



Meeting Minutes

Ad Hoc Committee on Housing Affordability

City Hall
601 4th Avenue E
Olympia, WA 98501

Information: 360.753.8244

Wednesday, April 19, 2017

5:30 PM

Council Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hankins called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: 3 - Chair Julie Hankins, Committee member Jim Cooper and Committee member Jeannine Roe

OTHERS PRESENT

City of Olympia:

City Manager Steve Hall

Community Planning and Development (CP&D) Director Keith Stahley

CP&D Deputy Director Leonard Bauer

CP&D Housing Program Manager Anna Schlecht

CP&D Senior Planner Amy Buckler

Department of Commerce Consolidated Homeless Grant Manager Jeff Spring

Community Youth Services Deputy Director Derek Harris

Family Support Center Director Trish Gregory

SideWalk Executive Director Phil Owen

Interfaith Works Shelter Program Director Meg Martin

Home Fund Effort representative Mike McCormick

Housing Authority of Thurston County Executive Director Chris Lowell

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 4.A** [17-0432](#) Approval of April 3, 2017 Ad Hoc Committee on Housing Affordability Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved.

5. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- 5.A** [17-0407](#) Consideration of the Responses of Other Communities that Have

Engaged in Coordinated Efforts to Address Housing Affordability and Homelessness

Mr. Stahley gave a presentation on the efforts of Bellingham, Vancouver, Seattle and Everett to address housing affordability and homelessness.

In 2012 Bellingham voters approved a property tax levy of \$21 million over a 7-year period (2013-2019) to provide, produce and/or preserve affordable housing. Two-thirds of the funding must benefit households earning less than 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI). The goal for persons served over a 7-year period was 2,250. This goal has been more than doubled; Bellingham has served 4,777 individuals since 2013. Bellingham also approved a Rental Registration and Safety Inspection Program in March of 2015. This program ensures that all rental housing units comply with specific life and fire safety standards; providing a safe place for tenants to live. All rental properties must be registered with the City and require an inspection every 3-years. Bellingham has a monitoring fund to meet the ongoing commitment to affordable housing, required by the levy program. At the end of the 2015 action plan year, the City of Bellingham has collected \$377,147 to be used for future administrative expenses directed towards monitoring.

Vancouver voters approved a property tax levy of \$6 million a year, in 2016. This will generate \$42 million in total to establish an Affordable Housing Fund for households earning less than 50% of the Area Median Income. This levy costs tax payers 36 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value of property, equaling \$90 per year or \$7.50 per month, for a home valued at \$250,000. According to Home Fund a City of Olympia levy would look most similar to this model. Vancouver's plan is to use 67% of these funds to build and preserve affordable homes, 25% to stabilize families facing homelessness, 5% to provide safe shelter for the most vulnerable and 3% for implementation costs. Vancouver has also enacted ordinances designed to provide protection to vulnerable renters. These ordinances are: 45-day Notice of Rent Increase, 60-day Notice to Vacate and Source Income Protection. Vancouver also waives impact fees for low-income housing and has various multi-family tax exemptions.

Since 1981, Seattle has voted five times to produce and preserve affordable housing. Each levy has succeeded its goals. This year, instead of proposing a property tax levy, Seattle will be combining efforts with King County to run a ballot measure to raise the regional sales tax by 0.1 percent. This would bring in more than \$800 million between 2018 and 2027, to help battle homelessness.

The City of Everett developed the Everett Community Streets Initiative Task Force to help better understand street-level social issues and identify potential short- and long-term actions for the community to address those issues. This task force includes community members, business owners and service providers. Everett also has embedded social workers in their police force and has a response team, called CHART (Chronic-Utilizer Alternative Response Team), which is made up of criminal justice, emergency response and research partners that collaborate in an effort to

reduce the impact of chronic utilizers on those systems.

Discussion:

Mr. McCormick provided a proposed plan that could be enacted by an approved tax levy. He spoke with Ms. Lowell on the importance and immediate need of moving forward and meeting the deadline for putting a proposed levy on the ballot, due to increasing rents and lack of supply of affordable units. Mr. Stahley informed Councilmembers that staff plans to have a draft for a financial and administrative plan to them by the second meeting in May.

Committee member Cooper inquired about the City of Olympia's time period for notices to vacate. Currently, the City requires a 20-day notice to vacate.

Committee member Cooper stated interest in developing a monitoring fund.

