

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

COUNTY COURTHOUSE
311 Grand Avenue, Suite #105
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038
(360) 778-5010



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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

Homeless Strategies Workgroup

MEMO

Date: April 24, 2020
To: Homeless Strategies Workgroup Members
From: Councilmember Barry Buchanan
RE: Homelessness Activities during COVID-19 Emergency

As you know, the Homeless Strategies Workgroup (HSW) suspended all meetings, and HSW members will instead receive a memo update twice monthly. Memos will also be posted on the [HSW Meeting Information page](#). Please email any feedback, ideas, or questions you may have to Cathy Halka at chalka@co.whatcom.wa.us.

Byron Avenue Quarantine & Isolation Facility

The quarantine and isolation facility located at 3701 Byron Avenue partially opened on April 22, 2020. The facility has 6 rooms available now and additional rooms will open as supplies (such as mattress covers, mini-fridges, and microwaves) are available. The facility will have 13 rooms available in the next few weeks.

All contracts are in place for services, including contracts with Sea Mar Community Health Center and Lighthouse Mission Ministries. Food services are being delivered to the site every two days by Maple Alley Inn, except on Sundays when food service will be provided by McDonald's. Food delivery is paid on receipt.

For security, the property is fenced with a guard shack, but security cameras will not be provided as they are expensive and not eligible for FEMA reimbursement.

FEMA is providing a \$1.35 million reimbursement over 90 days, with reports due on progress every 30 days. New FEMA requirements will evaluate the cost of the facility in relation to the number of people served. Case management and medical treatment is not covered by FEMA and will be absorbed through a Commerce Department grant.

Peace Health is managing bed control, tracking referrals and occupancy, and identifying duration of stays. The Byron Avenue facility will provide additional capacity if the hospital is overwhelmed with patients.

The County is also conducting assessments of additional locations for future use as additional

non-congregate isolation and quarantine facilities.

(Visit www.whatcomcovid.com for more information)

Basics PNW Lockers

Basics PNW is finalizing contracts with the City of Bellingham to locate 10-12 lockers for use by people experiencing homelessness on the city pad site located in the Grand Avenue right of way. The contract is for one year with the potential to extend the term. Basics PNW will fully manage and oversee the use of the lockers, including lease agreements, reference checks, and maintenance. Once the agreements with the City are complete, Basics PNW will work with the County on a second locker location. Whatcom County Council identified funding for the purchase of lockers in the 2020 budget.

Unity Care NW – Virtual Tour

Unity Care NW is working closely with Unified Command and the Whatcom County Health Department and instated new systems to address patient and staff safety amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please take a moment to view a virtual tour of Unity Care NW COVID-19 activities:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfMXzf_vjQI&feature=youtu.be