

**RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**SUPPORTING THE EXPANSION OF YEAR-ROUND SHELTER CAPACITY IN WHATCOM COUNTY**

**WHEREAS**, there are many factors leading to housing instability and the most frequent hardship is lack of affordable and available housing; and

**WHEREAS**, Local Plans to End Homelessness are required by Washington State legislation for counties receiving state funding at a minimum of once every five years, with briefer updates annually; and

**WHEREAS**, Whatcom County Health and Community Services (WCHCS) submitted the [2019 Strategic Plan to End Homelessness](#) in Whatcom County with the input of community stakeholders including those with lived experiences; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2019 Strategic Plan was created in alignment with Federal and Washington State plans to prevent and end homelessness; and

**WHEREAS**, the Strategic Plan outlined seven key strategies:

1. A Centralized Point of Entry
2. Rapid Re-Housing
3. Permanent Supportive Housing
4. Increase the Supply of Affordable Housing
5. Homelessness Prevention and Diversion
6. Interim Housing
7. Economic Security; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2017 the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development released new requirements for "a centralized or coordinated assessment system" ([CPD-17-01](#)); and

**WHEREAS**, according to the 2019 Strategic Plan, Whatcom County has two main entry points where the homeless community can register to receive services: Whatcom Homeless Service Center (WHSC), a department of the Opportunity Council, and Northwest Youth Services; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2019 Strategic Plan additionally recognizes intakes are also completed by the Homeless Outreach Team specialists at the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services (DVSAS) safe shelters with Lydia Place staff, at Opportunity Council's East Whatcom Regional Resource Center, and at the Lake Whatcom Residential and Treatment Center; and

**WHEREAS**, coordinated entry processes are intended to help increase the efficiency of local crisis response systems and improve fairness and ease of access to resources; and

**WHEREAS**, anecdotally, many homeless individuals have had challenges navigating Whatcom County's current coordinated entry system and receiving housing and services in a comprehensive and timely manner; and

52  
53 **WHEREAS**, an independent evaluation is needed to better understand and improve  
54 Whatcom County's coordinated entry system and explore increasing capacity and collaboration to  
55 better meet the needs of the homeless community; and  
56

57 **WHEREAS**, the Homeless Strategies Workgroup (HSW) was established by [Resolution](#)  
58 [2017-055](#), and re-convened as per [Resolution 2019-034](#), to identify opportunities for shelters to  
59 meet the needs of Whatcom County's homeless community; and  
60

61 **WHEREAS**, on May 4, 2021, the HSW presented to the Whatcom County Council a needs  
62 assessment that included a shelter inventory, identified needs and gaps, recommendations, and an  
63 accomplishments list (see [AB2021-268](#)); and  
64

65 **WHEREAS**, overarching goals from the HSW recommendations are to:

- 66 1. clarify the extent of local government support,
- 67 2. prioritize most vulnerable populations,
- 68 3. consider strategies and actions appropriate for local governments to support,
- 69 4. build upon current resources where possible, and
- 70 5. invest in long-term permanent solutions over temporary crisis solutions when resources  
71 are inadequate to do both; and  
72

73 **WHEREAS**, on May 4, 2021, the Whatcom County Council approved [Resolution 2021-018](#)  
74 concluding the work of the HSW and transferring responsibilities to the Whatcom County Housing  
75 Advisory Committee; and  
76

77 **WHEREAS**, the [Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness \(WCCEH\)](#) is a consortium  
78 of public and private agencies and non-profits that collaborate to create a system of housing and  
79 services, with the ultimate goal of moving homeless families and individuals to permanent housing  
80 and self-sufficiency; and  
81

82 **WHEREAS**, the WCCEH's [2023 Annual Report](#) provides a deeper understanding of Whatcom  
83 County residents experiencing homelessness with information from the annual Point-in-Time (PIT)  
84 survey and public-school students and their families; and  
85

86 **WHEREAS**, the PIT count is a voluntary survey of people experiencing homelessness on a  
87 single day each year that does not fully represent the true extent of homelessness in Whatcom  
88 County; and  
89

90 **WHEREAS**, the 2023 PIT survey, conducted January 26, 2023, counted 1,059 individuals  
91 from 850 different households experiencing homelessness in Whatcom County; and  
92

93 **WHEREAS**, according to the PIT count, between 2022 and 2023, there was a 27% increase  
94 in persons experiencing homelessness and a 33% increase in households experiencing  
95 homelessness; and  
96