Committee member Roe requested more information and data for Olympia's situation, similar to the data Everett's Task Force developed for that community. Mr. Stahley pointed out that the City of Olympia is in the process of gathering similar data. She would also like a regional vision and approach to be addressed.

The discussion was completed.

5.B [17-0385](#) Review the Downtown Strategy Recommendations regarding Homelessness and Affordable Housing

Ms. Buckler provided a review of the Downtown Strategy findings and recommendations regarding homelessness and affordable housing. An important take-away from the downtown strategy findings is that 41% of Olympia households make less than 80% of the median income.

The Downtown Strategy recommends the following actions for housing (H):

- H1. Develop a Comprehensive Housing Strategy to establish a mixed income residential community in downtown.
- H2. Dedicate additional resources for an ongoing housing program to implement the Housing Strategy described in H1.

The Downtown Strategy recommends the following elements for a Housing Strategy:

- Consider downtown housing in a citywide and regional context.
- Establish affordability goals.
- Identify implementation measures and funding.
- Create means to monitor progress and adapt to changing needs.

The Downtown Strategy recommends the following actions for homelessness (HS):

- HS1. Convene a broad range of community stakeholders to form an action plan leading to a more coordinated response to homelessness/street dependency and the impacts of downtown.
- HS2. Initiate a discussion with regional policymakers about future social service

siting, funding and support needs throughout the region.

The Downtown Strategy recognizes the following opportunities that may help improve the homelessness situation and assist the public process in including all solutions:

- Reinforce regional nature of homelessness in the urban hub
- Address triple bottom line
 - Human needs
 - Public resource needs
 - Neighborhood impacts
- Clarify downtown's role in providing social services within broader regional context.
- Plain talk the regional approach.

The Downtown Strategy identified 48 tools to help meet development objectives; the City and partners already use 27 of these tools. Some tools that would have a substantial benefit for low-income housing or homeless response, that are yet to be utilized, are:

- Inclusionary zoning
- Public development authority (RCW 35.21.730-31.35.755)
- Local housing levy
- Partner with non-profit
- HOME Investment Partnership Program (federal)
- Affordable housing reuse district
- Tax vacant land or donate it to non-profit developers

Discussion:

Committee member Cooper inquired about how the question of siting affects the polarity of discussion around these topics. It was decided siting is a topic that will be addressed in detail later in the process of the housing and homelessness discussion and action.

The discussion was completed.

5.C [17-0399](#) Overview of Thurston County Homeless Service Network's
Coordinated Entry System and the Vulnerability Index

Ms. Schlecht provided an overview of the Thurston County Homeless Service Network's coordinated entry system and the vulnerability index.

A coordinated entry system is a local process developed to ensure that all people experiencing a housing crisis have fair and equal access and are quickly identified, assessed, referred and connected to housing and assistance based on their strengths and needs.

The vulnerability index is a triage tool for identifying and prioritizing the street homeless population for housing according to the fragility of their health based on if they have/are/have had:

- More than three hospitalizations or emergency room visits in a year
- More than three emergency room visits in the previous three months
- Over 60 years of age
- Cirrhosis of the liver
- End-stage renal disease
- History of frostbite, immersion foot or hypothermia
- HIV+/AIDS
- Tri-morbidity (co-occurring psychiatric, substance abuse and chronic medical condition)

Mr. Spring gave an overview of Washington State's requirements for coordinated entry. The current state requirements are:

- In each county where there is a consolidated homeless grant; the county must develop a small set of processes and policies
- At a minimum, a community must identify a coordinated entry lead agency or governed body
- Each community must identify coordinated entry access points and partners, and advertise them widely
- Use a standardized assessment tool at each of the coordinated entry access sites that matches households with the most appropriate service interventions and also prioritizes families and households with the highest needs, although different populations can be assessed on different metrics
- There must be a procedure to describe how referrals will be made
- There must be a policy that ensures the assessment is uniform
- There must be a protocol for rejecting referrals

New themes to coordinated entry requirements, from Housing and Urban Development (HUD), with an implementation date of January 2018, are:

- Incorporating a person centered approach
- Incorporating cultural and linguistic competence
- Incorporating mainstream services (food assistance, mental health services, etc.)
- Geographic cover
- Lowering of barriers to coordinated entry access
- Incorporation of street outreach
- Participant autonomy
- Assessor training

Mr. Harris spoke to the evolving process of coordinated entry. This process is evaluated often and altered as needed. The team of coordinated entry providers in Thurston County discovered that many of the concepts they have had in place are recommended by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and HUD. This team has been working at addressing the needs in the community as well as adapting to the change on a regular basis.

