

March 22, 2018 Meeting 5 Summary

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Homeless Strategies Workgroup (HSW) was formed by [Whatcom County Resolution 2017-055](#) on October 24, 2017 by action the Whatcom County Council.¹

Chairperson, Whatcom County Councilman Barry Buchanan welcomed appointed HSW members and public participants and stated the focus of the March 22, 2018 Meeting 5:

Continue discussion of Identified Potential Shelter Sites and Workgroup Recommendation.

Identify 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.

HSW members introductions were followed by a brief introduction of the public attending the meeting. An overview of the public comment process was provided with instructions. See Meeting 5 Attendance Roster on page 7 of this summary.

This HSW Meeting 5 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 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 handouts <http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/2747/Homeless-Strategies-Workgroup>.

2. Update on Staff Analysis of Potential Sites Identified for Further Study

Tara Sundin, COB Planning provided an update on the detailed technical review work COB Planning is conducting following the HSW's Meeting #4 recommendations. In the initial review steps, County and City staff determined that Sites A and B were required by the property owners for current uses or for future uses. These were dropped from the list of potential low-barrier access shelter sites.

A detailed review will be prepared for two of the four—Sites F and H. Updates will be provided to the HSW members, and both the City and County Councils on this work. See March 22, 2018 [HSW Meeting 5: Handout](#) COB Memo re Low Barrier Shelter Status Report.

Sites recommended by HSW for further study	Feasibility review status
Site A: COB - Bellingham Police Department Site	Dropped from list
Site B: Whatcom - 401 Grand Parking Lot	Dropped from list
Site F: COB - Employee Parking Lot	Under review
Site H: Whatcom - 509 Girard WC Health Department	Under review

See February 22, 2018 [HSW Meeting 4: Summary](#) for information on HSW's initial ranking of Sites A-G.
See March 22, 2018 [HSW Meeting 5: Summary](#) for a description of Site H.

¹ Full Resolution 2017-055 available on the Homeless Strategies Workgroup webpage at url: <http://documents.whatcomcounty.us/weblink8/0/doc/4207806/Page1.aspx?searchid=6aa5b93b-9368-4909-a0b1-a00f962c1733>

March 22, 2018 Meeting 5 Summary

Questions, comments and discussion on Staff Analysis of Potential Sites under Further Study

No questions or comments were raised by HSW members.

3. Alternative Strategies for Those Sleeping Outside in Whatcom County

HSW Chair, Barry Buchanan welcomed Anne Deacon, County Health Department and Samya Lutz, COB Planning to provide background and resource information for this agenda discussion. A list of all alternatives identified by the HSW members to date was distributed for members to review and add to during the presentations and discussion. The HSW Chair reminded members the WC Council voted 7-0 to look at the Tiny Homes Proposal and life-safety issues; they are encouraged it is a good tool in the tool belt for what the County is trying to accomplish. The HSW agreed by consensus to adopt the COB Community Solutions Workgroup Matrix of Alternative Strategies for the Continuum of Housing to the Alternative Strategies list.

Questions, comments and discussion regarding alternative strategies:

- *Can we find out more about smaller projects like Laundry Love and other basic needs strategies that might be underway, as HSW have mentioned?*
- *How will the HSW consider the size of the alternative, is the group focused on and when the impacts will be delivered (e.g., does the alternative product a result in six months or three years?)*
- Interfaith Coalition is close to opening Family Promise with 20 area churches, which will provide four families shelter beds on a rotating basis and a day center with trained staff and services.
- *Are there staff and volunteers trained, is this low-barrier?* Full-time is provided at the day center, volunteers are trained. This provides a space for intact families of various sizes which is a real challenge in the community. It is not extremely low-barrier due to the close proximity.
- Lighthouse Mission Ministries (LMM) has purchased a shower unit that is mobile and it will service folks at the Drop-In Center and will be moved around town as available.
- *Is camping and use of land for a temporary campground being explored?* City of Bellingham has talked with the Police Department about storage, parking and potential areas that are not environmentally sensitive that could have a dumpster placed there and not have the site prioritized for clean up. It is not setting up a camp, rather finding where people already are and providing some of the things the advocates have been asking for.
- *Is there any effort to look at camps for tents, RV parking or tiny homes?* HSW Chair Barry Buchanan noted a few County Council folks met with Planning to see if there are locations and zoning that could work. Staff is taking the first step in analyzing this. Mayor Lineville is touring the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) site in Seattle with other public officials from the area.
- Showers and public health issues are on this list and there are efforts underway on this.
- *What is the status of the Drug Court Housing on Girard Street?* This is being worked on.

