

From: Kai
Subject: Homeless Strategy Workgroup Comment 12/18/20: Homes Now
Date: Friday, December 18, 2020 4:47:26 PM

Dear City and County officials, stakeholders of the HSWG,

These are the words I shared in the HSWG today:

My name is Kai and I'm a resident of Bellingham.

I've been volunteering at Camp 210 and have been in active discussions with some campers there and volunteers.

I appreciate the work of this group and the timely topic of pallet shelters.

Like the indicated subject, It makes sense to go ahead with pallet shelters as they are built in this case for emergency situations and can be set up before christmas.

I do think it's important to support local groups, and I think we can add additional shelter come this new year or when it is available.

However, I went to stress that the best time to implement these solutions was yesterday. It seems almost every day I've been getting messages alerting me to: flood watch, major rain, wind reports. It's hard not to empathize with the folks at the camp at City Hall and the houseless all over this community.

Tents are great and we need to support those camping but it is an extremely short term solution for the winter we approach.

I am urging you all to fast track shelters for these campers and the houseless of Bellingham, ideally 150 at the moment could house every single person at the Camp if they wanted. This is a conservative number. The real count of the houseless (750-1000 as you know) is not able to be sheltered in the facilities that we currently have.

There are identified locations to put these shelters like at clean green on Lakeway, there is identified funding, like the cares act, and there is a significant capability of Homes Now as well as the volunteers and especially the campers at Camp 210 to be in the leadership of future housing encampments.

Additionally I would like you to continue to study the buildings that are available that are not being used, like the buildings the lighthouse operated.

This is a public health emergency. The time to act is now. If you do, in a significant way, the

community will have your back, we promise you that.

Lets also get Swifthaven up and running as we can to house as many folks as we can. By doing so we say we have truly serve our neighbors. Winter is coming, and likely soon we will need even more than this as conditions worsen. All the reason to speed up these negotiations. Please do not forget the leadership and voices of the volunteers and especially the campers and continue to find ways to engage them who are doing a lot of your work, for free, without any expectations but to help and house each other.

Thank you,

Kai Rapaport,
Bellingham