



City of Bellingham
210 Lottie Street
Bellingham, WA 98225

MEMORANDUM

TO: SAFE HAVEN DECISION EXHIBIT
FROM: POLICE CHIEF DAVID DOLL
SUBJECT: RESPONSES TO EMAILS FROM WHAT-COMM STAFF REGARDING SAFE HAVEN
DATE: MARCH 13, 2019

In reviewing the "Objection to Safe Haven" email sent from What-Comm employee Kaitlen Damstedt on March 4, 2019, the following information should be considered:

- 1. Regarding subjects who are refused entry lingering around the Dispatch Center.** The experience of Winter Haven, next to City Hall, has not resulted in people lingering around the site. People are pre-selected to reside at the encampment, which means intake is not done on site. Visitors of guests are limited in time for visitation and must stay with the guest for the duration of the visit. We have had "on-lookers" taking pictures outside the fence line and briefly watching activity, but we have not experienced persons just lingering in the area.
- 2. Regarding lack of training for security residents.** BPD has provided, and will continue to provide, upon request, de-escalation training to guests and volunteers. Our requirement that a "board member" be on site 24/7 means that there will always be oversight on site and assistance for security issues if needed.
- 3. Regarding What-Comm parking lot security and the gate.** Public Works will be repairing the motorized gate so that it functions properly. A fence line will separate the What-Comm parking lot and encampment location. No Safe Haven guests or volunteers will be allowed within the confines of the What-Comm parking lot.
- 4. Regarding nighttime security.** Currently, nighttime activity at Winter Haven has not experienced issues. A guest is designated as security and does a walk-around the encampment every two hours as an extra patrol.
- 5. Regarding location (residential, parks, schools).** Winter Haven is currently near the same elements of concern and we have found an actual decrease in incidents of trespassing, encampments and other social-maintenance problems due to the ownership Winter Haven guests have taken in the ensuring security/safety for the surrounding area.
- 6. Regarding Winter Haven personnel taking photos of What-Comm vehicles and posting them on Facebook.** We have asked Homes Now! to cease taking of such photos and to remove them from any website.

7. **Regarding the statement that Winter Haven has not been without incident.** To date, there have been eight documented contacts surrounding Winter Haven:
- a. 19B-00250. This is an overall report used to track any issues surrounding Winter Haven.
 - b. 19B-02240. Winter Haven is named by an Officer who had contacted transients in the City Center, suggesting they should apply to be in the program.
 - c. 19B-02958. Jim Peterson, Winter Haven Coordinator and on-duty Board Member, called at 0534 to report two subjects were outside the fence line threatening to fight residents. The threatening people were gone prior to police arrival.
 - d. 19B-05052. Jim Peterson, Winter Haven Coordinator and on-duty Board Member, called to report that a former resident, who had been removed due to not following rules, had returned and was threatening to fight. The former resident was cited for trespassing.
 - e. 19B-05697. Former resident, who was removed due to rule violations, was on the street yelling at the encampment. The former resident was given his belongings and left the area.
 - f. 19B-07509. A fight occurred at 805 Lakeway involving a Winter Haven resident. The Winter Haven resident was more of a victim of an assault but did not want to press charges.
 - g. 19B-07605. A person was seen sleeping on a bench nearby, but outside the Winter Haven encampment. The individual was provided outreach.
 - h. 19B-12496. A report was generated regarding allegations of improper conduct at Winter Haven from a former volunteer. The information was hearsay and attempts are being made to identify the potential witness for further inquiry.

Questions:

1. **Where will their personal vehicles go?** There will be some parking in the southern entrance area of the encampment.
2. **Emergency vehicle use of What-Comm parking lot?** There should be ample room for emergency vehicles and service vehicles in the What-Comm parking lot.
3. **Background checks of guests?** All guests must log in and provide identification, and that login is available to any law enforcement officer upon request. Only guests will be checked for warrants and local contacts.
4. **Is this going to cycle each year?** No. The encampment will not return to this site.
5. **Why do I have to be afraid?** This is difficult to answer. The experience of staff at City Hall, who are in close proximity Winter Haven, has shown that the organizers and guests have abided by the rules and enforce the rules for conduct.
6. **Benefit from moving them from downtown?** The City's policy is to disperse encampments throughout the community on land it owns or controls so that one area does not include a disproportionate number of facilities. Per the temporary shelter regulations, temporary tent encampments cannot be located in any one location for more than 90 continuous days (with one 90-day extension). The Winter Haven permit, which ends on April 2, was issued for 90 days. The City believes the What-Comm site is appropriate for this use (see below).
7. **Employee exclusion into decision.** Siting a temporary encampment for the unsheltered is extremely difficult due to the general preconception that those who are homeless are more

inclined to exhibit adverse behaviors and/or participate in illegal activities – even with strict regulation and supervision. This bias effectively prevents the successful use of a broad public process to determine a site. In response to this, the best practice is to objectively assess potential sites against adopted criteria and then make a preliminary selection. It is at this point that both neighbors and site users are provided information and are consulted on potential issues.

In the case of the What-Comm site for the Homes Now! temporary tent encampment, a team of department heads from the Police, Fire, Parks, Public Works and Planning and Community Development Departments first identified a number of City-owned or controlled sites that could potentially accommodate the use. Each site was then individually evaluated to determine whether the proposed use could be fully accommodated. While it was found that several sites could accommodate the use, further research indicated that most of the sites had seasonal limitations (i.e. they were not available at the time that the Winter Haven encampment terminated). The What-Comm site was the best site that was available immediately.

The City then held three informational meetings with employees who work at the What-Comm site. Concerns were identified and responded to at each meeting. Additionally, Planning and Community Development staff have responded to the public's concerns and questions in the notice of decision. Although not required by the BMC, a neighborhood meeting was held and attended by over 70 residents, business owners, property owners and other interested citizens. At that meeting, information was provided and questions were answered by both Homes Now! and the City. After careful consideration of concerns raised by both employees and site neighbors, a final decision on use of the site was made by the Mayor.

8. **Marijuana use.** Those who possess medical marijuana cards will be allowed to use medical marijuana in the designated smoking tent only.

In reviewing the "Proposed HomesNow! Camp at 620 Alabama St" email sent from What-Comm employee Carol Orr on March 4, 2019, the following information should be considered:

1. **What-Comm is a secure, gated facility. It is not open to the public.** What-Comm will remain secure and a fence will separate the encampment from the What-Comm facilities.
2. **What has changed to lessen the need to provide a secure environment for emergency services employees?** Nothing has changed. This is the encampment will be separated from the What-Comm operations and Safe Haven guests, visitors, and volunteers will not be allowed in the secure area.
3. **Will those visiting and servicing the encampment be checked for warrants?** Visitors will be required to provide their full name and date of birth on the daily log and may be checked for warrants.
4. **The proposal states the residents will be monitored. What of their guests, the social service providers, site supervisors, those who maintain the portable toilets? Are they being monitored? By whom?** A board member will be on site at all times for overall supervision.

5. **Has anyone actually measured the site? From the map it does not appear there is sufficient space for this.** Yes. Staff from the City's Planning and Community Development Department verified that the map is to scale and the measurements are accurate.

6. **Employees starting their shifts at 2 pm will find nowhere to park in the parking lot and end up parking on the street. When their shift ends at 10 pm or 2 am, these (lone female) employees will be walking the streets to their cars. This is surely a safety concern.** There should be ample parking at the What-Comm in the secure area for all employees, especially since Fire will not be doing training at the facility.