March 22, 2018 Meeting 5 Summary

The Anne Deacon provided an update on WC's 10-year plan to end homelessness. A percentage of the document recording fee at the County goes to implement homelessness reduction strategies. See [HSW Meeting 5: Presentation](#) Whatcom County Local Plan Update to 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness 2012-2017. The 10-Year Plan focused on priority goals to reduce homelessness among families, school-aged children and veterans, and to enhance services for specialized populations. The 10-Year Plan is updated every four years. An increase in Whatcom County document recording fees will result in an additional \$700,000 that can be used in addressing homelessness.

Samya Lutz - Update on COB's Community Solutions Workgroup Alternative Strategies Matrix. See March 22, 2018 [HSW Meeting 5: Packet](#). The COB Community Solutions Workgroup prepared a matrix of aspirational alternatives among partners working on the continuum of housing in Bellingham and Whatcom County. The matrix identifies lead organizations, short descriptions, list of next steps, timing and November 2017 status. More housing and a diversity of housing types were the top strategies from this Workgroup.

Questions, comments and discussion regarding alternative strategies:

- *Some of these solutions address housing affordability for people who are working and a few of them address people who are currently homeless or about to be homeless, such as the light-touch case support idea for those who don't have complex issues? What is the status and how can the County and City help?* The family diversion program has worked to get folks out of the path toward homelessness. This has been more difficult to do with single adults, given the limited dollars that require the City and County to serve the most vulnerable populations.
- *Is this idea mature enough to be a budget proposal next year?* Yes, it is possible and it will take the City and County to work together to create this program.
- *Is there any risk because of our vacancy rate that we'll have to return state or federal funding we've received?* This has not happened to the City, though the Opportunity Council has had times when they could not use funding due to a lack of case managers.
- Rental assistance and housing authority rely on HUD housing funds and funds have been returned in prior years. Services are key in this population given the length of time homeless.
- Liaison program working with landlords is going well.
- *If the City were to acquire an reserve of apartment blocks in the city, what is the purchase price on a unit?* Samya Lutz indicated \$25,000 per unit new and for rehab is between 15,000-\$20,000.
- We don't have enough units, so I'm trying to work on that issue, how to get as many units as we can for the money we have.
- The ideas of buying existing buildings is a good approach as its more immediate. In contrast Frances Place has 42 beds and took 3+ years to build. So options to buy or lease existing buildings could work.

March 22, 2018 Meeting 5 Summary

- Olympia is now requiring low income units be built and located on a transit line.
- *Is this strategy "hire a person in City Planning and Development who can look at strategic acquisition" a role for the City or a private nonprofit?* The idea is for the City to look at existing buildings that can be used and not displace other people. This would allow the City to be ready with folks beyond Opportunity Council, which has internal staff working on this issue. It allows the City to keep its eye on things but not serve as the developer.
- Site control and ownership are key for accessing tax benefits and other cost savings in site development.
- *At a Veterans meeting today the idea of buying a hotel and housing folks on a temporary capacity was raised. Can a motel be condemned and used this way?*
If there is a willing seller there is no need for condemnation. In the case of the Aloha, there was contamination and a series of deaths, so it was not considered a safe place to live.
- The City's Solutions Workgroup list is aspirational and could be added to the HSW list if the HSW members choose to do so.
- Urban rest stop concept should be added to the list. Hospital ER found a severe increase in parasite infestations that can lead to serious conditions. They are convening a stakeholder group to look at potential solutions for showers, laundry and screening.
- *Is this Urban Rest Stop fixed or does it move?* That is unknown at this time, as the strategy requires a licensed health care provider to do the screening and prescribing required.
- *Could a community paramedic person fit into this type of screening?* They could and probably do this as part of their work now, though they would have to refer for perscriptions.
- *Is this barge - 200 bed facility off the table that was raised at the Veterans meeting today?*
There is a barge in Victoria with 200 beds and showers that is for sale; this hasn't been pursued.
- LMM is exploring satellite shelters in the county through partnership with churches during the server weather time, like Fountain Church collaboration with LMM this past winter.
- Mayor Lineville requested for an expansion to the 16 bed limit in the triage center. Anne Deacon noted that it may be possible, though regulation exceptions may max out at 28.
- Opportunity Council is pursuing a workforce housing project and head start class room with the number of units vary depending on final site plan (42-75 units).