97 **WHEREAS**, according to the PIT count, the numbers of both homeless individuals and  
98 households counted in 2023 are the highest reported since counting began in 2008; and  
99

100 **WHEREAS**, according to the PIT count, of the 1,059 persons counted in the 2023 PIT  
101 survey, 711 slept in shelters or transitional housing facilities and 348 were unsheltered; and  
102

103       **WHEREAS**, between the 2022 and 2023 PIT counts, there was a 9% increase in sheltered  
104 individuals counted and an 8% increase in the number of sheltered households; and  
105

106       **WHEREAS**, between the 2022 and 2023 PIT counts, there was a 91% increase in  
107 unsheltered individuals counted and a 110% increase of unsheltered households; and  
108

109       **WHEREAS**, the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report also states that people sleeping in interim  
110 housing facilities (transitional housing or emergency shelters) have better access to opportunities  
111 that can lead to long-term health improvement and housing stability when compared to households  
112 that are unsheltered; and  
113

114       **WHEREAS**, the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report identifies resources in shelters including  
115 hygiene facilities, healthy food and clean drinking water, connections to medical care, and often a  
116 place to safely store belongings; and  
117

118       **WHEREAS**, as noted in WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report, outreach professionals concur that  
119 the likely reason for the increase in unsheltered individuals is that homelessness is increasing, and  
120 available shelters are near or at capacity, or do not offer the services in a way that will meet the  
121 individuals' needs; and  
122

123       **WHEREAS**, the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report suggests that homelessness  
124 disproportionately affects Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC); and  
125

126       **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report and the 2021 U.S. Census,  
127 people identifying as Hispanic or Latino accounted for 10% of Whatcom County's population and  
128 14% of respondents in the 2023 PIT count; people identifying as Black, African American, or  
129 African accounted for 1% of Whatcom County's population and 4% of respondents in the 2023 PIT  
130 count; and people identifying as Native American or Alaska Native accounted for 3% of Whatcom  
131 County's population and 10% of respondents in the 2023 PIT count; and  
132

133       **WHEREAS**, few surveys were conducted across Lummi Nation, and surveys were not  
134 conducted on site with the Nooksack Tribe in 2023, which suggests an undercount of Native  
135 Americans experiencing homelessness; and  
136

137       **WHEREAS**, previous WCCEH annual reports note that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender,  
138 and queer (LGBTQ+) homeless youth make up a disproportionate number of the overall homeless  
139 youth population across Whatcom County and the nation; and  
140

141       **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report, of the 836 respondents  
142 surveyed for disability, 558 or 67% reported having one or more disabilities, including mental  
143 illness (49%), chronic substance use (34%), chronic illness (33%), permanent physical (28%), and  
144 developmental (13%); and  
145

146       **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH's 2022 and 2023 annual reports, veteran  
147 homelessness increased from 46 homeless veteran households in 2022 to 60 homeless veteran  
148 households in 2023; and  
149

150       **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report, children under 10 years old  
151 accounted for 8% of all identified homeless individuals, and another 7% of individuals were  
152 between 10 and 17 years old;  
153

154 **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report, 159 homeless children under  
155 the age of 18 were counted, making up 15% of the total individuals or around 1 in 7 of the  
156 respondents; and

157  
158 **WHEREAS**, in 2004, the U.S. Department of Education began requiring states to report  
159 data on homeless students in local school districts as part of their Consolidated State Performance  
160 Report; and

161  
162 **WHEREAS**, in contrast to the PIT count, these reports include cumulative data over the  
163 course of a school year and count students that are homeless as well as students living with  
164 another family to avoid homelessness and households residing in a hotel or motel that is paid with  
165 private funding; and

166  
167 **WHEREAS**, in the 2021-2022 school year, 1,223 students, or 4.3% of the total student  
168 population, experienced homelessness in Whatcom County; and

169  
170 **WHEREAS**, 56% of students experiencing homelessness in Whatcom County are students  
171 of color; and

172  
173 **WHEREAS**, 65% of students experiencing homelessness were doubled-up with another  
174 family, 11% stayed in hotels or motels, 14% slept in shelters, and 9% were unsheltered; and

175  
176 **WHEREAS**, students who are housed in Whatcom County have over double proficiency  
177 rates in English Language Arts and Mathematics and a 30% greater graduation rate than students  
178 that are unhoused; and

