

From: Dena Jensen

Subject: Clearing up some potentially inaccurate information regarding the campers at 210 Lottie Street

Date: Tuesday, December 1, 2020 7:59:13 PM

[Base Camp Nightly Count November 10 11 and 12 2020.png](#)

Dear Whatcom County Council and Homeless Strategies Workgroup:

I was just listening to the Whatcom County Council November 24, 2020 Special Committee of the Whole Meeting. I wanted to offer some information from the Lighthouse Mission Ministries Base Camp webpage that seems to contradict the remarks during the meeting that were made by Anne Deacon from the Whatcom County Health Department regarding the capacity of Base Camp at the time that campers began sleeping at Bellingham City Hall this November.

Responding to a question from Council Member Kathy Kershner during the meeting, Ms. Deacon had said, "It [Base Camp] has not been full recently. I don't have the numbers from the last couple nights, but when they started the encampment, there were over 20 beds available at Base Camp."

From my understanding, campers first stayed the night at City Hall on November 10, 2020. I will attach a screenshot to this email of the nightly capacity numbers that I took from the Base Camp webpage for the dates of November 10, 11, and 12, showing that Base camp was at 100%, 102%, and 103% respectively for those three nights. On November 8, and 9, Base Camp was at 92% and 96% capacity respectively for those dates. The first date after campers started showing up at City Hall, according to the nightly numbers posted on the Base Camp webpage, that there would have been about 20 beds free at Base Camp, would have been on November 15, 2020. I understand you all may be receiving reports with the nightly numbers from Base Camp. Should your information differ from what I have been able to obtain from the Lighthouse Mission Ministries website regarding the dates in question, I would appreciate you letting me know. Here is a link to the graph view of Base Camp's nightly numbers which I believe indicate the same numbers I have mentioned here: <https://www.thelighthousemission.org/stories-and-info/nightly-numbers-at-base-camp/>

Lately, as Ms. Deacon correctly alluded to, Base Camp has not been approaching capacity. However, besides the fact that Base Camp did publicly report that they were at or over capacity on the dates that the camp at Bellingham City Hall developed, also Council Members should be aware that many unsheltered community members cannot, or are not allowed to stay at Base Camp. People with PTSD, couples with

compromised physical or mental health who would be endangered if they are separated, people with certain kinds of pets, people who have suffered theft or physical mistreatment from other Lighthouse Mission clients, people suffering from addiction, people who are under 18, etc. in many cases cannot stay at the Lighthouse Mission. Also, the Lighthouse Mission has taken a recent position to not allow people who are staying at the 210 Lottie camp to stay at Base Camp because Lighthouse Mission representatives say they are concerned about those 210 camp members having COVID-19.

Additionally, although it is completely understandable that private shelters may have rules that exclude certain people from their shelters, as Base Camp does, those people still need to be provided a legal place to be protected enough from hostile weather so that they are not in peril of injury, illness, or death. To do otherwise would be inhumane, considered cruel and unusual punishment according to a 9th Circuit Court ruling (<https://cdn.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/opinions/2018/09/04/15-35845.pdf>), and would be a loss to our community's well-being in personal and financial ways.

Hopefully you have all been down to City Hall by now to see for yourselves what the status is of the people camped at City Hall and to learn more about these individuals and their needs. I am confident you will find that this is not a camp full of housed residents who are simply leading a protest. Many of the campers are those unsheltered people who are normally more concealed from view in wooded areas or along sidewalks behind industrial areas and who have vulnerable, at times during our pandemic, of being vacated from their campsites to search for another camp location.

Those individuals who have been helping service the campers at 210 Lottie and have been helping them manage their environment at the camp, are making appeals to all officials and social service providers to bring forth resources and education to aid in keeping the campers and the community safe. I know that numerous County Council Members provided volunteer winter sheltering services a couple years ago, and while the needed level of dedication may not be as high as then, since community members are already being allowed to help manage the camp, your presence, access to resources, and expertise would be valuable as frequently as you are able to offer them.

Finally, I call on you to facilitate the opening of as many tiny home villages as there is public land suitable for them. The mobile units the County is purchasing can go up quickly and you have numerous service providers willing to operate/manage them. Please get people expediently housed first, and then you can work on ensuring improved and additional services are provided to village residents.

Nightly Count:

For the night of 11/10/20:

- + 190 People stayed the night
- + 145 Men | 45 women
- + Percent full: 100%

For the night of 11/11/20:

- + 195 People stayed the night
- + 150 Men | 45 women
- + Percent full: 102%

For the night of 11/12/20:

- + 196 People stayed the night
- + 152 Men | 44 women
- + Percent full: 103%