



**COMMISSION
AGENDA MEMORANDUM**

Item No. 3b

BRIEFING ITEM

Date of Meeting August 8, 2017

DATE: July 31, 2017

TO: The Port Commission and Interim Executive Director Dave Soike

FROM: Veronica M. Valdez, Commission Specialist
Lindsay Pasternak Wolpa, Regional Government Relations Manager

SUBJECT: Addressing the homelessness crisis in King County

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to a request by Commissioners during the July 25, 2017 public meeting, the City of Seattle, King County and its regional partner All Home will provide a briefing on the regional strategy to address homelessness in Seattle and the region. All Home is a regional coalition hosted by the King County Department of Community and Human Service and designated as the local homeless housing task force according to Washington state law. Port legal staff will be available to answer questions on the Port's authorities with respect to supporting the region's efforts to address homelessness.

Members of Seattle Housing and Resource Effort (SHARE)/Women's Housing, Equality and Enhancement League (WHEEL), Neighborhood Alliance Coalition, and other stakeholders have been invited to attend to provide comments during testimony period.

BACKGROUND

On Tuesday, July 25, 2017 Commission Meeting, Commissioners requested a briefing from the City of Seattle and King County on their strategy to address the homelessness crisis in King County. During that meeting, several homelessness advocates and members of the homeless community raised the issue of Tent City 5 homeless encampment that is reaching its two-year time limit in its current location in Seattle's Interbay neighborhood.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- (1) To understand the state of homelessness in the region and the coordinated strategy of the City of Seattle and King County to address the issues of emergency needs of the current homeless population and affordable housing in our communities;
- (2) To learn the most effective ways in which the Port of Seattle can be helpful in working with our regional partners to address the immediate needs of the homeless population; and
- (3) To understand the parameters of the Port's legal authorities and other challenges related to land use on industrial-zoned properties.

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ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

City of Seattle and King County Regional Effort

In April 2017, King County Executive Dow Constantine and Seattle Mayor Ed Murray announced a new regional effort to help people experiencing homelessness receive services and access to a permanent home. Along with city leaders, service providers and All Home, Mayor Murray and Executive Constantine convened a joint task force to assess needs and resources, and propose a strategy that will get people living unsheltered into permanent homes, keep people in their homes and out of homelessness, and coordinate responses to root causes such as behavioral and mental health and substance use disorders. The scope of the effort reflects the reality that homelessness is a regional crisis, and presents an opportunity for a robust, coordinated response.

The effort would be funded by a 0.1 percent sales tax increase that would go to King County voters in 2018. Seattle, King County and other jurisdictions have been working together closely to address this regional crisis, creating a more coordinated system that focuses on the individual needs of people living outside and that uses a data-driven approach to ensure programs are accomplishing the goal of getting more people into permanent housing.

This region-wide, \$68 million per year funding package would replace the previously-proposed, Seattle-only property tax levy.

King County and Seattle have delivered positive results with existing efforts:

- (1) Seattle launched the Navigation Team, a team of outreach workers and specially trained police officers who connect with people living unsheltered and offer services and alternative shelter. Early results are promising – nearly 60 percent of people engaged by the Navigation Team have accepted services compared to less than 5 percent previously. This includes 85 people who left unsafe unauthorized encampments to stay in shelter, at authorized encampments, in a motel or have reconnected with family;
- (2) Between King County and Seattle, the City's Navigation Center and five additional 24/7 new enhanced emergency shelters are in process, with two in Seattle, one in Bellevue, one in Kirkland and one in Kenmore. One recently opened for families in White Center;
- (3) King County, Seattle, and United Way have agreed to use common performance metrics in contracting for homelessness services, with a primary focus on exits to permanent housing. United Way and King County have both completed their first request for proposal using these agreed upon metrics. Seattle will do so later this year;
- (4) Seattle has led the implementation of the "By Name List" practice in partnership with King County and service providers to address the housing needs of 200 people residing for in shelter for extremely long periods of time. After five weeks of effort, 14 individuals have moved out of shelter and into permanent housing, freeing up shelter

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- beds that will serve 70 people over the next year. The By Name List efforts for Veterans, Families with Children and Youth/Young Adults are also under way;
- (5) King County has brought 46 new inpatient mental health treatment beds online since August 2016 and will bring another 46 on line;
 - (6) King County, All Home and the City of Seattle have reduced barriers that impeded access to housing programs. Prior to these efforts, there were 105 distinct screening criteria that precluded many from accessing the programs that were supposed to help. Now, there are only five core criteria and none related to eviction history.

Tent City 5 Interbay

Tent City 5 was the first of three City of Seattle sanctioned encampments that opened in 2015. It is located at 3234 17th Avenue West, between W Dravus and W Bertona, in the Interbay neighborhood of Seattle. It has remained in that location for two years (allotted 2-year limit). It has 65-70 members including families with children. The City of Seattle provides about two-thirds of the funding for this particular authorized encampment, specifically through funds allocated to the Seattle Low Income Housing Initiative, and passed through to SHARE.

In the past two years, many organizations and individuals have come forward to augment the City of Seattle's efforts to provide some safety and stability for this community of people. Ace Hardware, Kasper's, Starbucks, other companies, and dozens of volunteers continue to provide assistance and supply items requested by the community.

Residents of Tent City 5 form an Executive Committee that is responsible for site security, resident identification and donations management. The five members are chosen for a short-term (typically no more than 30 days). They enforce SHARE's Code of Conduct, which prohibits alcohol and drugs coming into Tent City or bringing in weapons, fighting, abuse of any kind, littering or disturbing neighbors. The residents also make rules and determine the direction of things in the camp at their regular Tuesday meetings.

The City-imposed deadline for Tent City 5 to move from its two-year home in the Interbay neighborhood is this November. This stemmed from the 2015 legislation by which Mayor Ed Murray and the Seattle City Council created Seattle's first three city-sponsored encampments, in the Ballard, Rainier Valley, and Interbay neighborhoods. There have been permitted homeless encampments in Seattle for decades, but until two years ago they were all hosted by churches or similar groups, not authorities. The legislation allows the camps to stay for a year with a possible second-year extension.

With the upcoming November deadline in their sites, local Neighborhood Action Council have requested the Port of Seattle and Seattle City Council to find a new location nearby, in order to preserve the relationships and human capital that Tent City 5 residents have developed in the area.

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Port Legal Authorities

The Port’s authority to lease its property is quite broad. Under RCW 53.08.080, the Port may lease its real and personal property “for such purposes and upon such terms as the Port Commission deems proper.” This authority still requires that Port leases comply with zoning and other land use requirements.

ATTACHMENTS TO THIS BRIEFING

- (1) Guest Panel Presentation slides;
- (2) Photos of Tent City 5;

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS

February 14, 2017 – The Commission was briefed on regional efforts to address homelessness and winter shelter needs. Presenters included Alison Eisinger, Director of the Coalition on Homelessness; Scott Moorhouse, Off-Site Shelter Programs Director, Salvation Army; and Mark Ellerbrook, Manager, King County Regional Housing & Community Development.