



Burlington Chamber of Commerce and City of Burlington

Homeless Discussion notes for September 17

City Staff: Mayor Steve Sexton, Chief of Police Mike Luvera

Chamber Staff: President/CEO, Peter Browning, and Director of Operations, Steph Vervaart

We need to be a part of the solution, not a problem. Moving homeless from town to town will not solve the situation.

We need to be a resource:

Friendship house - www.skagitfriendshiphouse.org

Family Promise – www.familypromiseskagit.weebly.com

Community Action - www.communityactionskagit.org

Community Action has a resource list that can be printed out and given to people in need.

Next door site – www.nextdoor.com

Neighborhood watch for neighborhoods

Skagit County non-emergency line: 360-428-3211

Department of Corrections - ww.doc.wa.gov

Lisa Lee – 360-488-4801 or James Furchert – 360-488-4806

Homelessness comes in many varieties and reasons. Not all homeless are drug-addicted individuals.

Subsidies addictions, mentally ill, elderly, migration workers, or lack of funds just as easily as losing a job – 30% of the population could be homeless if they were not to receive one paycheck.

The homeless also struggle with the lack of literacy and competency to read and agree to contracts.

Housing costs are part of the problem. When will we see a break in the increase in rents? Burlington hasn't received building permits for multi-housing homes in over ten years. Burlington is short in the housing market for the residents in Skagit county.

We need subsidizing housing in Burlington. We will have 75 studio units at \$800.00 a month available in Burlington. This housing is needed, but it isn't helpful for the lower-income, or the elderly that may only have \$700 fixed income to live off. A shared living for the elderly program is a possibility.

Can we set up a shelter, what about caseworkers for the homeless like it did in the '60s where they aren't lost and forgot? Can we set up housing that won't require a dry campus? Is there low barrier housing in Skagit County? Mayor talked about using the old jail for the homeless to get them off the street.

Motel Vouchers for the homeless should still work. It just pushes the motel people to go back into the room and re-evaluate the safety of the room and guests.



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MV council just passed a law for safe parking only in church parking lots maximum of 5 cars or 12 people. Must provide garbage, clean water, and restrooms for the individuals. Nothing is funded by tax dollars just regulated by the city.

Burlington Blvd has been a C1 zone for mixed business/residential needs. The city has not had interest from contractors to build this until recently. This housing crisis has been talked about for 20 years to bring up the housing numbers in city limits, but until 2019 we have not had any movement.

The police have a shortage in officers as does the whole Police field. The city is up against \$20,000 signing bonuses that is something that the small city of Burlington cannot afford. They have only a few officers on at one time within city limits until they are fully staffed again.

Resources for officers after hours is very small. They cannot spend their time driving around trying to find a place to put a homeless person for the night. They have one point of contact for the mentally ill or drug-addicted individuals.

9th circuit court passed a law allowing camping on any public area if we do NOT have somewhere else that they can go. Currently, in the Burlington area, we do not have a shelter or system set up, and therefore we cannot ask them to leave the area. The only thing that can cause the homeless to have to leave public property is if they are interrupting education. So that also goes for panhandling. If they are not impeding on educational activities and that is what they claim as their home area the police cannot ask them to leave.