



Whatcom County Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force

May 22, 2017

Whatcom County Council
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 105
Bellingham, Washington 98225

Dear Councilmembers:

At the May 22, 2017 meeting of the Incarceration Prevention & Reduction Task Force, the Task Force unanimously approved the following motion:

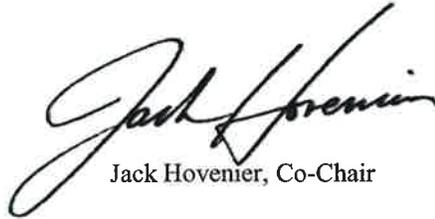
The Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force (IPRTF) recommends to the County Council that, no later than September 2017, the County will facilitate the community meeting for the expansion of the crisis triage facility. Prior to that, the IPRTF and County will try to educate the community about the benefits.

Enclosed is the County administration's proposed Public Involvement Plan, reviewed by the full Task Force.

Sincerely,

P.P.  for

Jill Bernstein, Co-Chair



Jack Hovenier, Co-Chair

c: Jack Louws, County Executive
Tyler Schroeder, Deputy Executive
Anne Deacon, Health Department

Encl: Whatcom County Crisis Triage Facility Expansion Draft Public Involvement Plan, May 2017

JB&JH/jkn



Whatcom County Crisis Triage Facility Expansion

Draft Public Involvement Plan

**Located: Whatcom County Triage Facility
2030 Division St.
Bellingham, Wa 98226**

**May 2017
(Amended)**



Public Involvement Plan

Introduction

As part of planning for the expanded Whatcom County Mental Health and Acute Detox Triage Facility (Crisis Triage Facility), it has been identified that there is a need to prepare a Public Involvement Plan (PIP). The Plan is intended to provide a transparent, open process for stakeholders, citizens and decision makers.

The Executive, Sheriff and County Council, as recommended by the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force (IPRTF), want to ensure that there is community understanding of the proposed expansion of the Crisis Triage Facility. Additionally, when Whatcom County purchased the Division Street property for the Work Center, it was imagined as an interim location until a new jail was built and the Work Center services moved there. The County indicated to the City of Bellingham and the neighbors in the area that the location would be sold and returned to commercial use at that time. It is still contemplated that Work Center Facility would move into a new jail facility, however, the recommended option of expansion to the triage facility would all but preclude a private, commercial future for the property. Given the success of the current facility and limited impact of the Work Center and current triage facility on the neighbors, this may not be an issue.

With this and other aspects in mind, the County has identified the need to perform public outreach to ensure that community input is heard and understood to accomplish a fully informed decision of the future use of the Division Street Property.

This Public Involvement Plan is principally for use by Whatcom County and the IPRTF to guide outreach efforts during development of the Crisis Triage Facility. It is a dynamic document, subject to change as circumstances warrant. Coordination of the Plan's updating and implementation will be done by Whatcom County in coordination with the IPRTF Triage Facility Ad Hoc Committee.

Objectives

The primary objective of a Public Involvement Plan is to foster understanding in the process leading to a decision of siting the expanded Crisis Triage Facility at the Division Street property. An expanded facility will play an important role in behavioral health treatment in Whatcom County and help to address the mental health and substance use challenges facing the community, including the criminal justice system, by creating a

more robust diversion option for those whose primary interaction with law enforcement is a result of problematic symptoms of mental illness and/or substance abuse.

After initial review and input it has been determined that the priority location of the expanded Crisis Triage facility is the Division Street property that houses the current triage facility and the County's Work Center. The advantages of such a location were identified by the IPFTF, as recommended in the Phase I report to the County Council:

- The land is owned by the County, this makes the entire project more affordable.
- Preliminary design work for remodel and addition was done in 2010, reducing the cost of design.
- The location is close enough to downtown, the hospital, and the freeway to not create significant difficulties for law enforcement and emergency medical services (EMS) over other locations. This is especially true if the time it takes first responders to drop off individuals is sufficiently brief.

