

## Winter Into Spring Communications Strategy

### Goals:

1. Honor our existing system that supports most of those experiencing homelessness
2. Accept the flaws in this system (they are nationwide)
3. Focus on the efficacy of actually helping this population – rather than just shelter
4. Harness the increased attention and willingness to support this cause
5. Minimize further opportunities of protest to interact with police

### Audience:

1. Influencers
  - a. City and County Council
  - b. Executive administrations
  - c. City partners (HomesNow!, Road2Home)
  - d. Agency partners (Opportunity Council, Health Dept., LMM, GRACE)
  - e. Media
2. City and County employees as ambassadors
3. Public

### Key Messages:

1. We are a compassionate and caring community and we invest millions to fight homelessness every year.
2. Homelessness is a growing problem that deserves more attention and new ideas.
3. Our community's success at caring for those experiencing homelessness is evident by:
  - a. How well we protected this population from COVID by opening BHS then investing in Basecamp to provide COVID-safe shelter.
  - b. County-wide strategy this winter to ensure adequate winter shelter.
    - i. Basecamp remodel completed in <date> with capacity for 200
    - ii. 100+ volunteers trained and organized by Christ the King Church to operate Drop In Center (DIC) every day (not weather dependent) for additional 39.
    - iii. No need for additional winter shelters when both shelters running.
4. According to the agencies, the top challenge to serving the homeless population this winter was Camp 210.
  - a. Disconnected individuals from services, medication and caseworkers, setting many people back in their progress.

- b. Undermined legitimacy of county-wide strategy and the multiple agencies that serve this population every day.
  - c. Reduced the use of indoor, fully staffed and operated shelters so that DIC was underutilized.
  - d. Created “festival” atmosphere with no rules or boundaries, thus reversing progress of many clients towards overcoming personal struggles and obstacles.
  - e. Violated CDC guidelines for social distancing and avoiding groups.
  - f. Diverted donation stream from legitimate agencies serving the majority of the homeless population.
  - g. Focused all attention on those most hard to serve, at the expense of the majority.
  - h. Some of those supporting Camp 210 used homelessness as a method to demonstrate societal inequities and condemn allocation of funds (i.e. de-fund police).
  - i. Camp 210 did increase community awareness and support for the homeless, resulting in one spin off group focused on outreach and donation collection (SOS).
  - j. On January 28<sup>th</sup> following action to remove the encampment, Camp 210 relocated to lower Geri Field on Puget Street.
  - k. On February 2<sup>nd</sup> notice was posted that the encampment was illegal and order to vacate by February 5<sup>th</sup>. Severe weather forecast delayed action.
5. Severe Weather Warming Site at Depot Market Square
- a. City established warming site from February 9<sup>th</sup> – February 16<sup>th</sup>.
  - b. During this time, capacity existed at Basecamp and DIC for shelter.
  - c. Health Dept. recommends no government run emergency winter shelters in future.
6. Current situation:
- a. Geri Field continues to receive stream of donations from well-meaning public
  - b. Encampment organizers include both campers and volunteers
  - c. Reports of illegal activity in the area have increased
  - d. The site has been damaged extensively including breaking into restroom building, tampering with power supply, burning in multiple locations, and extensive refuse including feces and needles in the adjacent field.
  - e. Agencies are unable to enter the site to serve the campers due to safety and hostility.
  - f. Agencies may be willing to make themselves available at a nearby location but do not think outreach would be effective at this time.
  - g. Legitimate uses of the field by the public require it be cleared asap to allow time for restoration and ensure safety of resumed recreational use.

7. Operations plan:

- a. Developing options for consideration.