



Whatcom County Housing Advisory Subcommittee
Severe Weather Shelter
Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date/Time/Location: May 10, 2019 10:30am to 12:00pm – Garden Center Conference Room, 322 Commercial Street, Bellingham

Subcommittee Members Present: Tyler Schroeder, Barry Buchanan, Kelli Linville, Dan Hammill, Doug Chadwick, Mike Hilley, John Gargett, Michael Shepard, Lynn Sterbenz, Bridget Reeves, Mike Parker, Michael Heath, Ann Beck

Subcommittee Members Absent: Flo Simon, Rick Qualls, Laura Harker, Karen Burke

Whatcom Co. Health Dept. Staff/Guests: Anne Deacon, Human Services Manager, Barbara Johnson-Vinna, Human Services Housing Specialist; Chris D’Onofrio, Human Services Housing Specialist; Samantha Murdoch, Coordinator; Hathor Woods, Shari Lapof, Mark Raaka, John Campbell, Helen Campbell, Frances Burkhart, Mark Gardner, Peter Ruffatto

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/Who
1. Call to order, introductions	Introductions commenced and quorum present.	Anne Deacon
2. Review of Purpose and Goals	<p>This subcommittee has a responsibility to report back to the Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee who has a responsibility to report back to the County Council and County Executive.</p> <p>In 2010 an inter-local agreement was established between Whatcom County and all seven cities. This agreement addressed a state legislative mandate for an advisory committee to oversee a specific housing fund that is collected by counties. The committee has broadened its scope beyond the following list:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation of housing projects or units within housing projects that are affordable to very low income persons 2. Supporting building operation and maintenance costs of housing projects or units within housing projects eligible to receive Housing Trust funds and that are affordable to very low income persons and that require a supplement to rent income to cover ongoing operating expenses. 	Anne



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	<p>3. Rental assistance vouchers for housing projects or units within housing projects that are affordable to very low income persons and to be administered by a local public housing authority or other local organizations that have an existing rental assistance voucher program consistent with U. S Department of Housing and Urban Development's Section 8 program</p> <p>4. Operation costs for emergency shelters and licensed overnight youth shelters.</p> <p>The committee also looks at the housing system generally speaking, especially for homeless individuals, and affordable housing options for low income as well.</p> <p>A Charter for this subcommittee was adopted by the Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee (WCHAC) and presented to the members. The subcommittee is an ad hoc committee of the WCHAC, convening for the purpose of creating guidelines for a coordinated countywide action plan to respond to the health and safety of people who are homeless during severe weather.</p> <p>The subcommittee's goal is to create a pre-planned procedure that can be activated quickly in order to avoid an uncoordinated response to people who are homeless during severe weather and in need of safe temporary shelter. The subcommittee's Charter includes the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the Open Public Meetings Act • Identify sever weather thresholds for enacting plan • Identify source for gathering weather data • Identify potential available resources • Consider qualifications for severe weather shelter service providers • Consider operational standards for facility regarding animals, hours of operation, food/drink, security/screening and entry/re-entry rules • Consider alternative response to shelters • Identify and prioritize populations to be served • Identify training needs for providers/community • Develop a communication plan to inform community of shelter availability • Create action plan to be activated when severe weather criteria are met • Submit recommended action plan to the WCHAC for final approval <p>The guidelines and procedure being created are for severe weather shelter needs, not ongoing winter shelter or disasters focus. However, the subcommittee's work will likely inform other efforts focusing on winter shelter capacity issues that are likely to arise next season due to the loss of a community partner.</p>	



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<p>3. Problem Statement</p>	<p>The initial activity of the subcommittee was identifying problems that were encountered in severe weather shelter operations/challenges last season:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plans in place, but not fully utilized due to an inadequate response from community; some advocacy groups did not use faith based resources, even though space was available 2. Facility and personnel/volunteer capacity was scarce 3. Definition of severe weather was inconsistent with no agreed upon standard 4. Miscommunication regarding available beds in existing shelters – once misinformation was provided, unable to correct 5. Assumed shelter population restrictions discouraged use 6. Screening guests at only one point of entry (because the overflow shelter acted as a satellite to the Lighthouse Mission) may have been a deterrent to some 7. Could not meet the needs of everyone due to a multitude of special requests/circumstances 8. “Frenzy” – i.e., <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. miscommunication and distribution of incorrect information, b. some advocates attempting to help created more confusion, and in some cases, harm to the system in place or individuals seeking assistance, c. community leaders feeling the pressure to act immediately, but not having timely access to information and resources d. many different advocate voices introducing a sense of urgency that was not necessarily based in fact 9. Need regular communication to the public about efforts underway and options 10. Low barrier shelter volunteers need greater expertise in operations and behavior management, conflict resolution, and identification of behavioral health distress 11. No co-ed options 12. Uniformed Security personnel was a deterrent for some 13. Insufficient funding for motel stays 14. Inappropriate motel placements – did not match the needs appropriately with resources, resulting in damaged relationships with motels 15. Not willing to go to a faith based shelter – misunderstanding requirements of the faith based location 16. Some individuals who were homeless were not fully aware of their health risk as a result of the severe weather 	<p>Anne</p>



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<p>4. Process for Recommendations</p>	<p>In the event that resources are not available to meet every specific request or need, subcommittee members had to identify those populations that had a higher health and safety vulnerability. Resources would be dedicated initially to those with the highest risk.</p> <hr/> <p>More Vulnerable:</p> <p>Medically Fragile Families with children – including domestic violence, single parent Minors – 17 and under Seniors Individuals with Substance Use Disorder and Serious Mental Illness Individuals with disabilities – low ability for self-care Parents with adult children to provide for LGBTQ People who have worn out their welcome – violence, predatory, verbal assault, protection order, beyond resource of the specific shelter</p> <p>Less Vulnerable:</p> <p>Those with animals Couples Non faith based Singles – both genders Light Touch Car Campers</p>	<p>Anne</p>
<p>5. Scheduling Meetings</p>	<p>Every other week, with a short deadline for creation of an action plan. Sending out standard times to determine best day of week and time going forward.</p>	
<p>6. Public Comment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify shelters and what each shelter can handle • Mutual aid, what they can handle, point of contact, what they bring to table • Cost benefit analysis: weather, ED, FD, Jail, compare if shelters had been in place • Be aware of the ICS (Incident Command System) structure for managing severe weather responses 	
<p>7. Parking Lot</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing winter shelters • Daytime shelters • Who will own next steps? • Severe environmental conditions 	
<p>8. ADJOURN</p>	<p>12:10 PM</p>	<p>Anne</p>