

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL
Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

COUNTY COURTHOUSE
311 Grand Avenue, Suite #105
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COUNCILMEMBERS
Barbara Brenner
Rud Browne
Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
Carol Frazey
Satpal Sidhu

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

Homeless Strategies Workgroup

Friday, August 9, 2019 Meeting #9 Summary

Time: 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.

Location: Whatcom County Civic Center Annex,
322 N. Commercial, Garden Room

Attendance:

Members

Lieutenant Don Almer, Bellingham Police (for Deputy Chief Florence Simon)
Ann Beck (for Anne Deacon), Whatcom County Health
Barry Buchanan (HSW Chair), Whatcom County Councilmember
Doug Chadwick, Whatcom County Sheriff, Chief Deputy
Carol Frazey, Whatcom County Councilmember (for Councilmember Rud Browne)
Mike Hilley, Whatcom County EMS
Nick Lewis, Lummi Business Council
Kelli Linville, City of Bellingham Mayor
Guy Occhiogrosso, Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce, President
Mike Parker, Opportunity Council
Bridget Reeves, Lighthouse Mission Ministries, Associate Director (for Hans Erchinger-Davis)
Tyler Schroeder, Whatcom County
Michael Shepard, Port of Bellingham Commissioner
Markis D. Stidham, Homeless Advocate
Emilio Vela, Jr., Northwest Youth Services

Public

Sara Arnoldi, Northwest Youth Services
John Campbell, citizen
Helen Campbell, citizen
Liz Coogan, City of Bellingham, Executive Assistant to the Mayor
Mark Gardner, City of Bellingham, Legislative Analyst
Shari Lapof, HomesNow volunteer
Chris Kobdich, Unity Care Northwest
Emerson McCuin, Northwest Youth Services
Max Morange, Bellingham Food Bank
Rick Qualls, Fountain Community Church
Rick Sepler, City of Bellingham, Planning and Community Development, Director

Meeting Summary Prepared By: Cathy B. Halka, AICP, Legislative Analyst, Whatcom County Council

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1. Welcome and Introductions, HSW Chair, Whatcom County Councilmember Barry Buchanan

Councilmember and Chair of the HSW, Barry Buchanan, welcomed the group and asked each member to introduce themselves and identify what they hope the HSW will accomplish. Councilmember Buchanan reminded the group of the purpose of the HSW as per Resolution 2019-034. The purpose of the Homeless Strategies Workgroup is to identify additional temporary winter shelters, added capacity for year round shelters, additional opportunities to address the needs of the County's homeless population, and strategies to prevent people from having no other option than to sleep outside.

Mayor Linville suggested adding to the purpose/mission to create a communication network and work together. Further, the County needs a coordinated tracking of efforts to address homeless services so all organizations can know what others are doing.

Mayor Linville mentioned the lawsuit Martin vs. City of Boise, which determined you can't make people move along if you don't have a place for them to go.

Councilmember Buchanan asked if anyone had an edits to the Meetings #8 Summary (7/26/2019) and approved the meeting summary.

2. Unity Care (UC), Rest Stops, Update from Chris Kobdich

Chris Kobdich discussed the plan adopted by the Unity Care board in May. In 2018, UC had close to 100 patients with bed bug and head lice issues. UC explored urban rest stop in Ballard, which provides showers, laundry and restroom facilities free of charge, including towels and soap. UC expanded the idea to include medical, behavioral health, substance abuse, case management services. UC has a preliminary budget for cost, some of which can be funded by Medicaid. Other costs are water. UC applied for a HRSA grant, which will be awarded in October and then it will have to be operational in four months. UC is looking for a site and talking with collaborating partners (for non-clinical elements) like Opportunity Council. The Rest Stop would have 5 showers, 5 washers, 9 dryers, 5 restrooms, 2 medical exam rooms, 3 dental labs, 1 behavioral health office, space for haircuts, offices for 2 case managers, and a hot room for people's belongings (to kill head lice and bed bugs). Its \$900,000 per year in operational costs, and subtracting what UC can bill for it leaves \$400,000 in unfunded operational costs.

