

From: David Crook
To: Cathy Halka
Subject: Homeless Strategies Workgroup
Date: Friday, November 20, 2020 4:56:50 PM

Friends,

I sat in on the meeting today. Wanted to say:

First -- you're all great, and thank you for your work. I don't spend as much time on that as I probably should (there's an emotional intelligence book on my shelf, if I ever have time to read it... :-).

I support the "phase 1" -- focus on the emergency need first (Mike, Seth et al.) . The cold weather and covid is here now. I think this can be connected to long-term efficiencies as Emily was advocating for, which which is very important, but it should not be precluded by that concern if long-term efficiencies will take more time. Hypothermia, Covid and other life-threatening conditions are what this group is looking at now.

The 25~50 pallet homes seem like a terrific idea, and can be transitioned to more permanent location, etc. in a subsequent, separate phase, or stored until next winter as part of our Rapid Response plan, etc. Michael's mention of the two un-used locations -- I think he mentioned Sunnyland and one other -- seem sensible. Seth's mention of Winterhaven also sounds good. An embarrassment of opportunity -- this is all good news.

On Rapid-Response -- our gov. undoubtedly does an awful lot that I don't know about -- but it's important to recognize that our Rapid Response plan for the folks @ 210 camp this winter is the community organizers themselves -- gov. had no rapid response for that, and in fact, moved first to clear them out, which was a regrettable choice -- not sure what the whole story was there. As 210 camp has developed, we've seen incredible organization, resourcing, knowledge-base and energy demonstrated by community members -- their work reflects credit upon themselves, and extends great benefit to our broader community -- which is more supportive of this than I might have expected, and it's really encouraging to see. I want to encourage you consider, as part of your broader strategic response modeling, the likelihood of this type of effort being needed again (this Winter's emergency was also an emergency last Winter, and the one before -- gov. has never had an adequate strategy for dealing with it). I think that we would do well to develop healthy and stable communication channels with these folx on a long-term basis -- which may be a challenge, but I think it can be done in various ways, including relationships and check-ins with long-standing community orgs, or a city/county-sponsored commission (Racial Equity Commission?), etc. This is gap-coverage, between the emergent need, and gov's ability to respond to it -- important as a strategic component in your model.

Aside: I wonder what it would be like to develop these community leaders...

I want to mention supports and barriers just quickly. If we can pay police time-and-a-half to sweep a camp, surely we can pay health workers, HOT team, et al. time-and-a-half to visit the camps instead. This can be done now, with the resources we have, and should hold-up under any scrutiny the use of police overtime would, to far better effect. I hope you can consider it. It's a resource, we have it -- let's use it. As for barriers -- I watched the Sherrif in his flac vest

and fatigues, and one of his deputies in plain-clothes observing the camp this morning from the NE corner of Lottie and Grand -- 7:30-to-8:00 -- ostensibly keeping the community safe from the unwashed -- it was as disturbing to see as it was to hear them complain of being unappreciated to passers-by. The Sheriff and his partner wore no masks while interacting with passers-by on the sidewalk (1~2-foot distance) for a full 30 minutes. I also understand there was an undercover officer in the camp yesterday -- didn't hear if that was BPD or Sheriff. So far, it seems like the only thing holding them back is that people are watching. It also seems like their presence is making things worse / wratcheting-up tension, not making things better. Homeless folx don't need to be reminded that they're at the bottom of the food-chain; and the 210campers and community organizers are being very careful not to interact with passers-by or otherwise jeopardize their tenuous presence on the City Hall property.

One friendly critique -- please take this with grace, and the compassion from which it extends -- a lot of our homeless community hold on to whatever scraps of dignity they have left, in whatever way they can, as they fight to survive not only the cold and hunger, but also the erasure of their very humanity. It's a different thing, I think, to sit in a warm, covered house or office, with food and facilities and full cupboards, and from there, to effect polite and articulate speech. When you get yelled-at, it's hard -- I know I only have so much capacity for that myself, so truly, no judgement from me -- but let it go without comment if you can. If you find yourself able, go visit them in person, and look a fellow human in the eyes. It isn't enough to see them. They need to see you seeing them -- it matters deeply -- every bit as much as they need warm clothes and shelter.

Well there you have it. Thanks for your work -- I'm so glad our community has you, and I look forward to your progress on this.

Please take care,
-david crook
Columbia Neighborhood

Sent from [ProtonMail](#), private email.