

King County Community Meeting

White Center Temporary Overnight Shelter

TAF Bethaday Community Learning Space

September 15, 2016

Welcome

6:40-6:45

Michael Ramos Executive Director of the Church Council of Greater Seattle as the mediator welcomed guest to discuss the proposed shelter he presented the opportunity for interpreters in Spanish, and Vietnamese. He let parents know there was supervised childcare available on the 1st floor. He informed the community that there would be time available for questions after the short presentation, he asked those that had not signed up to please do so. He informed the attendees of the proposed discussion regarding the overnight shelter, the opportunity to learn about the shelter and the issues concerning the shelter. Michael stated that there are over 10,000 homeless people in King County. The most recent One-Night count of those without shelter is 4,505. Approximately a year ago the County Executive and the Mayor of Seattle both declared a state of emergency due the increasing homeless population. Michael Ramos is part of All-Home Coordinating Board. Their goal is to make homelessness rare and eliminate the trauma and give housing options. This shelter can be a place of hope and healing for the homeless of this community. Michael introduced the proposed agenda. A public comment was made that the schedule did not provide enough time. Michael let the community know that the meeting could be extended longer if needed. The ground rules established that everyone has important things to say, King County was there because they wanted to hear the communities voice. He asked the community if they could agree to basic ground rules of civil conversation to seek the understanding of the shelter by being respectful to each other with different viewpoints, take opportunity to listen to each other and pay attention to the person speaking. He stated the intention for the evening was to answering as many questions as possible and addressing concerns. If needed follow up will take place by King County and the Salvation Army. Michael emphasized "In the end we all care about the community". The community members agreed to the ground rules and wanted the time to express themselves in a respectful way.

Background and Needed Shelter Operations

6:45-6:55

Michael Ramos introduced Mark Ellerbrook the manager of housing and community development for King County. Mark thanked the community for their attendance and asked that during the question and comment section for the community to present recommendations to be taken into consideration to fold into the shelter operation. The overnight shelter will open at the former public health location at 8th and 108th. Mark stated that, outside Seattle, Southwest King County has the largest number of homeless, with over 300 homeless individuals. White Center accounts for over 100 of those homeless individuals in Southwest King County. The homeless impact effects green spaces, door fronts, streets and parking lots in White Center. Last year the 211 phone line recorded over 1300 calls from the White Center area for housing assistance. Currently there are no shelters near White Center. The closest

shelter houses 9 beds for women in West Seattle at Our Lady of Guadalupe. King County has looked at all the various factors and determined the necessity for a shelter in White Center. The former public health clinic has been closed for years. This provides an opportunity to bring individuals for services. Historically, shelters have operated as an emergency basis, a place to sleep and leave the next morning an in/out model that lacks an opportunity to connect homeless individuals to services. At this time King County is moving toward an enhanced shelter model by providing a regional shelter with extended hours offering meals and case management to address the underlying issues of homelessness. The object is to provide a system that stabilizes an individual and helps them out of the homeless situation. King County provides regional shelter opportunities, this overnight shelter will operate from 5pm to 8am.

Mark Ellerbrook introduced Officer Major Smith from the Salvation Army and Scott Morehouse. Major Smith briefly spoke of his extensive involvement with human services, shelters, transitional housing, detox and substance use disorders for over 20 years. He is the director of social service for Seattle. The flagship programs have become their shelter operation. Within the last 18 months the program has gone from 50 seasonal shelter beds to 230 beds in 3 different Seattle locations. They have had positive turnout with some that have found housing. Scott Morehouse currently manages The Salvation Army shelter facilities. Scott is a White Center community member and has children that attend schools in the area. He briefly described how this will be a low barrier shelter providing a safe place for those that need assistance and reminded the audience that he was available for questions after the presentation.

Future Use

6:55-7:02

Michael Ramos introduced Steve Daschle Executive Director of Southwest Youth and Family Services. They provide behavioral health, education, family support and youth development services. Steve gave an overview of their work with other partners to support Communities of Opportunity. The idea is to focus resources on communities of great need. Creating equity, community development and improved health outcomes. Currently they have 4 staff members at the building doing case management. They also help students that have exited high school at TAF classrooms. They have a vision to help everyone with a variety of services including the food bank. They would like to work with Capitol Hill housing to build several units of affordable housing on the property in the future. They would like to have all the resources within 4 years to start the construction phase. The process will be announced in the future to the public.

Comments & Questions

7:02-8:00

Michael Ramos informed the audience that the question/comment period would follow the order that individuals signed up. Upon being called the individuals would be given a microphone, comments and questions were limited to 2 minutes.