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Mayor Linville suggested that we look at using a building or space that is already available so there is less time to get it up and running.

3. County Review of Resources Available for Severe Weather Shelters

Ann Beck, Whatcom County Health Department, described limited resources. There is some funding for water and packaged snacks. After a budget review, the revenues are down this year and all funding is already committed. There are not extra resources in the Health Department budget, but maybe there is funding in other departments or areas of the County.

Tyler Schroeder indicated that the process will be to understand the costs and engage the County Council and the City Council (if interested) to identify general funds that might be available. Behavioral Health funds are the first source, but those funds are already committed. Next step is to have the County Council look at general funds, maybe in mid-biennium budget process.

Michael Shepard indicated the Port of Bellingham has a facility available, but they don't have staff. It's important to identify an approved sponsor now so there isn't a scramble later.

Ann Beck indicated that three faith-based organizations are interested, some with little assistance and others are asking for paid staff to assist overnight. The County Health Department is trying to set up volunteer training. The Opportunity Council is working on a cold weather shelter. There is a conversation that needs to happen to identify volunteers for cold weather shelter and the severe weather shelter.

Mike Parker mentioned that organizations that don't think they can handle a program like this should reconsider. There is a lot of support out there to make it happen and a lot of passion.

Markis D. Stidham mentioned that it is difficult to hear everything hangs on availability of volunteers. He continued discussing the importance of shelters being secular, and that if everything is faith-based people might not feel included. Markis continued to say that some rules are prohibitive, such as separating couples. Also, he said the preamble of the Constitution talks about providing for the general welfare; and that is our mandate. His goals are to set a good example with a budget and a model and ask the government copy it because. Jim Peterson should not do it all. Markis said that he keeps seeing groups wait for partners, and he fears we will leave people out again this winter.

Rick Sepler provided an update on the shelter location. The location and details will be made

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public in a few weeks.

Tyler Schroeder and Ann Beck will put together an estimated budget for a winter shelter. The government process requires issuing an RFP or RFQ to make sure we aren't missing someone out there interested in participating. The budget estimate, when complete, will be shared with the HSW, the Mayor of Bellingham and the Whatcom County Council.

Mayor Linville indicated the City of Bellingham is putting efforts and resources into a partnership with the Opportunity Council on a 3 month winter shelter, and has a letter of agreement to work with Lighthouse Mission and Parberry's to look at locating the drop in center.

Bridget Reeves clarified the difference between a winter shelter that operates for three months and a severe weather shelter, which is operational intermittently.

Nick Lewis said he's never seen a true partnership for the tribe. His non-profit is working on housing for sex offenders. Partnering with tribes, which don't have to follow all the same regulations, can be an opportunity. There are a lot of opportunities not being discussed. Nick is building 27 tiny homes. Another issue, he said, is funding restrictions, and people have to think about challenging the rules and creatively pushing interpretations of the rules. He built a women's home with state funding last year.

Mayor Linville indicated that everyone at the meeting is invited to sit at the table, to be part of the conversation, and figure out what's the most practical.

Mike Hilley discussed a partnership the County has with the Lummi Clinic.

Markis agreed with the idea of partnerships with the tribes, as well as with stepping outside the boundaries or rules for an emergency such as the current emergency.

Emilio Vela, Jr. said he worked for government for 20 years and left because he wanted to be part of a creative solution and use his government knowledge. Culture is relevant to effectiveness. Latinos and Native Americans are overrepresented in the homeless community.

4. Legislation discussion, House Bill 2263

Councilmember Buchanan suggested sending out the bill to HSW members and discuss the item at a future meeting. HB2263 allows for an election for a new tax to create a fund for some efforts (He clarified that SB1406 is a rebate tax, and 2263 is a new tax)

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5. Encampment locations and operations

Rick Sepler provided an update on Unity Village, located in Fairhaven on Post Point. The permit was approved with no appeal. By the end of the month residents will be transferred from the existing site on Alabama to occupy the new site until next spring. Units are produced off site. The permit is valid through April 2020. Twenty homes are permitted – it is whatever they can complete by November 1st. The structures are very portable.