ACTIONS:

- HSW members agreed by consensus to add the COB Homeless Solutions Workgroup Matrix to the HSW Alternatives Solutions List.
- HSW Meeting 6 summary will present the HSW list of alternative strategies in a framework to support feasibility analysis and ranking. See pages 7-14 of this summary.

March 22, 2018 Meeting 5 Summary

HSW Members identified the strategies that might have high impact and require low effort:

- Triage open beds that could be made available if there were sufficient case management or other readiness supports. We may need to think of beds as having an accompanying level of service to it. Then we can cost these beds with this in mind. Lydia Place has found 30 beds and the City supported the effort with \$40,000 to meet support needs.
- Add designated parking to the list of high impact low effort strategies.
- Mayor Lineville noted that the City Police indicated that anywhere in the City limits you can park overnight and that they only respond when it is complaint driven.
- Coalition for Homelessness requested a designation for smaller camps and parking areas that can be spread across the community so no one area has too much concentration.
- *Has there ever been a parking program with churches?* There are programs in other communities, Bellingham churches have not responded to a request from the Mayor for a temporary parking partner.
- Storage is moving forward, City is identifying locations, one of which is the Bellingham Police Department.
- *Is Safe Storage working with providers on referrals?* The project will be using applications. Each locker has a mail slot and they can offer shower, laundry coupons, and other services like gym memberships and potential free-dental care.
- Laundry Love vouchers has come and gone.

HSW Members identified the strategies that might have High Impact and require Low Effort:

- Mental Health Triage opens next summer or next fall.
- Private mental health provider and potential partner for property to house special populations.
- An additional Sun House or behavioral health focused shelter that is beyond night-by-night is needed. This model requires a lot of staffing and keeps folks out of large settings that are not appropriate for them.
- Need a medical shelter for people who are not having mental health or substance abuse needs.
- Expansion of opportunities for Department of Corrections re-entry housings as we have very few sober housing options.
- A new outpatient substance abuse provider is coming into town, but we do not have enough providers for this population.
- Whatcom County, we have folks with intensive care needs and these "family home environments"
- The County revised the Resolution to add the Port of Bellingham to the HSW.

March 22, 2018 Meeting 5 Summary

4. Prepare for Meeting #6

HSW members will discuss the status of suggested solutions, populations impacted, and timeline for completion as part of the alternative strategies and ranking process. Other dimensions to be considered include: feasibility, such as funding, existing leads. See pages 8-15 of this summary for a compilation of alternative strategies and additional details compiled by staff.

HSW members shared a sense of urgency to move forward on these solutions. As such, the County will consider additional members to the HSW who can support the next phase of the group's work. The HSW Chair noted that the Whatcom County Council amended the formation resolution to include a representative from the Port of Bellingham. An invitation was extended to the Port. It was noted that there is not a representative that brings direct experience as a consumer of homelessness services, and that the next phase of work could benefit from this perspective, as other advisory groups have found helpful. HSW members and supporting staff were encouraged to propose additional names to the HSW Chair.

ACTIONS:

- HSW members and supporting staff will submit suggested names for HSW membership during the next phase of this ad hoc committee's work.
- HSW members will identify potential leads and partners for the alternative strategies.

5. Public Comment

HSW Meeting 5 Public Comment included short statements provided by the following individuals. This summary captures key points, HSW Meeting 4 audio to capture full statements.