Bobby Beeman began the session. He is the owner of Sky's Barber Shop in the main business center and the President of The Chamber of Commerce. **He asked why business owners were not made aware of this proposal prior to last Friday when this event invitation was sent. Bobby asked why this information had not been presented to the Chamber of Commerce during their mixer.** He stated that

he has never met any of the presenters. He is very frustrated with the manner of how this was communicated. **Bobby asked if anyone has spoken to the homeless population to inquire what they needed.** He stated the homeless population would not go to the shelter because he has spoken directly to them and most like their living situations. He also spoke of the regional shelter and feels that individuals from different parts of King County will come this way and create displacement.

Mark Ellerbrook did agree that this will be a regional center and they are going to provide outreach. He spoke of the fact that outreach does build relationships with those that need services, not the 1st time but it could take time to connect with those in need.

Bobby asked, why the county represented the White Center business district as supporting the shelter without coming into the business center and speaking with the business owners.

Mark stated that there were a variety of different meetings, he was not given an opportunity to finish due to interruptions by several community members. Mark informed the community there was outreach to the residents within 500 feet of the shelter. Mark offered an apology for overlooking outreach to the community business center.

Joseph Benavides has lived in White Center for 50 years adjacent to the food bank. He feels the designated shelter is located in the most dangerous, congested uncontrolled intersection in White Center. He made comment that those using the Shelter will not be fingerprinted and could be violent offenders, felons and child molesters. A major intersection for Cascade, Evergreen, Mount View and White Center Heights schools, he is concerned that children will be going to school as the shelter closes for the day. He stated that the planning began in November of 2015 without traffic study and no upgraded plumbing for showers. He proposed a human barrier in front of the shelter to keep it from opening and suggested to the audience that they email King County Executive opposing the shelter location. Joseph believes most of the current homeless cash their paychecks every day and then go pan handle for more money. Joseph did not ask any questions.

Guss and Marion Papas spoke that their family has been in the community for over a century. On a daily basis homeless people throw garbage in their yard. A homeless individual started a fire on their property. They are tired of all the drugs due to the homeless problem they proposed sending the homeless population to Bellevue or Kirkland. Marion Papas asked, **how many more police officers will there be? After 8:00am those individuals will not be leaving the area, where would they go, just hang out?**

Mark told them they will not have more officers. The point of the shelter is to offer help to get the homeless connected to services. The homeless individuals have been part of the community for a long time, it's time to address the substance use issues and mental health issues.

Hilary Coleman she works for the Seattle King County Coalition on Homelessness. She has helped open several shelters in the greater King County area. She wanted to call attention to the fact that homeless people sitting outside, needing shelters. This shelter will open 70 beds and offer meals and give stability. The coalition wants people living outside to have a safe place and an opportunity to maintain jobs. She wants everyone to acknowledge humanity. Equating drugs and alcohol to only homeless people is not accurate it happens inside private homes as well. She wanted to recognize the individuals that have lost jobs and really need somewhere safe to stay inside. Hilary did not ask any questions.

Alison Eisinger was called but not present.

Elaine Quinn is a resident at Arrowhead Gardens. She thanked the food bank which visits 4 times a week. She is interested in the homeless situation. She has 2 encampments next door and she feels comfortable with the encampments because sheriff/police visit frequently. They have never had a problem. The encampment has a fence labeled "no drugs" and is kept up aesthetically. She attended a reading on Monday night at a Library called Original Voices, Homeless and Former Homeless Women's Writings. The writings are based on Mary's Place, the model that this shelter is modeled after. Mary's Place is a shelter that provides services to get people back on their feet. She feels that we should not lump all people as drug addicts. She read a small section from the book. Elaine did not ask any questions.

Susan Nguyen spoke as a mother of 2 children and a voice for others that could not attend. She lives close to TAF and has lived in White Center for many years. She feels there are many crimes and feels this is unexpected. She suggested the boarded up school for a shelter that is farther away from schools and mass amounts of children. **Was that location looked at for a shelter?**

Mark Ellerbrook replied that the current site is a vacant owned county property. It has room for couples and singles, with open space for services and case management. This will be for interim use in a county facility.

Amy Bovencamp is a building owner in White Center her husband is a business owner. She commented that she cleans her parking lot every day, scrubbing her building from urine, she cleans up needles and garbage. She is concerned there are no limits to how many nights individuals can stay at the shelter. She feels it a recipe for enabling, she feels there is no incentive. She would like to see homeless participate to improving for the community, a give and take. **What are they going to change?**

Mark replied that experience shows if you give barriers to shelter people they will not come in to the shelter. By providing a low barrier shelter they will attract a larger population. The object is to engage those people in case management and eventually house individuals.

