

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL  
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Ben Elenbaas  
Carol Frazey  
Kathy Kershner

## WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

# Homeless Strategies Workgroup

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**Friday, December 18, 2020**

**Meeting #34 MEETING SUMMARY**

Time: 1:30 p.m. – 2:50 p.m.

Location: Remote online meeting, for more information visit

Members in Attendance:

Barry Buchanan, Chair, Whatcom County Councilmember  
Tyler Schroeder, Whatcom County  
Michael Lilliquist, Bellingham City Council Member  
Hannah Stone, Bellingham City Council Member  
Seth Fleetwood, City of Bellingham, Mayor  
Michael Shepard, Port of Bellingham, Commissioner  
Hans Erchinger-Davis, Lighthouse Mission Ministries Representative  
Ann Beck, Whatcom County Health  
Jenn Daly for Dean Wight, Northwest Youth Services Representative  
Dave Crass Florence Simon, Bellingham Police, Deputy Chief  
Markis D. Stidham, Homeless Advocate  
Joel Kennedy, Homeless children and families  
Emily O'Connor, Homeless children and families  
Michael Berres, Special populations  
Lisa Marx, Schools

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### 1. Welcome, HSW Chair, Whatcom County Councilmember Barry Buchanan

Councilmember Buchanan welcomed members and guests. HSW members approved the meeting summary: Meeting 33 – December 4, 2020. The next HSW meeting will be held virtually on Friday, January 8, 2021; 1:30pm.

### 2. Discussion and Planning for Pallet Shelters (Tiny Homes)

Tyler Schroeder provided an update regarding the County shelter purchase including:

- Proclamation of emergency by executive last week,
- Contract with Modular 360 for 25 units (with potential to purchase 25 additional),
- Site identified at Geri Fields next to Civic Field,
- Construction of units is underway and delivery will be by the end of the year, and
- Lead time for future orders varies based on when they are received.

HSW members discussed the following:

- Site locations and operations of the Geri Field site (by Homes Now),
- Additional operator and location to be identified,
- City shelter RFQ for longer term shelter includes \$500,000 for units and operations,
- Pallet Shelters as an option to continue to consider,
- Expanding shelter opportunities is a strategy to address needs of individuals at city hall camp
- City Hall campers that meet Homes Now entry requirements will be considered for entry (with space for up to 28 people) at the Geri Field location.

- Basecamp has around 81 spaces available and processes 5-10 people each day for check in, which includes a COVID test. If the camp at City Hall were disbanded or severe weather hits, Basecamp will increase the number of people processed each day.
- Drop-In Center space opens if criteria is met. Drop-In Center will be for overnight stays only and guests will be shuttled back to Basecamp for daytime services.
- Policymakers need to discuss spending more public funds for pallet shelter.

### 3. New Strategies Matrix

HSW members discussed updates from subcommittees:

- Unsheltered (year-round) Subcommittee
  - Need to identify a chair, have not held their first meeting yet
- Winter/Severe Weather Subcommittee
  - Need to identify a chair, have not held their first meeting yet
- Youth (year-round) Subcommittee
  - Jenn Daly (Chair) reported the group is scheduling their first meeting
- Families (year-round) Subcommittee
  - Emily O'Connor (Chair) provided an update that funding for motel stays is running low. There are 60 families in motels now and an additional 20 families likely in the next few months. The monthly bill for motel stays is approx. \$100,000 a month, and this is not a good location for families or a good use of resources.
- Funding Subcommittee
  - Michael Lilliquist (Chair) provided an update that the Funding Subcommittee has met and shared materials to review. Members are looking at what is currently being spent now and how great is the need. The next meeting will be in early January.
- Communications Subcommittee
  - Joel Kennedy (Chair) reported the subcommittee has met a few times, and discussed communications needs such as a uniform data network and communication to the general public about what is being done to reduce homelessness, what's working, and what are remaining needs.
  - HSW members discussed a need for more coordination of communications to the general public about what is happening to address homeless (actions, successes, needs) and a need to include City and County staff in messaging as well as people experiencing homelessness so they know where to find resources.

### 4. Year Round Sheltering for Families with children

Updates provided in previous section – Families (year-round) Subcommittee

### 5. Winter Shelters

County Health Dept staff continues to engage with volunteer and faith-based organizations, but no one has stepped up to operate severe weather shelters. (as per Anne Deacon- submitted by email)

### 6. Public Comment

The following members of the public provided comments:

- Brel Froebe
- Doug Gustafson
- Katherine Orłowski
- Melissa Wisener

- Mario Abata
- Kai Rapaport
- A Blythe
- Hiram Joe
- Heather Katahdin
- David Petrie
- Arrisa Owen Turner
- Shari Lapof
- Aida Cardona
- Krissa Joy Kimera
- Louis Burell
- Flip Breksin
- David Petrie (additional time)
- Lynnette Allen
- Benjamin Simons
- Amy Glasser
- Amelia Ireland
- Shari Lapof (additional time)