



Memorandum

TO: SATPAL SIDHU, COUNTY EXECUTIVE

FROM: Anne Deacon, Human Services Manager

DATE: APRIL 21, 2021

RE: HOMELESS STRATEGIES WORKGROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

During the May 4, 2021, County Council Committee of the Whole, staff will present recommendations from the Homeless Strategies Workgroup (HSW), approved at their April 16, 2021 meeting.

Staff from the city of Bellingham and County Human Services, with guidance from the HSW, completed a needs assessment that included an inventory of current shelter options operated throughout the county and available to people who are experiencing homelessness. Quantitative and qualitative data on unmet needs and gaps was then collected and analyzed. This work included reviewing current trends, the recent Point-in-Time count data, and multiple interviews with stakeholders which included people with lived experience.

Upon completion of the inventory of services and the identification of needs and gaps, a set of recommendations was created. These recommendations were based upon the prior work noted as well as research of best or promising practices, with consideration of potential resources available.

Whatcom County Resolution 2017-055 established the Homeless Strategies Workgroup, and was amended in July 2019. Both resolutions resolved in part, "...The workgroup shall determine its own meeting schedule, but shall attempt to complete its work as expeditiously as possible." The COVID pandemic may have slowed the work of the HSW due to unexpected challenges, but the recommendations to County Council are now complete and ready for review. The HSW has met its obligations as set forth in resolution(s), and submits these recommendations for approval and subsequent action by the county.

In order to assure continued accountability of progress in these recommendations, the Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee (WCHAC) can assume that role as it aligns with their current role, and already provides that oversight. The WCHAC was established by an Interlocal Agreement between the county and all seven cities, and includes membership from homeless advocates, small cities, city of Bellingham, Tribal Nation, housing developers, and homeless housing providers. Regular reports on progress of the HSW recommendations will be provided to the County Council and upon request.