Recognizing the advantages that the property at Division Street brings to the siting of the expanded Crisis Triage Facility, it is important to provide the public information on the project and garner public input to help form the decision making process.

The Public Involvement Plan

Various mechanisms will be used to inform and involve stakeholders, consistent with the County's goals. As a first priority, the Public Involvement Plan will reach out to those most affected by the project and those neighbors that live in the vicinity. Overall, the County will include those individuals seeking information on the project.

Public involvement will be an informational activity educating the public on the need to enhance the Crisis Triage Facility, provide information on the site selection process and explain what the neighbors can expect the facility's impact is on the neighborhood in the future. It will be conducted in a respectful, responsive manner. The County will work with the City of Bellingham in a "no surprises" manner to understand how their policies and regulations affect the design, location and permitting process, including public outreach of the proposed project.

Key Messages

Key Messages are the overarching themes that define more specific statements regarding the project.

- **Expand the existing Triage Facility located at the Division Street property**
- **Develop two 16 bed units joined in one building off a common foyer with a common intake space; each unit licensed as a Residential Treatment Facility.**

- **One unit will provide mental health crisis stabilization services as a Crisis Triage Facility.**
- **The 16 bed mental health Crisis Triage Unit will be certified as voluntary with enhanced security.**
- **The other unit will provide for a 16 bed acute substance detoxification services.**
- **The land is owned by the County, this makes the entire project more affordable.**
- **Preliminary design work for remodel and addition was done in 2010, reducing the cost of design.**
- **The location is close enough to downtown, the hospital, and the freeway to not create significant difficulties for law enforcement and emergency medical services (EMS) over other locations. This is especially true if the time it takes first responders to drop off individuals is sufficiently brief.**
- **Public transportation is limited in the areas, which can make it difficult for self-referral/walk-in patients. Additional transits options will be important for the project to function appropriately**
- **This project is important to reinforce an ongoing process of recovery by connecting people to supportive services in the community. An adequate continuum of care includes community based mental health counseling, residential and outpatient substance use disorder services, recovery house level of care, longer term supportive housing, case management, and access to primary care and dental services.**

Methods

Following are several methods that will achieve the Objectives listed above. They will be implemented as soon as possible and continue through the site and design selections; and final permitting.

- Objective: Providing convenient means for citizens to ask questions or express opinions.
- Methods
 - **E-Mail through the Whatcom County Executive Office and Health Department;**
 - Tyler Schroeder, Deputy Executive – tschroed@co.whatcom.wa.us
 - Anne Deacon, Human Services Manager
adeacon@co.whatcom.wa.us
 - Additional email contacts as appropriate, to be determined

- **A dedicated website address created for the updates to the expanded crisis triage facility project.**
 - <http://www.whatcomcounty.us/2075/Crisis-Triage-Center>
 - <http://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/Home/View/26331>
- Compass Health Flyer on existing Whatcom County Triage Center
- **Briefings - Throughout the planning, permitting and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process, there should be briefings of stakeholders and key officials. These should be scheduled to allow input prior to important stages of the process. Key meetings would be as follows:**
 - Incarceration Prevention Task Force – Triage Facility Subcommittee
 - Incarceration Prevention Task Force – Full Committee
 - Bellingham City Council Briefing
 - County Council Briefing
- **Neighborhood Notice/Meeting discussions**
 - Identify addresses of neighbors within 500' ft. of property
 - Other contacts similar to City of Bellingham's community meeting requirements
 - Ensure that all addresses in Orchard Street area are included
 - Identify a community meeting day and space, to be determined
 - Explain the project and permit process
 - Obtain opinions on site
 - Discuss the uses on the site
 - Listen to concerns about impacts
- **Key Stakeholders Discussions**
 - Incarceration Prevention Task Force members
 - Whatcom County Council
 - Whatcom Crisis Oversight Committee
- **Permit Process**
 - Property is zoned Public to allow governmental operations
 - Outright allowed in the Public zone
 - Pre-Application Process (or, waiver)
 - SEPA process, two week public comment period
 - Building permit process application