Ms. Gregory spoke to the benefits of splitting coordinated entry into different groups: youth and transition-age youth, families with children, and single adults. This allows the team to address the specific needs of a particular group, and collaborate with each other to make sure each group is getting their needs met in the best way possible.

Mr. Owen gave an overview on coordinated entry. The purpose of coordinated entry is to:

- Reduce or eliminate “runaround”, people know who to call and where to go
- Prioritize people in greatest need of services
- Maximize system impact by appropriately matching services with individual needs
- Ensure universal data collection on demographics, needs, etc.

Coordinated entry is not:

- A one-stop shop
- Final in design
- Able to meet all of the shelter, rehousing and services needs that exist (new resources are needed to meet the need)

Steps in the coordinated entry process are:

- Eligibility screening
- Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data collection
- Diversion
- Vulnerability assessment
- Program matching and master list placement

Ms. Martin gave an overview of how the vulnerability index assessment works. Thurston County currently uses version 2.0 of the Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT). The vulnerability index is administered in a form of a survey that takes an average of seven minutes to complete. The questions help capture a homeless individual’s health and social status. It identifies the most vulnerable using a web-based data system that produces a report on the interview subjects that is summarized with a numeric “vulnerability” rating. The higher “score” a person has, the more vulnerable they are. There is not an automatic vulnerability index reevaluation process; however it is possible to fill out a change form and update an individual's vulnerability rating.

Discussion:

Committee member Roe asked Mr. Spring to describe areas the current system has been noncompliant in. Mr. Spring responded that noncompliance had to do with missing policies, procedures and processes.

Committee member Roe inquired about where the data gained from coordinated entry went to, and how the Council could obtain this detailed information. Mr. Owen verified the county program currently uses HMIS to collect and share this data; however

providers are not able to generate system reports in HMIS. Ms. Schlecht provided another option for gathering data, which is the Commerce Dashboard. A link to the dashboard can be provided to Council. Chair Hankins is interested in using this data to see what may have preceded issues of homelessness. Mr. Owen stated the coordinated entry group would be able to provide more information and data regarding prevention. Mr. Stahley agreed with Committee member Roe and Chair Hankins; to move forward, measurable data will need to be obtained in order to provide clear objectives and performance measures.

Committee member Roe asked what county is the model for coordinated entry. Mr. Spring replied Kitsap County is similar to Thurston County in this regard and has been quite successful with coordinated entry since it became a requirement for grant recipients in January, 2015.

Committee member Roe inquired about the specific new resources needed in order to meet the need of all shelter, rehousing and services that exist. Mr. Owens responded that the HOME fund would help secure the resources: permanent support housing. These funds would not be used to assist coordinated entry, only housing. The Committee members are concerned that funding one and not the other would cause issues in the process as a whole. Mr. Owens explained this request of funds would address the largest gap in the process at this time.

Committee member Roe asked how people connect to coordinated entry after going to the day shelter. Ms. Martin responded that about three months ago Interfaith Works implemented a revamped intake process. The day shelter is now able to gather the minimum required questions for HMIS data collection, make a clear referral to get them into coordinated entry, and provide them with tools to get there (bus maps, etc.). Weekly meetings of the coordinated entry team allow them to address any issues that may arise with individuals who are having difficulties getting to coordinated entry.

The information was received.

6. REPORTS AND UPDATES

Mr. Stahley provided information for the next Ad Hoc Committee on Housing Affordability meeting. The next meeting will be held on May 1, 2017. Some of the topics that will be discussed at the next meeting are:

- Developing a public outreach plan
- Survey instrument draft
- Thurston County's triage and mobile triage facilities
- City efforts and needs around public safety and housing

Staff hopes to provide a draft for a financial and administrative plan that would support a declaration of emergency at the meeting taking place on May 17, 2017.

Committee member Cooper inquired about changing the current notice to vacate and rent increase notice policies immediately. Mr. Stahley stated it is possible to administer an emergency ordinance to change these timelines. In this instance, a

public hearing would be held after the emergency ordinances were put into effect. The City would have 6 months after administering an emergency ordinance to evaluate whether or not to make the ordinance permanent.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 p.m.