179  
180 **WHEREAS**, student homelessness exists across Whatcom County school districts, and in the  
181 2021-2022 school year:

- 182 • Bellingham School District reported 523 homeless students (4.3% of student population)
- 183 • Lynden School District reported 88 homeless students (2.5% of student population)
- 184 • Mount Baker School District reported 126 homeless students (6.9% of student population)
- 185 • Nooksack Valley School District reported 240 homeless students (12.4% of student
- 186 population)
- 187 • Blaine School District reported 46 homeless students (2% of student population)
- 188 • Ferndale School District reported 151 homeless students (3.2% of student population)
- 189 • Meridian School District reported 49 homeless students (2.7% of student population); and

190  
191 **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report, 7% of homeless individuals  
192 were aged 18-24 (74 young adults) and 15% of homeless individuals were under the age of 18  
193 (159 youth) in 2023; and

194  
195 **WHEREAS**, Northwest Youth Services served 1,205 youth in Whatcom and Skagit counties  
196 in 2023 in an effort to help young people learn and practice the tools that will help them get and  
197 stay out of the cycle of homelessness; and

198  
199 **WHEREAS**, Point Source Youth (PSY), a national nonprofit organization committed to youth  
200 interventions to end the youth homelessness crisis, deploys solutions including rapid re-housing,  
201 host homes, direct cast transfers, and family and kinship strengthening programs, all of which are  
202 grounded in youth choice, independence, supportive wrap-around services, and the housing-first  
203 principle; and  
204

205       **WHEREAS**, in February 2022, A Way Home Washington and Washington State Department  
206 of Commerce, with the help of many contributors that included young people with lived  
207 experiences, released ["Yes to Yes" Washington State: Unaccompanied Youth and Young Adult](#)  
208 [Homelessness Landscape Scan](#); and  
209

210       **WHEREAS**, the "Yes to Yes" report found that there has been increased action on  
211 preventing youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness including flexible fund diversion programs in  
212 ten counties, a statewide prevention strategy created by young people with lived experience, the  
213 Office of Homeless Youth, and partners, and investments in preventing exits from public systems of  
214 care into homelessness; and  
215

216       **WHEREAS**, the "Yes to Yes" report also identified gaps that still exist including  
217 disproportionality of homeless youth that are BIPOC, LGBTQ+, or disabled, lack of resources for  
218 pregnant/parenting individuals and individuals struggling with mental health and substance use,  
219 lack of access to basic needs including transportation, food, and YYA-specific shelter and housing,  
220 and insufficient government funding, equity strategies, and real-time data; and  
221

222       **WHEREAS**, based on the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report, of the 850 households experiencing  
223 homelessness counted, 752 (88%) were unaccompanied (single) persons, 87 (10%) were families  
224 with children, and 11 (1%) were family households without children; and  
225

226       **WHEREAS**, the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report states it is probable that the 87 households  
227 with children represents a significant undercount because Housing Pool data indicates many eligible  
228 families were waiting for services in January, though they were unreachable when surveys were  
229 conducted; and  
230

231       **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report, 6% of single parent households,  
232 13% of two parent households, 36% of adult-only households, and 42% of unaccompanied persons  
233 remain unsheltered; and  
234

235       **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report, 164 seniors over the age of 60  
236 were surveyed in the 2023 PIT, representing 15% of total respondents; and  
237

238       **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report, since 2019 senior homelessness  
239 measured in the PIT counts has increased by 141% and the percentage of seniors among those  
240 surveyed increased by 50%; and  
241

242       **WHEREAS**, as noted in the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report, individuals experiencing  
243 homelessness over the age of 50 are more frequently experiencing health complications normally  
244 found in populations over the age of 70 due to the difficult conditions they endure while unhoused;  
245 and  
246

247       **WHEREAS**, the 2024 PIT count was completed on January 26, 2024, and results are  
248 expected to be released in summer 2024 in WCCEH's 2024 Annual Report; and  
249

250       **WHEREAS**, in 2023, the Big Lift was drafted by a coalition of concerned community  
251 leaders advocating for cooperation between the community and local governments to assess and  
252 address the homelessness crisis through a holistic sheltering, services, and transitional housing  
253 program leveraged heavily on the value of tiny home villages and promotion of supportive  
254 legislation; and  
255

