



Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date/Time/Location: June 14, 2018, 10:30-12:00 a.m. – Whatcom County Health Department, 509 Girard Street, Bellingham

WCHAC Members Present: Samya Lutz, Jennifer Moon, Paul Schissler, Regina Delahunt, Debbie Paton, Ed Moran, Bob Libolt, Emily O’Connor; John Harmon, Kyle Christensen

WCHAC Members Absent: Karen Burke

Whatcom Co. Health Dept. Staff/Guests: Barbara Johnson-Vinna, Human Services Housing Specialist; Chris D’Onofrio, Health Dept. Human Services Clerk; Michael Parker, Whatcom Homeless Service Center Director; Brien Thane, Bellingham Housing Authority

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/Who
1. Call to order, introductions	Introductions commenced and John Harmon is thanked for his long service to the community and his work on behalf of the Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee	Emily O’Connor
2. Agenda Review	No changes requested	Emily
3. Public Comment	No public comments	Emily
4. New Business		
A. <i>April/May Minutes Approval</i>	Samya Lutz moved that the minutes from April meeting be approved as presented. Debbie Paton seconded the motion. The committee voted and the motion passed.	Ayes: 8 Abstain:2 Motion Passed
B. <i>Upcoming Health Board Presentation</i>	There will be a presentation of the Whatcom County housing program to the Board of Health (County Council members) on June 26 th . Barbara and Anne Deacon will have an opportunity to communicate about system priorities and to provide contextual information relating to housing in Whatcom County. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presentation will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Data about homelessness trends, affordability, and rental vacancy rates ○ A description of the relationships we have with partner agencies ○ An overview of our programs, goals, and scale of the interventions ○ A discussion of tiny homes and other community responses • WCHAC members weighed in on tiny homes: 	Barbara Johnson-Vinna



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<p>C. <i>City of Bellingham Update</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ From a development perspective, tiny homes are not an efficient use of funds ○ Though intended to be temporary, tiny homes often are in use for longer than planned ○ Tiny homes can contribute to variety of approaches to housing in private market, but there is concern about their use by non-profit agencies as a means of addressing homelessness ○ The City of Bellingham could potentially create specific criteria for the use of tiny homes that would restrict use to appropriate purposes ○ The public may associate the idea of tiny homes with what they've seen on TV, however the low-budget homes being proposed locally for homelessness reduction are far less glamorous ○ Tiny homes might have small short-term advantages, but will not solve the deeper problems of housing in general or for many of the specific residents ○ The proposed tiny houses do not offer many of the necessary provisions of healthy homes and should not be considered acceptable substitutes for better, permanent housing ○ Tiny homes may be an imperfect solution, but for people sleeping outdoors, the low-budget structures may provide important security and protection from elements that they need now ● WCHAC has an opportunity to recommend priorities for the Health Board through a statement that will be given to the council members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The committee considered drafting and signing a letter outlining their position on use of public funding for programs that are or lead directly to permanent housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Paul Schissler motioned that the committee vote to approve drafting a letter and Kyle Christensen seconded the motion. The committee voted with all in favor. <p>The City Council recently voted to put a levy on the ballot in November to increase funding for housing programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This levy will essentially renew an expiring levy for another 10 years at a rate of 36 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value ● The levy will include some services, but focuses more on capital/construction projects <p>A consolidated plan was released that provides background information and outlines the City's priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This plan is available online at https://www.cob.org/Documents/planning/community-development/consolidated-plan/2018-2022-consolidatedplan-public.pdf <p>Use of tax credits for construction of new units continues to be a challenge in Whatcom County</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The rate of formerly homeless a project will house is almost required to be set at level (75%) that the city feels is too high <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This rate of formerly homeless tenants would require extensive case management services and raise the ongoing costs to a prohibitive level ○ Conversations with Housing Finance Commission about adjusting the rate are ongoing 	<p>Ayes: 10 Nays: 0</p> <p>Samya Lutz</p>



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<p><i>D. Regional Networking Project</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The vouchers that would be needed for this rate to be viable over the years are often unavailable <p>Paul Schissler is working to advance a networking project that would help Skagit, Whatcom, San Juan, and Island Counties to align their priorities, share resources, and develop a network of information gathering and sharing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The proposed organization would be a new entity that includes dedicated staff 	<p>Paul Schissler</p>
<p><i>E. Whatcom Homeless Service Center Update</i></p>	<p>Mike Parker shared that Whatcom Homeless Service Center is working to add service capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More veteran's services are on the way ● Beginning to use Medicaid to fund case management services ● Governor's Opportunity Zone funding program may be used to help transition individuals into housing from the State Hospital and avoid discharges to homelessness <p>The Point-In-Time Count Report was delayed to add more information about unsheltered homelessness, and how race and ethnicity impact rates of homelessness. The report will include the following data and observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 815 people counted in 2018 ● 384 people unsheltered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This is the highest amount that has been recorded in Whatcom County ● 174 chronically homeless individuals ● The number of homeless families has decreased to 68 ● Homelessness rates for individuals discharged from institutions is very high <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This will likely be a new focus moving forward ● 67% of people counted had their last permanent address in Whatcom County ● The participation of Lummi Nation representatives helped bring light to the housing situation on the reservation, where we see high levels of unsheltered homelessness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Opportunity Council is working to develop better relationship with the Lummi Nation and the WCHAC is seeking tribal representation on the committee 	
<p><i>F. Report from Conference to End Homelessness</i></p>	<p>A Washington Low Income Housing Alliance conference on ending homelessness took place in Yakima in May</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The conference focused mainly on equity, diversity, and inclusion in housing programs ● Officials told attendees that low-barrier projects are required to meet new standards for CHG funding ● HUD gave Dept. of Commerce a lower-than-usual rating on their score sheet ● New vouchers for people with disabilities are becoming available and there's an opportunity for the 	<p>Barbara, Mike</p>



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<p>G. <i>New County Housing Positions</i></p> <p>H. <i>Project Homeless Connect</i></p>	<p>Whatcom Homeless Service Center to partner with Bellingham Housing Authority to support people with disabilities</p> <p>Whatcom County is in the process of adding two new positions to support the housing position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 FTE will be a new Community Health Specialist that will focus on the housing program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It will start in early July • 1 FTE will be a new Human Services Supervisor that will spend about 30% of their time supporting the housing program, as well as some time with the developmental disabilities and veterans programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This position will likely be filled in the latter half of the summer • Funding for new case management positions with partner agencies is forthcoming, but no timeframe has been set <p>Project Homeless Connect will take place on July 20th at Bellingham High School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information can be found at http://www.unitedwaywhatcom.org/project-homeless-connect • For questions about volunteering, contact: Bruce Johnson 360 296-1191 bruce98225@comcast.net 	<p>Barbara</p>
<p>5. ADJOURN</p>		
<p><i>NEXT MEETING</i></p>	<p>Next regular meeting August 9, 8:30 – 10:00 a.m. Whatcom County Health Department - Admin. Conference Room</p>	