Markis Stidham described the mass production of walls and completion of installations yesterday. There are 15 buildings on site. He encouraged government leaders to reexamine budgets and allocate money for more locations. He indicated that residents are relieving the pressure on shelters, and people are getting jobs and moving out, opening spaces for the next people in need. He encouraged government to follow the model because it works.

Mayor Linville indicated that people should visit the site to see the tiny homes offered in Unity Village, and Mike Parker further agreed. Linville said it is different than the example from the Builders' Association. The Unity Village tiny homes are not a permanent solution. Nick Lewis said they call them extra bedrooms instead of tiny homes, so that the expectation is clearer. Markis Stidham called them cabins, and said there is a culture that allows for supporting each other to get back on their feet.

Mayor Linville suggested that not everyone wants to look in Bellingham for places to live and that the HSW look at additional locations outside the City of Bellingham. She suggested taking a message to the small cities workgroup about the Bellingham experience and copying the model.

The members discussed going to the small cities meeting to present and identify opportunities to meet the needs of the homeless populations in those communities. Markis Stidham echoed the need to provide opportunities in small cities, but that there also exists a strong need in Bellingham. Being homeless should not be a death sentence. We need to identify community leaders in other locations to understand the need. HomesNow has plans to build more, in Bellingham if they can. An estimated 200 beds more are needed.

Nick indicated people don't want to move around. Lummi community members were welcomed to the casino for help last winter. Over half of the reservation is non-tribal and everyone was welcome. There is revenue the county gets and none of it goes back to the reservation. \$40M of property was sold on the reservation last year. Where does the collected tax money go; it doesn't come back to the support us. Sixty to seventy percent of the population is on Medicaid,

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and there is a higher need than in Bellingham.

Mayor Linville indicated that revenues collected in Bellingham don't all come back to the city. She said it is difficult to track money because it goes to support the public good in many areas, and she believes it does.

Michael Shepard requested data on numbers of beds and locations. Mike Parker suggested that creating an asset map and list of resources would be a good place to start, and health departments should compile an inventory of resources. He suggested looking at city or county owned properties first as potential shelter locations, or where Lummi might have a location where things can move forward more quickly.

Nick Lewis indicated that government moves slowly. As a non-profit there are fewer regulations. A home has 15 kids and 2 adults, and it's been operational for two years. It has kept kids out of CPS and reunited them with their parents.

Bridget Reeves has discussed opportunities with St. Peter's church in Deming, which hosts meals for 150 people a month. Lighthouse Mission is looking at how they can partner to offer a shower trailer on Tuesday mornings. There is probably a greater array of needs for those 150 people, and it is an opportunity for partnerships.

Markis indicated that HomesNow still needs \$8,000-\$9,000 more for completion on materials alone. They will meet their goals, but workers are burning themselves out to complete everything. Last winter they spent \$30,000 after 6 weeks. They have a good model to follow.

Lieutenant Almer asked if the workgroup has reached consensus that a specific model has worked. Mayor Kelli said it is not one size fits all but there can be a menu of options.

Bridget Reeves mentioned that the community may not be able to find a 200-bed shelter location, but partners are still looking for a location and they will take suggestions.

Mayor Linville said that when they were at LIHI tiny home village, it was interesting that groups built them (Boy Scouts, Rotary, etc.) and then donated their project to the community. That is reaching out and asking more people to be part of the solution. Nick Lewis added that the Northwest Indian College carpentry students built extra bedrooms.

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6. Strategies Chart Review and Updates

Councilmember Buchanan reported that the County Council requested the Executive move forward to issue a contract for construction of the Crisis Stabilization Center and support for a future budget amendment for the overage cost (\$1.2M). The Center will be breaking ground soon.

7. Public Comment

Shari Lapof, a volunteer with HomesNow, said that you can't build a countywide program on volunteers. Money has to be triaged to identify what is most important for life saving. People on the street have to be housed whether there is money or not.