Scott Morehouse stated that their housing outcomes increase by 7% for the downtown homeless population they found stabilized housing by adding part time case management. Major Smith emphasized that some individuals do respond with a desire to stabilize. They want success but it will not eliminate all problems, intervention of this type leads to a decrease of homelessness and provides an opportunity to make change. The Salvation Army has a location in White Center and they can build a relationship with the shelter.

Mark spoke of the housing outcomes some people need longer term housing services, some need a place where they need rapid rehousing. Case management helps determine housing needs for the individuals.

Tanya Powers does support well thought out homeless services. She is worried about security around the parks, she doesn't feel public safety is strong enough to support this shelter location. She doesn't think faith based models work, she feels Recovery Café is a better alternative. Tanya did not ask any questions.

Major Smith stated they were a faith based organization which is different than implementing faith based programs. They do not discriminate, they provide services without using faith based programs.

Susan McAliley stopped by Camp Second Chance on Meyers Way and asked them what they thought the solution would be. She said they told her some folks are just homeless due to financial housing difficulties. She feels many are homeless because they cannot get past the drug testing. Methadone is being imposed and those chemicals are addictive. According to her research Methadone can cost over \$6,000, she found an herbal based product for \$89.00 it's a onetime use called Withdrawal Ease, she suggested the county could look at drug fee withdrawal treatment. Susan did not ask any questions.

Bill Tracy feels communication is terrible, he feels that regardless of protest the county will establish the shelter. **What exactly can the community expect in 6 weeks?** He would like to complain to Joe McDermott.

Mark Ellerbrook stated they are currently going through the building permit process for a change of building use that is currently underway. They are upgrading the fire panel and facility to be managed as a shelter. Notes are being taken to create a recommendation to talk about the service plan to take back to the roads department. DCHS was not aware of the road intersection issue. He told the individuals that they will see the progress on the website

Norma Addis has been in the human service area for many years. She has been part of One Night count, she has been involved with the King County Housing Authority representing White Center community. One of her biggest concerns is centralized entry. **If and who will work with non-profits to access services other than Salvation Army? How else is the county going to help with MIDD?**

Mark replied that the MIDD is up for renewal at this time and a vital service with specific issues for opiate addiction that is going to council right now. The other agency in this community is Sound Mental Health. They currently offer outreach and have success connecting with homeless individuals that need services and then moving them to housing. One of the key interventions is rapid rehousing getting folks into housing, for less cost. National data show that housing stability is key. There will also be coordinated entry which is being worked on as a centralized assessment and referral to housing. At the shelter they will receive assessment and they will be connected to housing.

Owen Salee is excited to have this opportunity in the community. He believes the need is already here because of having over 300 homeless individuals in South King County. He feels some are stuck without housing due to difficult situations. He would like everyone to look past "I wish I would have known". He would rather have homeless in a designated place because either way they will be homeless in the community. Owen did not ask any questions.

Harry McCartney never had a problem until recently when, he had someone break in to his home after Victory Outreach started. He believes this shelter will not benefit the people that are trying to get ahead. He feels that this is not a family accommodation and will most likely encourage felons and drug users. He believes the individuals will not be locals and it's not the right solution, very unfair to force this on the White Center Community. Harry did not ask any questions.

Unidentified audience member **why are children not allowed and why is the focus on singles/couples?**

Mark replied that single and couples show the greatest need in this area and have the fewest resources.

[Sheryl Cornelius](#) felt the general consensus is not opposed to the idea of an overnight shelter but the fact that they are not part of the conversation. She feels the community would want to be part of the solution but should have been involved sooner. With the shelter opening on November 1st, there is no consideration for other solutions. She believes 60% of the homeless population is abusing substances and/or mentally ill, not taking medications as needed. She would like to help that population but doesn't feel they have been part of the conversation. She is concerned about the overall homeless population not being screened. **She asked if the county spoke to Mountain View, Cascade, Evergreen or White Center High parents. Are these people sex offenders walking among kids going to school, how would anyone know?**

Mark Ellerbrook stated they did outreach to the principals. Last week Anne Reese was contacted. The specific intention of this meeting is to notify the community of what will take place.

Several audience members express that no one from the school district informed them. One parent contacted security for Highline School District. They were not aware of the shelter. They expressed concern for children safety.

[Gwen Woodruff](#) **Can the panel speak of long term funding for the program?**

Mark informed the audience that the funding is for this year and into 2017. Then they will look at the budget process looking at funding from state funding, consolidated housing dollars and local dollars.