256 **WHEREAS**, over the last few years, the Whatcom County Council has passed multiple  
257 ordinances and resolutions supporting policies that aim to improve housing availability and  
258 affordability, reduce risk of homelessness, and provide services to those most in need; and  
259

260 **WHEREAS**, on May 22, 2018, The Whatcom County Council adopted [Ordinance 2018-030](#)  
261 establishing the Whatcom County Business and Commerce Advisory Committee to advise the  
262 County Council and Executive on critical issues impacting the business community; and  
263

264 **WHEREAS**, studies show that in order to end homelessness, individuals need to be  
265 connected to services such as employment and trade skills; and  
266

267 **WHEREAS**, the business and labor community can play a pivotal role in assisting  
268 unhoused individuals by offering employment, training, and apprenticeships; and  
269

270 **WHEREAS**, in November 2022, Proposition 5, the Healthy Children's Fund, was approved  
271 by voters in Whatcom County and established a dedicated property tax for 10 years as outlined in  
272 [Ordinance 2022-045](#); and  
273

274 **WHEREAS**, on March 21, 2023, the Whatcom County Council passed [Resolution 2023-007](#)  
275 approving the Healthy Children's Fund Implementation Plan, which outlines goals and strategies  
276 to increase early childhood well-being with one focus area being preventing and reducing the  
277 trauma of homelessness; and  
278

279 **WHEREAS**, the Healthy Children's Fund is a critical local funding source for supporting  
280 children and families at risk of or experiencing homelessness and providing more safe housing  
281 options; and  
282

283 **WHEREAS**, investing in shelter and housing for families with children can help prevent  
284 adverse childhood experiences and end generational homelessness; and  
285

286 **WHEREAS**, on July 11, 2023, the Whatcom County Council approved [Ordinance 2023-039](#)  
287 providing for submission of a proposition to the qualified electors of Whatcom County pursuant to  
288 RCW 82.14.450 authorizing the collection of a local sales and use tax of two-tenths of one percent  
289 for the purpose of providing funds for costs associated with public health, safety and justice  
290 facilities and services, including behavioral health, supportive housing, public safety, and criminal  
291 justice facilities and programs; and  
292

293 **WHEREAS**, Ordinance 2023-039 adopted the Justice Project Needs Assessment  
294 Implementation Plan, which identifies five strategies and 15 projects for transforming the criminal  
295 legal and behavioral health systems in Whatcom County and ensuring the provision of adequate  
296 facilities, staffing, resources, and services at all points of contact between the community and  
297 these systems; and  
298

299 **WHEREAS**, the Justice Project Needs Assessment Implementation Plan acknowledged a  
300 lack of adequate housing for people with behavioral health issues as a problem in Whatcom  
301 County; and  
302

303 **WHEREAS**, Project 12 in the Justice Project Needs Assessment Implementation Plan is to  
304 maintain and expand supportive housing programs for people with behavioral health issues and a  
305 history of incarceration, as clinical support and intensive case management services have been  
306 shown to increase housing stability, reduce involvement with the criminal legal system, and  
307 decrease use of emergency medical services; and  
308

**WHEREAS**, among the identified key next steps is to provide capital and operating funding for small recovery/supportive housing and shelters; and

**WHEREAS**, on August 8, 2023, the Whatcom County Council approved [Resolution 2023-020](#) declaring affordable housing and homelessness a public health crisis; and

**WHEREAS**, Resolution 2023-020 also requests that the Executive and county staff from all relevant departments take a more holistic, system-wide approach to addressing homelessness and housing affordability and availability at all income levels, and bring forward ideas for how the County can take more proactive, effective, and decisive action; and

**WHEREAS**, Resolution 2023-020 also requests that Whatcom County increase its coordination, collaboration, and advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels to prioritize addressing the housing affordability and homelessness crisis; and

**WHEREAS**, Resolution 2023-020 also requests that the Housing Advisory Committee of Whatcom County and/or county staff provide a progress report to Council before the end of 2023 on the status of the HSW recommendations; and

**WHEREAS**, Whatcom County is currently undergoing an update to its Comprehensive Plan due by December 2025; and

**WHEREAS**, on August 9, 2022, the Whatcom County Council approved [Resolution 2022-036](#) establishing priorities for Whatcom County's 2025 Comprehensive Plan update; and

