts that could arise due to current or future adjacent uses, physical characteristics of the site or compatibility of use with the neighborhood.

Tier One Sites: - Owner, Location	Questions	Pros - Possible positive impacts	Cons - Possible negative impacts
SITE A. COB - Bellingham Police Dept Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Can parking be built underneath or above? ○ What is the cost to replace Police evidence storage and training facility? ○ Will the shelter have a lower parking requirement? ○ Could locating the facility next to Police Dept be viewed or perceived as criminalization of homelessness? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Offer perception of safety for community with proximity to Police Dept ● Is in City's ownership ● Site is big enough ● Site allows for building by road w/ private area behind ● Nearby site could be used for displaced parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proximity to Police Dept could create hesitancy for some users ● Location could imply monitoring by law enforcement ● Location in the heart of government can impact trust ● Parking needs to be replaced ● Costs to immediately replace storage and training room ● Coordination of dealing with a building that is in active use ● Cost to the City for increased evidence storage
SITE B. Whatcom - 401 Grand Parking Lot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Can the property be used within the stream setback?</i> No structures or paving are allowed within the shoreline buffer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public ownership ● Close to places homeless frequent and are welcomed ● Infrastructure on site ● Outdoor area can be private ● Big visual break and stream corridor between this site and the Police Dept Site A ● Low profile of site to road creates privacy and greater security for enclosures ● Lot big enough with set-back ● Not a sufficiently used site ● Could locate building on one part and have private courtyard in another area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Displacement of parking (70) ● Dept of Ecology "no further action" designation on this site, as former use was a garbage dump and requires clean up. Big cost and risk for a smaller building, short-term solution. ● Whatcom County Facilities Plan <u>may</u> need site for future WC jail or facilities downtown ● County Courthouse built with option to connect to that site ● May increase cost to County in future if/when facilities need to be improved or consolidated ● Proximity to the jail

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Tier One Sites: - Owner, Location	Questions	Pros - Possible positive impacts	Cons - Possible negative impacts
SITE C. Whatcom - Court House Parking Lot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Would a full-clean-up be required at this site?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Big ● Public ownership ● Flexibility on where structure is located on site ● Close to familiar places homeless are already welcome (library, Maritime) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Displacement of parking ● Limits County's ability for future facilities in downtown ● In the Arts District ● Open lot would require visual barriers for privacy ● Site close to government buildings and jail ● Negates possibility to enliven block (Sylvia Center, museum)
SITE D. COB - 600 West Holly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Do we know if this is a brownfield site? Yes both sides of Whatcom Creek are.</i> ○ <i>Could the environmental clean-up issues be addressed by using portables and temporary units?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Large ● Very close to LMM ● Currently vacant (no parking) ● Next to a business may be challenging to move ● Neighbors are accustomed to this type of use ● People around this site are accustomed to the use ● This site may be one that would get people to use the shelter. Site could fit a courtyard, transitional housing, services and affordable housing ● Multiple uses could take place on this site and combined with other compatible uses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incompatible with 2008 Old Town Sub-Area Plan that calls for 1000 units of housing and 4000 feet of commercial ● Too close to LMM; there would be a high concentration of shelter beds in the area ● Redevelopment of Old Town Plans are in place for this site ● Not best use of shoreline land ● Consent Decree with Dept of Ecology on this site which will increase costs to build due to former landfill ● Migration of shelter guests into Maritime Park due to the proximity ● Site acquired with federal economic development funds which may need to be returned (1 mil) ● City gets complaints about homelessness issues in this section of town ● A more commercially viable use could revitalize this area
TIER TWO SITES	<i>HSW will prepare pros/cons on Tier Two sites prior to the Jan 18, 2018 meeting. Use Meeting 3 Worksheet provided by Tara Sundin and bring to Jan. 18, 2018 -Meeting 3.</i>		
SITE E. COB - Municipal Court Parking Lot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ○ ○ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ● ● 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ● ●
F. COB - Employee Parking Lot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ○ ○ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ● ● 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ● ●

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HSW members suggested continued ranking of (i) sites identified using the COB-LMM criteria (Tier 2 Sites E and F), (ii) additional properties identified by HSW members within the COB-LMM study area, and (iii) additional properties identified using proposed adaptations to the COB-LMM location criteria. See section one of this summary for suggested adaptations to the criteria.

HSW members requested discuss the big picture of the City and County's long-term facilities needs and explore ways to leverage available funds by building a facility with multiple functions.