[Dean Peloquin](#) has lived in White center since 2003, he would like to see a better way, and he also feels this was handled poorly. He feels the homeless people are already part of the community and wanted to hear from The Salvation Army. **There are probably other success stories, what other success stories from different locations does the Salvation Army have with this type of homeless shelter?**

Major Smith replied that he would like to say 50% are not homeless the next day, realistically that does not happen. They are committed to intervention and helping those that no one else wants to help through the difficult journey. He acknowledged that this has not been well informed.

[Unidentified audience member](#) **Will it be fulltime occupied with social workers?**

Mark Ellerbrook stated there will be at least 2 people anytime the shelter is occupied and 3 during the hours of activity. The shelter will have case managers available during the operation time. There will be phone numbers available to address community concerns.

[John Wells](#) lives on 10th he has a problem with homeless encampments. He had to put up another fence to keep the homeless out of his property. He feels the police have been a problem between Seattle, SeaTac, Burien and Sheriffs. He feels they do not respond now and this will make it worse. The issue he has is the location, not the fact that there needs to be a shelter. His wife spoke of calling the police nightly because of the bad public behavior by the encampment individuals. She would like a shelter away from kids. It irresponsible to place the shelter in the central location for children. She feels it's unacceptable to inform the community 6 weeks prior to the shelter opening. John did not ask any questions

Pat Price has lived in White Center for over 30 years. She belongs to several different community organizations, none had heard of the shelter intentions. This could have been put out on local social media. She stated the King County Sheriff's officers are more productive at Myers Way than King County Police Department. She would like more coverage because it will be needed. **Does King County use its own equity impact tool? Did King County commission a fair housing analysis of North Highline? What about opportunity mapping and analysis?** In 2011 an opportunity analysis was commissioned by the White Center Community Development Association, data could be shared and utilized. It was distressing then, 5 years ago. Alternative sites are not possible in 6 weeks, this does not show alternative opportunities.

Mark replied that the notice stated the community could suggest alternative sites at this meeting. One alternative site considered was DSHS property in the basement but it has been fully leased out by SeaMar.

Christina Moi has been a resident since the early 80's. She feels there should be a shelter but not in residential area. She would like to talk again because homelessness in White Center is real and the community is suffering. She feels November is too soon and the community doesn't need a shelter in residential area. Christina did not ask any questions.

Dian Messner suggested that unused school locations could be used. **Why they were not contacted sooner?** She feels it's unsafe not to do criminal history background checks. She spoke of the church encampment and the members that were well behaved because they were monitored.

Mark Ellerbrook let the crowd know they could look at the unused schools. Mark asked the audience if the path to school coinciding with the shelter exit time would be better if adjusted to a later exit time. The audience strongly opposed any shelter near the schools, regardless of exit time. The audience strongly opposed the location.

Mark stated that the point of the shelter is to provide outreach services to address the problems that are already taking place. To the people that are already part of the community.

Carrie Cinderich spoke of crime and homeless issues in the White Center area for decades. She asked, **why the rush, why can't this wait longer?**

Mark stated that it is due to the worst weather period approaching. Historically November is the time when emergency shelters are open throughout the county and they are wanting a safe warm place for individuals to come in out of the poor weather.

Barbara Dobkin a board member of the North Highline Unincorporated Area Council spoke regarding the 300 low income units going into Top Hat and the plans for 80 low income housing units that will go up after the interim shelter unit. She feels the community is becoming poorer by design, the schools are suffering. She referred to a comment by Steve Daschle where he mentioned that people are being pushed out of Seattle and coming here. **Why pick White Center instead of others?** She feels there is an intentional concentration of creating poverty in White Center. This is an issue of social equity.

Mark acknowledged the lack of affordable housing and low income housing. However, the shelter is for the people in the community now. Homelessness is disproportional minority and people of color, most are under-represented populations that need an opportunity for housing.

[Anthony Paiva](#) just moved to Seola Gardens he is concerned about policing and security. **Why is Seattle's problem becoming their problem? What plans are in order for police and what can residents expect?**

Mark stated there is not a planned increase for officers. Currently officers are dealing with the homeless people that are already here. By bringing homeless people into a single place they can address their core issue with services. Mark restated that there will be presence at the facility and contact number at all times. There is an idea to have people at the shelter even during times that it's closed to answer questions.

[Timothy Wellender](#) is very frustrated at 7% success ratio, he feels that is a 93% failure rate by the downtown shelters. He polled neighbors and asked if they had been informed, most were not aware of the shelter. He believes the shelter will be the same as the casino that came to White Center. Timothy did not ask any questions.