Sara Arnoldi indicated that 22 North was open the first time last fall. It is the first time there weren't tents outside. Regarding culture, there are barriers with visitor rules such as singles only. People have to choose between being housed and being together with their community. How do you put together resources for those without a place to go?

8. Discussion of Next Steps

The next meeting is August 23rd, and Safe Storage PNW will be attending and presenting.

Mike Parker suggested that at the next meeting we discuss creating a tool kit and creating dashboard of resources that quantifies beds and services.

Emilio Vela, Jr. said we need to consider youth because they are usually not alone, and a lot of what we do is family reunification. As we look at homelessness in severe weather, we need to address the challenges then and moving forward year round.

List of Alternative Strategies & Responses

Updated for 08/23/19 HSW Meeting

\$ = Less than 100k

\$\$ = 100k – 300k

\$\$\$ = 300k – 1m

\$\$\$\$ = 1m +

◆ This strategy is already listed among the priority strategies in the City's 2018-2022 Consolidated Plan and/or Assessment of Fair Housing.

* Strategy suggested by Community Solutions Workgroup in fall 2017.

Humane responses to address public health and safety impacts associated with homelessness crisis

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?	Status	Ranking?
Rest Stop	Create an Urban Rest Stop (mobile or fixed location) with showers, laundry, check-in medical screening (proposed by Whatcom County Public Health Crisis Oversight Committee). Or, laundry facilities.	X	X	X	X	\$\$, \$\$\$	X	Proposed by Whatcom County Public Health Crisis Oversight Committee. NWYS operates a Day Center from 10-2 at First Congregational Church, Serves 24 and younger. Respite Care (Peace Health) Rest Stop (Unity Care)	Peace Health, Unity Care, NWYS		
Barge	Operate a floating barge with beds and showers.	X	X					HSW agree this is a challenge to implement.			
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)	X	NWYS working with First Congregational on Day Center, which will serve 24 and younger. Open from 10am-2pm. Provides laundry service Light House mission does linen laundry daily, not enough			

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?	Status	Ranking?
								capacity for personal laundry. Interested in a laundry trailer service City of Bellingham considering a laundry voucher service			
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	\$\$, \$\$\$	X	Requires on-site management, restrooms and facilities. Partners required. City of Bellingham has a camping area behind the 911 center on James St. HomesNow creating Unity Village (Post Point location) – Construction begins Aug 1 2019. City of Bellingham will assist with Unity Village Operations for 9 months	HomesNow, City of Bellingham		High
Restrooms	Bathroom facilities with 24 hour access for those who work shifts. Explore multiple locations.	X	X		X	\$, \$\$, \$\$\$	X	City of Bellingham is completing 24 hour access restroom at MHP. Porta-potties have been located in 3 additional areas. Whatcom County considering Rest Stop, which could also help with this need. 24-hour access would be very expensive.	City of Bellingham, City of Ferndale, Lighthouse Mission		High

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?	Status	Ranking?
								NWYS working with First Congregational on Day Center, which serves ages 24 and younger from 10am-2pm. Lighthouse Mission has 3 outhouses at drop in center City of Ferndale has a 24-hr bathroom at Star Park.			
Showers	Shower facility with 24 hour access for those who work shifts.	X				\$\$, \$\$\$	X	Lighthouse Mission has a shower trailer - serves 16-18 showers per setting. Moves to 4 locations a week and recently served their 1,000 th shower LMM will include shower facilities in new permanent shelter facility. NWYS working with First Congregational on Day Center, serves 24 and younger. YMCA offers a limited number of shower passes – they are at capacity. HomesNow has a shower truck for tiny home residents. Once a month takes shower trailer to Maritime Heritage Park for a summit. Offers 1,500 showers	Lighthouse Mission, HomesNow		