Brittany Jones: Thanked the City for the commitment for a location for 12 lockers (less than a parking place). They are looking for a second location for the pilot project and the units can be installed on grass and concrete. Individuals will have month-to-month leases for use of the locker. Safe Storage is also looking to add additional supports like vouchers.

Carman Gilmore: Working on safe storage project, shared highlights and submitted a written comment detailing the storage locker concept and the types of impacts this 1 year pilot project will have (24 lockers in 2-3 locations in Bellingham that are clean, safe and small (take up size of a parking place). They can be used in indoor or outdoor spaces and hope to have them painted with murals to fit the neighborhoods. Finalizing design and prototype is scheduled for Spring 2018. Three property owners are interested, no one has committed yet. Would be could for COB and WC to do this. 25% of funding needed has been secured. The nonprofit effort is seeking additional support. This is one vital piece in addressing our homelessness crisis.

March 22, 2018 Meeting 5 Summary

March 22, 2018 Meeting 4 Attendance Roster

Present:

Barry Buchanan, Whatcom County Councilmember (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)
 Hans Erchinger-Davis, Lighthouse Mission Ministries (LMM)
 Mike Parker, Opportunity Council (OC)

Absent:

Jack Louws, Whatcom County Executive (WC)
 Rud Browne, Whatcom County Councilmember (WC)
 Guy Occhiogrosso, Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce (BWCC)
 Robin Meyer, Northwest Youth Services (NWYS)

Public:

Carman Gilmore and Brittany Jones provided public comment.

Support Staff:

Samya Lutz, Tara J. Sundin, City of Bellingham Planning
 Anne Deacon, Tyler Schroeder, Whatcom County
 Mary Dumas, Dumas & Associates, Inc., Facilitation Support

March 22, 2018 Meeting 5 Information

Presentations and Handouts	Source	Webpage Location
HSW Workgroup Meeting 5 Agenda	Tara Sundin, COB	March 22, 2018 - Meeting 4: Agenda
COB Memo March 15, 2018 T. Sundin to HSW re Low-Barrier Shelter Status Report	Tara Sundin, COB	March 22, 2018 - Meeting 5: Handout
Presentation: Whatcom County 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness Overview & June 2018 Update	Anne Deacon, WC	March 22, 2018 - Meeting 5: Presentation
Community Solutions Workgroup - Continuum of Housing Implementation Matrix	Samya Lutz, COB	March 22, 2018 - Meeting 5: Packet
Resources cited in Meeting 5	Source	link or <filename>
Public Comment: Safe Storage PNW	Safe Storage Coordinators	March 22, 2018 - Meeting 5: Public Comment
Public Comment: Letter to HSW	Carmen Gilmore	March 22, 2018 - Meeting 5: Public Comment

List of Alternative Strategies & Responses

Strategies provided by Homeless Strategies Workgroup Meeting 1-5 summary notes. Document prepared by T. Sundin for use at May 10 HSW Meeting.

\$ = Less than 100k
 \$\$ = 100k – 300k
 \$\$\$ = 300k – 1m
 \$\$\$\$ = 1m +

Humane responses to address public health and safety impacts associated with homelessness crisis (pages 1-3)

Response	Description	Sanitation & hygiene	Personal safety/security	Public safety	Environmental health	Level of funding needed	Underway or Planned	Partner Agencies Working on Response Potential Partners	Lead agency?	Ranking?
Rest Stop	Create an Urban Rest Stop (mobile or fixed location) with showers, laundry, check-in medical screening Or, laundry facilities.	X	X	X	X	\$\$, \$\$\$?	Discussed during Whatcom County Public Health Crisis Oversight Committee in response to increase in parasitic infestations. Northwest Youth Services (NWYS) working with First Congregational on Day Center, which will serve 24 and younger. Opening by end of 2018.		
Barge	Operate a floating barge with beds and showers.	X	X							
Laundry Program	Laundry Love - former program is closed. The program may need multiple, small locations that do not rely on one facility or one set of benefactors.	X				\$ (if partnered with faith-based or agency with shared mission to allow use of facility)		NWYS working with First Congregational on Day Center, which will serve 24 and younger. Opening by end of 2018.		