ACTIONS:

- HSW Meeting 3 will complete review of HSW members' pros, cons and hidden impacts for Tier 2 Sites E and F.
- HSW members will identify additional sites that fit within the COB-LMM study area for consideration by HSW at Meeting 3.
- HSW will review sites identified applying COB-LMM easy-access shelter criteria 3-8 only to identify additional sites within the city limits of Bellingham.
- HSW will discuss the big picture of the City and County's long-term facilities needs in the downtown core and explore ways to leverage available funds with a multi-function facility.

Alternative Solutions for those sleeping outside in Whatcom County will be identified by the HSW as part of their work. Ideas suggested by the HSW and public are listed below; this list will be added to at HSW meetings. HSW will begin discussion and ranking of ideas during Meeting 4.

- Stop the "sweeps" of homeless peoples belongings at camps and RV parking areas.
 - *City of Bellingham clarified that the City conducts planned clean ups for public safety purposes. The City will conduct 6 scheduled clean ups, then stop for 2 weeks until after the new year.*
- Establish a permitted camping area.
- Shower facility with 24 hour access for those who work shifts.
- Bathroom facilities with 24 hour access for those who work shifts.
- Lockers for storages of valuables with 24 hour access.
- Laundry facilities.

3. Recap and Plan of Action for Meeting 3

1. Complete Initial Pros and Cons of Identified Potential City of Bellingham-Lighthouse Mission Ministries (LMM) Sites D and E
2. Review Potential Additional Properties located within the City-LMM Criteria Area Proposed by HSW Members and Initial Pros and Cons
3. Conduct Initial Ranking of Potential Sites for a COB-LMM easy-access shelter
4. Review Sites Identified Applying COB-LMM Criteria 3-8 and Initial Pros and Cons
5. Alternative Strategies
6. Public Comment

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4. Public Comment

- LMM has been existence, next year, for 95 years. We can work on the homelessness issue, but I think we have a track record of need.
- When I moved back to town and see impacts on Holly St and waterfront. It's an incredibly valuable area to occupy in way that is forward-looking for business and development. If the Drop-in Center were de-linked from this site and a proper kitchen and space could be found. Holly Street would look very, very different in 10 years. The old St. Luke's facility could be a long-term Lighthouse Mission Program site and co-located with mental health.

December 19, 2017 Meeting 2 Attendance Roster

Present:

Barry Buchanan, Whatcom County Councilmember (WC)
 Rud Browne, Whatcom County Councilmember (WC)
 Jack Louws, Whatcom County Executive (WC)
 Michael Lilliquist, City of Bellingham Councilmember (WC)
 Dan Hammill, City of Bellingham Councilmember (COB)
 Kelli Linville, City of Bellingham Mayor (COB)
 Alice Clark, Downtown Network (DN)
 Guy Occhiogrosso, Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce (BWCC)
 Bridget Reeves, Lighthouse Mission Ministries (LMM)
 Mike Parker, Opportunity Council (OC)
 Robin Meyer, Northwest Youth Services (NWYS)

Public:

Cindy Louws, Sara Nucklolls,

Support Staff:

Tara J. Sundin, Christopher Behee, City of Bellingham Planning
 Mary Dumas, Dumas & Associates, Inc., Facilitation Support

December 19, 2017 Meeting 2 Information

Presentations and Handouts	Source	Webpage Location
HSW Workgroup Meeting 2 Agenda	Tara Sundin	December 19, 2017 - Meeting 2: Agenda
Handout: Site Evaluation Process Criteria	Chris Behee, COB	December 19, 2017 - Meeting 2: Handout 1
Presentation: Easy-Access Shelter DRAFT Location Criteria	Chris Behee, COB	December 19, 2017 - Meeting 2: Presentation 1
Handout: Easy-Access Shelter DRAFT Location Criteria Handout		December 19, 2017 - Meeting 2: Discussion
Resources cited in Meeting 1 Presentation	Source	link or <filename>
Letter: Homes Now to City of Bellingham re Stop the Sweeps Camp Protest, December 4, 2017	HomesNow	December 19, 2017 - Meeting 2: Handout 3 http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/2747/Homeless-Strategies-Workgroup
Letter: Anne Deacon, Whatcom County Health re considerations for locating shelters	Anne Deacon	December 19, 2017 - Meeting 2: Discussion