**WHEREAS**, one of the priorities outlined in the Resolution is to collaboratively work toward economic security and affordable housing without sacrificing environmental health and public safety; and

**WHEREAS**, in alignment with changes to the Growth Management Act (GMA) instituted by House Bill 1220, Resolution 2022-036 requests that the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update include a goal that everyone, at every income level, has access to affordable housing, as defined by a household spending 30% or less of its income on housing costs; and

**WHEREAS**, possible implementation strategies and actions that could help accomplish the housing priorities listed in this resolution include, but are not limited to:

- Specific goals and policies to ensure housing development meets current and future housing, equity, climate, and economic needs;
- Ensure adequate housing and services for seniors and people with disabilities - services to include housing support, assistance with daily living, transportation, recreation, accessing healthcare, and assistance at a person-centered level;
- Provide a full range of affordable housing types ranging from multifamily apartments, condos, and duplexes to detached single family homes, ADU's, and tiny homes; and

**WHEREAS**, 2025 Comprehensive Plan should include more specific consideration of recommendations addressing homelessness and shelter capacity and related zoning and land use policies and regulations; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Bellingham estimates that less than 30% of Whatcom County housing is affordable to a household earning the median family income; and



**WHEREAS**, in 2023 [Washington State Department of Commerce projected](#) Whatcom County will need to build 34,377 new homes by the year 2044, 18,053 of which need to be affordable to households earning less than 50% of Area Median Income; and

**WHEREAS**, on October 24, 2023, the Whatcom County Council approved [Resolution 2023-043](#) supporting the use of Economic Development Investment (EDI) funds for affordable housing; and

**WHEREAS**, on April 9, 2024, the Whatcom County Council approved [Resolution 2024-017](#) recognizing the fentanyl crisis as an emergency in Whatcom County and identifying approaches to the emergency; and

**WHEREAS**, Resolution 2024-017 recognizes that involuntary displacement of people experiencing homelessness is estimated to worsen overdose and hospitalizations, decrease initiations of medications for opioid use disorder, and contribute to deaths among people experiencing homelessness; and

**WHEREAS**, on April 10, 2024, the Whatcom County Executive issued [Executive Order 2024-02](#) addressing fentanyl in Whatcom County; and

**WHEREAS**, Executive Order 2024-02 requests WCHCS prepare and submit to the Executive, in coordination with the Department of Emergency Management, a 24-month emergency response plan, staffing requests, and budget proposal to operationalize the order's actions to address the Prevention, Intervention, Treatment, and Aftercare/Recovery (PITA) needs of the Whatcom County community; and

**WHEREAS**, on May 30, 2024, WCHCS completed the [Operations Plan for Fentanyl Executive Order](#); and

**WHEREAS**, strategy 1e of this Operations Plan is to implement strategies to reduce the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and mitigate the individual and public health impacts of encampments; and

**WHEREAS**, shelter is often an initial entry point for the homeless community to gain access to services including treatment for chronic substance use, mental illness, and other health issues; and

**WHEREAS**, in discussion of the Operations Plan and councilmember priorities during a Council Committee of the Whole meeting on June 18, 2024, multiple councilmembers expressed interest in supporting recovery shelter and housing; and

**WHEREAS**, Whatcom County often partners with the City of Bellingham, City of Ferndale, and other local jurisdictions and agencies to fund and support homeless shelters; and

**WHEREAS**, on October 24, 2023, Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham entered into an interlocal agreement to jointly fund a winter shelter located at 1355 Civic Field Way in Bellingham from December 1, 2023 through February 29, 2024 operated by Road2Home, a nonprofit serving community members experiencing homelessness; and

**WHEREAS**, Whatcom County agreed to pay half of the costs of the Road2Home winter shelter, not to exceed \$250,000, with funds provided by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA); and



410 **WHEREAS**, the City of Bellingham agreed to pay Road2Home \$500,000 (of which \$306,000  
411 are federal funds) to operate the Road2Home winter shelter (see [Contract C2301393](#)); and  
412

413 **WHEREAS**, the Road2Home winter shelter at Civic Field Way operated every day from 7:00  
414 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. and provided space for up to 45 guests, with the possibility for additional  
415 capacity during severe weather; and  
416

417 **WHEREAS**, in summer 2023, Whatcom County staff published a request for proposals  
418 seeking a qualified provider to run a temperature dependent severe weather shelter for the 2023-  
419 24 winter season; and  
420

