



Whatcom County

COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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Agenda Bill Master Report

File Number: AB2019-138

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File Created:	02/12/2019	Entered by:	DBrown@co.whatcom.wa.us		
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First Assigned to:	Council				
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TITLE FOR AGENDA ITEM:

Resolution requesting that the County Executive provide staff resources and funding to coordinate with Whatcom County cities, social services agencies, and other providers to provide sufficient shelter capacity during cold weather periods and coordinate issuing hotel/motel accommodation vouchers

SUMMARY STATEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE LANGUAGE:

Resolution requesting that the County Executive provide staff resources and funding to coordinate with Whatcom County cities, social services agencies, and other providers to provide sufficient shelter capacity during cold weather periods and coordinate issuing hotel/motel accommodation vouchers

HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE FILE

Date:	Acting Body:	Action:	Sent To:
02/12/2019	Council	APPROVED AS AMENDED	

Attachments: Housing Voucher Resolution, SECOND AGENDA REVISION NOTICE FOR 2-12-2019

Final Action: 02/12/2019
Enactment Date: 02/12/2019
Enactment #: RES 2019-011

RESOLUTION NO. 2019-011

REQUESTING THAT THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE PROVIDE STAFF RESOURCES AND FUNDING TO COORDINATE WITH WHATCOM COUNTY CITIES, SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCIES, AND OTHER PROVIDERS, TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT SHELTER CAPACITY DURING COLD WEATHER PERIODS, AND COORDINATE ISSUING HOTEL/MOTEL ACCOMMODATION VOUCHERS

WHEREAS, regardless of the time of day, or day of week, individuals and families in need of cold weather shelter may not have the resources, time, or ability to contact agencies that provide shelter in times of cold weather; and

WHEREAS, winter storms don't limit their operating hours from Monday-Friday, 9am to 5pm; and

WHEREAS, weather conditions will make life extremely hazardous for those living without permanent housing; and

WHEREAS, children are much more physically and emotionally fragile than adults and should never be left on the streets at night (winter or summer) and providing motel vouchers or shelter opportunities to homeless families as needed helps protect our communities most vulnerable citizens; and

WHEREAS, families in need of cold weather shelter have explained that there is nowhere to obtain housing vouchers after 5pm on weekdays, during the weekends, and holidays; and

WHEREAS, the cost to the community of having the unsheltered fall sick and subsequently require admission to the emergency room (often their sole source of medical care) is much greater than the cost of preventing the unsheltered becoming sick in the first place; and

WHEREAS, there are very limited options for families to find cold weather shelter that does not require men and women/children to go to separate facilities; and

WHEREAS, organizations like the Lighthouse Mission, Opportunity Council, DVSAS, Brigid Collins, and NW Youth Services have been exemplary at issuing accommodation vouchers for people; and

WHEREAS, these same organizations often know which individuals should NOT be housed in the same place as a vulnerable family because they could pose a threat to the health and safety of a vulnerable parent or child; and

WHEREAS, in times of cold weather, these same organizations lack the capacity, resources, and operational schedules to respond to the need to shelter people in times of cold weather emergencies; and

WHEREAS, local governments themselves, and non-profit organizations in addition to those listed above, when coordinated with local governments, might provide additional capacity to provide cold weather shelter and accommodation vouchers; and

WHEREAS, the Whatcom County Executive has recognized the critical importance of this issue, has recognized that some County funds can be available to assist in addressing the crisis of cold weather shelter, and has been coordinating efforts on the matter with the City of Bellingham; and,

1 **WHEREAS**, the City of Bellingham is the permitting authority within its jurisdiction,
2 and has worked diligently coordinating with multiple non-profit organizations to address the
3 crisis of cold weather shelter; and,
4

5 **WHEREAS**, among local governments, the Whatcom County Council acts as the
6 Whatcom County Health Board to enact local rules and regulations as are necessary to
7 preserve, promote, and improve public health and make recommendations to the Whatcom
8 County Executive on matters affecting public health in our community; and
9

10 **WHEREAS**, the crisis of lack of access to cold weather shelter is a clear, enduring,
11 and recurring threat to public health.
12

13 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council
14 respectfully requests the County Executive work with the Health Department, the City of
15 Bellingham, the small cities, and relevant non-profits to improve efforts at coordinating
16 responses to cold weather shelter crises.
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18 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Council respectfully requests the County
19 Executive coordinate improving communication between local governments and relevant
20 non-profits regarding access and capacity to cold weather shelter.
21

22 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that such responses include, but are not limited to,
23 planning for and providing some County funding, in coordination and cooperation with other
24 local governments and relevant non-profits, for potential access to County facilities as an
25 emergency resource for shelter in times of cold weather.
26

27 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Council respectfully requests the County
28 Executive expand the existing hotel/motel voucher program currently in effect by the
29 County.
30

31 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Council respectfully requests the County
32 Executive to include the Civic Center Garden Room or another appropriate location
33 downtown in the severe weather shelter inventory, ideally to be staffed by volunteers or as
34 contracted by the County as needed.
35

36 **BE FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Health Department assume a
37 lead role in coordinating these efforts.
38

39 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Council respectfully requests the County
40 Executive contract with social services agencies that can either maintain an open office or
41 provide on call services to be able to issue the communities supply of emergency housing
42 vouchers to families throughout periods of cold weather.
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44 **ADOPTED** this 12th day of February, 2019.

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46
47 ATTEST:

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50 Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

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52
53 WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
54 WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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57 Rud Browne, Council Chair

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59 APPROVED AS TO FORM

60
61 Civil Deputy Prosecutor