



Memorandum

TO: SATPAL SIDHU, COUNTY EXECUTIVE

FROM: Ann Beck, Community Health & Human Services Manager

DATE: 11/20/24

RE: SEVERE WEATHER SHELTER UPDATE

Background:

This summer Whatcom County Health and Community Services (WCHCS) began planning for the 2024-25 winter shelter season. In September 2024, the Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee shared winter shelter recommendations at County Council's request via a memo listing those recommendations. The committee recommended that the County's severe weather shelter open if overnight temperatures are expected to be at or below 32 degrees for four or more hours. This is a less extreme temperature threshold from previous years, and WCHCS staff expect to operate the shelter for more than the 20 nights opened last season. The increase in expected openings, securing a facility able to possibly accommodate more individuals as needed and a recent increase in homeless encampments being closed, staff are expecting more nightly guests and more openings of the severe weather shelter. This has meant an attempt to increase the staff able to work during the shifts when an opening happens.

It is estimated based on predicted precipitation and temperatures during this winter season, that the County will need to open the severe weather shelter 35-50 nights between November 15th and March 30th. The Housing Program Staff would like to update Council on the progress of the severe weather shelter planning and operation now that a site has been secured and temporary staff are being hired. This update will include the number of added temporary staff, the additional numbers the shelter can support and the current budget expectations to support the shelter.

No action will be needed by Council during this meeting, this will be an informational session as the winter season is just beginning.

Please call Ann Beck at 360-778-6055 if there are any questions. Thank you.