[Caroline Ship](#) was homeless with a baby for 6 months. She followed parameters that were safe. She would like King County to take extra measures for the children. She feels the children in the community are already at a disadvantage. Caroline did not ask any questions.

[Ingrid Stone](#) wanted to know how temporary this shelter will be. **She wanted to know if the people from the Jungle will be there. Will these people be living safely? What happens with overflow people?** She is concerned that some homeless individuals will be carrying weapons and dangerous items.

Mark Ellerbrook replied the temporary shelter is scheduled for 3 years, while planning for longer term takes place. Related to barriers/screening, the focused outreach will target the people that already live here, not the Jungle. This will help bring them in and connect them to services. The 7% figure is not good enough. That is the reason for the enhanced model. This will be different than past Salvation Army practice and different than the downtown shelters. The downtown shelter is an emergency shelter from 8pm- 6am, which does not allow for sufficient time to provide outreach services. Based on national data, it will make a dramatic difference in connect people from shelter to housing.

Have you already told the homeless people that this will open?

Mark Ellerbrook said no, it has not been distributed through the homeless network.

[Patrick O'Neill](#) asked if this is was 100% sure? He pointed out the school proximity of Cascade School being 1000 feet away. **Would the county consider screening or possibly consider a women's shelter instead?**

Mark Ellerbrook said yes this will open. As far as looking at screening, one thing that is known county wide is that homeless people are screened out of homeless resources. By not screening out, more people can access the services needed. Other shelters county wide operate the same low barrier model.

[Betsy Wheelok](#) wanted to know why the shelter is not open to families.

Mark stated the families don't comingle with singles and couples well. The acute need is for couples and singles there are facilities for families already.

Betsy did not feel Mark understood the question and rephrased it.

Mark replied that with this being a low barrier shelter there are a variety of reasons for not having all the populations coming together, safety would be one of them. Due to disruption by the audience Mark was not able to finish his answer.

Sue Miller was called but not present.

Interruption by unidentified woman.

Unidentified audience member Why is it okay not to have families mixed with singles but it's okay to have them next to schools, if it's not safe under the single roof?

Throughout the county there are shelter in residential communities near schools and not near schools. Mark stated these folks will be receiving the case management services they need, the individuals will be indoors receiving the services they will need. One of the ways to increase eyes on the street in that location is by working with the Salvation Army and (Mark was interrupted and not allowed to finish his statement)

Unidentified audience member what is the legal distance sex offenders can be around children?

Mark Ellerbrook stated it was 880 feet.

Christy Tubbs also felt the communication was poor. She likes being able to run through the park without worries and does not want the shelter within 300 feet of the park. She would like to work on a shelter but not this location. Christy did not have any questions.

Lamont Nelson was not in attendance at the time, according to Joseph Benavides. His neighbor Lamont instructed him to speak on his behalf. Joseph spoke of getting a Go Fund Me page and wants to hire a lawyer to stop this action with an injunction. Joseph coaches youth sports and feels kids will suffer.

Mark Rufkus spent 3 years on the White Center Chamber of Commerce. He has a background with seeking homeless solutions. At times he and his family would assist homeless people to Victory Park. He would like everyone to do their part to help those in White Center, because of the vast amount of homeless individuals that need assistance. Mark did not have any questions.

Lois Schipper worked at public health in White Center. She feels the homeless are everywhere and they need to find a solution. Lois did not have any questions.

Mark Ellerbrook thanked everyone for their comments. He spoke of working together as a community and would like to have a follow up meeting. He suggested a second meeting to discuss the shelter modification opportunities.

The audience was willing if the permit process stops right away. They would like a new location. The audience requested the second meeting be announced to the whole community and look at alternative options. King County will follow up with emails for those that provided email.

Jaden Landren is a student that recently relocated Cascade school. She fears what the parents are speaking about and her safety.

Sili Savusa from the Community Development Association wanted everyone to realize that this is a strong neighborhood with passion raised today. What she feels is ironic is that it's not about homeless people. She feels the community would like to help the homeless. She feels White Center is a community of opportunity and it's because people speak to power. She would like the community be part of the conversation. She doesn't want other communities to go through the same and being marginalized without them being part of a decision without being there. She would like a citizens committee and some individuals that are homeless to work with King County. She would like the county to put a hold on this until there is more opportunity to look at this on the behalf of the homeless that still need services, the community and businesses. She would like to show what White Center can do because their role is to take care of people. Sili wants to make sure White Center stays strong, she feels there is a path to move forward with those that have the power to do something to help the community.

Mark liked the suggestion and would like to have a committee to work collectively as a community. Follow up meeting will be announced.

Meeting Adjourned

9:05pm