

City Council Meeting

March 29, 2017

Councilmembers Present:

Mayor Pro Tem Jones
Councilmember Hankins
Councilmember Gillman
Councilmember Roe
Councilmember Bateman

Meeting: Olympia Housing Forum sponsored by the Home Fund.

The Agenda for the evening featured presentations from Greg Winter Executive Director for Opportunity for Bellingham, Washington, Alishia Topper Councilmember Vancouver, Washington, Andy Silver Executive Director Council for Homeless Vancouver and Phil Owen, Chair of the Home Fund.

Mr. Winter reviewed the projects that Bellingham has been able to accomplish since the approval of its housing levy in 2012. He noted that they have constructed 417 units out of the 614 that they have committed to build. There levy rate was .36/\$1,000 of assessed valuation and they anticipated generating approximately \$21,000,000 in revenues and that they have leverage the funds collected to date at a 7:1 ratio.

He stressed the importance of including supportive services in the levy and maintaining flexibility going forward.

Ms. Topper noted that Vancouver's process started with the creation of an Affordable Housing Task Force and was the result of a developer systematically evicting residents from a project without cause and with little prior notice.

She said that the City Council took early action on three issues to help to establish a more equitable rental environment. These actions were:

1. 60 day notice for no cause eviction,
2. 45 day notice for a rent increase of more than 10% and
3. no discrimination in source of income.

She said that Vancouver was facing an affordable housing crisis and that prompted their City Council to declare a state of emergency as provided in RCW 84.52.102.

Mr. Silver noted that the campaign kicked off two days after City Council placed the measure on the ballot. He said that key elements included the partnerships that were formed including those with non-profits and health care institutions. They created a brand (Bring Vancouver Home), held a forum once per week and knocked on 15,500 doors. They raised \$110,000 to support this effort. The measure passed in 2016 by 57.64%.

Mr. Owen spoke about the current vacancy rate being under 3% and that 499 highly vulnerable people are waiting for housing. He explained how the vulnerability index is being used to help to triage resources by placing the most vulnerable at the top of the list.

Question and Answer:

Bellingham's process started in January of 2012 and it passed in November of that same year. Vancouver started their process in May of 2015 and saw it pass in November of 2016.

There were a number of questions regarding how the tax increase would impact cost burdened households.