Response	Description	Sanitation & hygiene	Personal safety/security	Public safety	Environmental health	Level of funding needed	Underway or Planned	Partner Agencies Working on Response Potential Partners	Lead agency?	Ranking?
Camping	Permitted camping area. Establish Safe Camps for under 15 people (smaller sizes) and distributed locations are better than one large site.		X	X	X	\$\$, \$\$\$		Requires on-site management, restrooms and facilities. Partners required.		
Restrooms	Bathroom facilities with 24 hour access for those who work shifts. Explore multiple locations.	X	X		X	\$, \$\$, \$\$\$	X	City of Bellingham (City) is completing 24 hour access restroom at MHP. Porta-potty's have been located in 3 additional areas. Whatcom County (County) considering Rest Stop, which could also help with this need. 24-hour access would be very expensive. NWYS working with First Congregational on Day Center, which will serve 24 and younger. Opening by end of 2018. Not 24-hours or it would be a shelter.		
Showers	Shower facility with 24 hour access for those who work shifts.	X				\$\$, \$\$\$	X	Lighthouse Mission (LMM) has purchased a shower trailer that will be available summer of 2018. LMM will include shower facilities in new permanent shelter facility. NWYS working with First Congregational on Day Center, which will serve 24 and younger.		

Response	Description	Sanitation & hygiene	Personal safety/security	Public safety	Environmental health	Level of funding needed	Underway or Planned	Partner Agencies Working on Response Potential Partners	Lead agency?	Ranking?
								Opening by end of 2018. YMCA offers a limited number of shower passes – they are at capacity. 24-hour access VERY challenging.		
Lockers	Lockers for storage of valuables (24 hour access). Locked Storage - a location has been identified, additional locations are needed that can accommodate a 120 square foot unit that can placed on to site.		X			\$	X	Safe Storage PNW Non-profit City of Bellingham has identified one location as a pilot on City property. Has also offered to assist with funding. Additional partners needed.		
Car/RV Parking	Establish Safe Parking designated for those who have "some level of shelter" with rules to mitigate impacts, amenities nearby with signage with parking time duration limits. Spread out parking across the community. Lighting and security are a concern, and if COB can help with these, some organizations and entities might be able to offer parking sites.		X	X		\$\$, \$\$\$		Requires on-site management, restrooms and facilities. Partners required.		

Response	Description	Sanitation & hygiene	Personal safety/security	Public safety	Environmental health	Level of funding needed	Underway or Planned	Partner Agencies Working on Response Potential Partners	Lead agency?	Ranking?
Camping	Use campgrounds in the off season, this community resource already exists.	X		X	X	\$\$, \$\$\$		Requires on-site management, restrooms and facilities. Partners required.		
Garbage Collection	Dumpsters for homeless community to discard their belongings when needed				X	\$	X	The City has provided dumpsters in several locations around the City for this purpose		

Strategies to End Homelessness – even IF temporary or temporary for the individual (pages 4-6)

Strategy	Description	Funding Level	Underway or Planned	Partner(s) Agency or Agencies Working on Strategy	Lead?	Ranking?
◆ Case Management	Identify available beds that could be available if sufficient case worker support were provided; then triage these available beds to match levels of service needs with case workers and/or funding for case workers	\$\$, \$\$\$	X Room for expansion	Opportunity Council’s Homeless Services Center / Landlord Liaison program. Lydia Place – City entered into an expanded case management program. NWYS, CCS, and above agencies could expand further.		
Triage Facility	Triage Facility for mental health stabilization and substance use detoxification will be ready by next fall.	\$\$\$\$	X	Whatcom County is Lead – Project is funded and underway.	Whatcom County	
Private Mental Health Facility	Private mental health and potential partner for site by hospital, which would be bigger than current triage facility.	\$\$\$\$		Would require a private partner.		
Purchase Hotel	Buy a hotel and house people temporarily until they move into housing.	\$\$\$\$		Would require a partner agency to manage hotel / provide case management.		
Satellite Shelters	Site county satellite shelters for severe weather (winter shelter closed Feb. 28, 2018).	\$\$ per year				
Additional Specialized Shelters	Specialized shelters with staff to support special populations (e.g., dual diagnosis of mental health and substance abuse; medical recovery).	\$\$\$		(Note: NWYS PAD program, Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Services (DVSAS), YWCA, Sun Community Services and Interfaith houses used to shelter homeless families, Family Promise added additional shelter beds)		
Additional Small Shelters	Smaller scale shelters, e.g., four bedroom duplexes, which are easier to find. And signing leases and supporting people in them, e.g.,	\$\$\$, \$\$\$\$				