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?	Status	Ranking?
								per year. 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 to lead effort with support from COB and other agencies City of Bellingham identified a location near the police station and poured a concrete pad. City agreed to purchase lockers. Operational models need to be in place. Whatcom County has been working with Safe Storage PNW to identify location for lockers on County property. County has budgeted \$20,000 to assist in this effort. Additional partners needed.	City of Bellingham Whatcom County		
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		X	X		\$\$, \$\$\$		Requires on-site management, restrooms and facilities. Partners required. City of Bellingham allows for 8hour parking on-street, unless otherwise marked. City of Ferndale acknowledged	City of Bellingham, City of Ferndale		

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?	Status	Ranking?
	a concern, and if COB can help with these, some organizations and entities might be able to offer parking sites.							many park overnight in parking lots at parks.			
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

Strategy	Description	Funding Level	Underway or Planned	Partner(s) Agency or Agencies Working on Strategy	Lead?	Status	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 will be ready by next fall.	\$\$\$\$	X	Whatcom County is Lead – Project is funded and underway.	WC	Whatcom County Council (8/7/2019 Meeting) supports the Executive’s decision to award the bid for the construction of the Crisis Stabilization Facility, with the understanding that the Council intent will be supportive of the concept of a future budget supplemental of \$1 million to be transferred to the project based budget to provide the needed contingency funds for the project.	
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.			

Strategy	Description	Funding Level	Underway or Planned	Partner(s) Agency or Agencies Working on Strategy	Lead?	Status	Ranking?
Temporary Winter (cold weather) Shelter	temporary shelter during cold weather, typically open for 3 months	\$\$		Opportunity Council	OC, WC	OC is working on a shelter, but needs assistance with volunteer staff - See Volunteer Training strategy below WC identifying budget needs and potential general funds for Council budget approval (Tyler S., Ann Beck)	
Severe Weather (Emergency) Shelter Satellite Shelters	Site county satellite shelters for severe weather (winter shelter closed Feb. 28, 2018). Temporary shelter during extreme cold weather events, typically open for days or weeks	\$\$ per year		WC, COB, COF	COB	WC identifying budget for winter shelter, possible general funds available for Council budget approval. Need to identify locations	
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, DVSAS, YWCA, Sun Community Services and Interfaith/Family Promise operate shelter beds today)			
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., like the NWYS approach that uses a master lease.	\$\$\$, \$\$\$\$					
Drug Court housing	Speed up Drug Court housing.		X				
◆ Rental Assistance	Expand resources for rental assistance vouchers		X				

Strategy	Description	Funding Level	Underway or Planned	Partner(s) Agency or Agencies Working on Strategy	Lead?	Status	Ranking?
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	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			HomesNow is creating tiny home communities. Identify volunteer agencies that can help build tiny homes	HomesNow, Whatcom County	HomesNow is completing Unity Village at Post Point WC work is underway to develop volunteer base	
Re-entry	Expansion of re-entry options (e.g., Dept. of Corrections half-way house, sober houses)						
Smaller shelters	Expand number of "family home shelters" for a smaller scale and less intense setting than a 200 bed shelter setting.						
Volunteer training	Prepare a group of volunteers to be available for temporary shelters and severe weather shelters		X		WC	County is working on a program to train volunteers to mobilize when needed	

Strategy	Description	Funding Level	Underway or Planned	Partner(s) Agency or Agencies Working on Strategy	Lead?	Status	Ranking?
Homeless Services Tool Kit	Develop an asset map, resources list, and models for sheltering the homeless	\$		Opportunity Council, Whatcom County, Bellingham, Ferndale and other small cities	WC		
<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	Lighthouse Mission Ministries 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.			
* Supported employment programs	Assess existing workforce development programs, cultivate relationships with employers 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 Healthcare Authority's Medicaid Transformation initiative.			

Strategy	Description	Funding Level	Underway or Planned	Partner(s) Agency or Agencies Working on Strategy	Lead?	Status	Ranking?
* Insurance for landlords	Create an insurance or damage mitigation fund to minimize the risks to landlords renting to tenants with no/poor rental history			Opportunity Council is investigating the feasibility of establishing such a fund in Bellingham, and will draft a set of recommendations early this year.			