Strategy	Description	Funding Level	Underway or Planned	Partner(s) Agency or Agencies Working on Strategy	Lead?	Ranking?
	like the NWYS approach that uses a master lease.					
Drug Court housing	Speed up Drug Court housing.		X			
Mental Health Court housing	Create Mental Health Court housing					
◆ Rental Assistance	Expand resources for rental assistance vouchers		X			
Landlord Liaison	Find willing landowners who can be matched with houseless person to offer appropriate shelter within zoning that currently exists.			(Note: Landlord Liaison program is operational, works with landlords who have existing units. Both the City and County are funding this position through the OC. BHA also has a similar position specific to their voucher programs.)		
* Landlord Incentives	Landlord incentives can help to get people into housing more quickly.		X	Opportunity Council (OC) will convene a small group of local experts to examine the feasibility of using existing programs for this recommendation		
◆ Supportive Shared Housing	Optimize current market rental with shared housing strategies (use HUD resources we already have.			This is similar to the “Additional Smaller Shelters” item above – a strategy in which nonprofits would operate small group-style homes with supports, and fewer rental assistance resources needed (with lower cost of shared housing).		
Tiny Homes	Per Whatcom County Council 2018 action					
Re-entry	Expansion of re-entry options (e.g., Dept. of Corrections half-way house, sober houses)					

Homeless Strategies Workgroup

REVIEW DRAFT

Strategy	Description	Funding Level	Underway or Planned	Partner(s) Agency or Agencies Working on Strategy	Lead?	Ranking?
Smaller shelters	Expand number of "family home shelters" for a smaller scale and less intense setting than a 200 bed shelter setting.					
<i>The Strategies listed below were not suggested by the HSW, but were prioritized by the City's Community Solutions Workgroup.</i>						
* Community Liaison/Health Worker	Develop a community liaison or trained peer health worker program to help keep people in housing and integrate within the broader community		X	Chuckanut Health Foundation and PeaceHealth have funded the Whatcom Alliance for Health Advancement to explore and establish a Community Health Worker model		
* Social inclusion	Coordinate among services and programs to promote social inclusion and community building among formerly homeless population		X	LMM started Street Connect early intervention relationship program in Feb 2018. Starting mentorship aftercare program in fall 2018.		
◆ Light-touch case management	Light-touch case management services available for those with lower vulnerability, more social/job skills to get them on their feet and housed quickly		X	Opportunity Council pursued and received a capacity building foundation grant to pay for 0.5 FTE of light touch services. The City is considering additional funding for light touch services (not necessarily with the OC).		
* Supported employment programs	Assess existing workforce development programs, cultivate relationships with employer and/or develop linkages among programs to better serve clients who are homeless and formerly homeless			Opportunity Council is in the process of two related initiatives: 1. Expanding employment services in a new dedicated space at 625 Cornwall Ave. 2. Exploring the feasibility of adding a new Supported Employment program as part of the WA State Health Care Authority's Medicaid Transformation initiative.		
* Insurance	Create an insurance or damage mitigation fund to minimize the risks to landlords renting to			Opportunity Council is investigating the feasibility of establishing such a fund in Bellingham, and will draft a set		

Strategy	Description	Funding Level	Underway or Planned	Partner(s) Agency or Agencies Working on Strategy	Lead?	Ranking?
for landlords	tenants with no/poor rental history			of recommendations early this year. County already funds a small program.		