421 **WHEREAS**, Ferndale Community Services was the only respondent interested in operating a  
422 temperature dependent shelter and entered into a contract with Whatcom County to operate a  
423 severe weather shelter for the 2023-24 winter season with funding from ARPA; and  
424

425 **WHEREAS**, Road2Home and YWCA responded to provide nightly winter shelter and entered  
426 into a contract with Whatcom County to operate nightly with funding from ARPA; and  
427

428 **WHEREAS**, no other applications were received and Whatcom County was unable to identify  
429 a willing and available partner to provide a severe weather shelter service within Bellingham city  
430 limits; and  
431

432 **WHEREAS**, WCHCS staff recognized the need for additional capacity for shelter over the  
433 2023-24 winter season, so they took on the responsibility of planning and operating a severe  
434 weather shelter funded by Whatcom County; and  
435

436 **WHEREAS**, WCHCS staff:

- 437 • Located, acquired, and equipped a location to operate a shelter from November 1, 2023
- 438 through March 14, 2024,
- 439 • Recruited and trained on-call volunteers and temporary paid staff to support operations, and
- 440 • Operated overnight (5pm to 8am) when forecasted conditions met previously established
- 441 Severe Weather Shelters Guiding Assumptions ( $\leq 28^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) and sufficient staffing was available;
- 442 and  
443

444 **WHEREAS**, the WCHCS' [Winter 2023-24 Severe Weather Shelter After Action Report](#) was  
445 published on May 23, 2024 and presented to Council on June 4, 2024; and  
446

447 **WHEREAS**, the county-run severe weather shelter, located at 810 N. State Street in  
448 Bellingham, was open for a total of 20 nights and served 197 clients for a total of 947 bed nights,  
449 averaging 47 people per night; and  
450

451 **WHEREAS**, the planned capacity of the county-run severe weather shelter was 45, but  
452 during particularly cold nights, the shelter exceeded that capacity, with the highest number of  
453 clients served in one night totaling 69; and  
454

455 **WHEREAS**, the nightly winter low barrier shelter operated by Road2Home reached or  
456 exceeded capacity (45 people) 87% of the nights they operated this winter, and reported guests  
457 would begin lining up outside in hopes of acquiring a space for the night as many as 3-4 hours prior  
458 to opening; and  
459

**WHEREAS,** Road2Home counted an average of 25 to 30 guests who were turned away on nights when Whatcom County's severe weather shelter was closed compared with an average of 8 guests on nights when the severe weather shelter was open; and

**WHEREAS,** these numbers likely represent an undercounting of individuals seeking overnight sheltering, as severe weather shelter guests shared anecdotally that word spread quickly among the unsheltered population as to when the line queuing at Road2Home's nightly shelter had reached capacity; and

**WHEREAS,** the After Action Report identified strengths and areas for improvement for five main objectives:

- Operationalize a facility to serve as a Severe Weather Shelter (SWS)
- Recruit, train, and schedule staff to safely operate the SWS
- Activate the SWS based on established temperature and weather-based criteria
- Communicate SWS operational status to partner agencies and public at least 48 hours before activation
- Ensure safety and wellbeing of staff, volunteers, and guests; and

**WHEREAS,** among the identified strengths were that the Response System Division staff (including Ground Response and Coordinated Entry, Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, and Alternative Response Team) were able to make prolonged connections with regular clientele during severe weather shelter operations; and

**WHEREAS,** the After Action Report included four main recommendations moving forward:

1. Prioritize additional nightly sheltering capacity during the coldest months instead of sporadic, criteria-based severe weather sheltering
2. Expand both length of winter sheltering "season" and hours of operation
3. Utilize a dedicated, single purpose location with sufficient capacity, necessary amenities, and within proximity to other community services
4. Identify a contracted provider OR establish dedicated WCHCS positions to operate and manage a nightly winter shelter as described above in the above recommendations; and

**WHEREAS,** the total cost for this severe weather shelter was \$403,598, for an average of \$426 per guest served per night; and

**WHEREAS,** WCHCS' After Action Report [presentation](#) provides the following cost comparison of various interventions:

- The average cost of an uninsured overnight hospital stay is \$9,300, while an uninsured daytime visit is \$2,607
- The median annual cost of a motel/hotel room in Whatcom County is \$48,000
- The average annual cost of a single bed in the Whatcom County jail is \$45,000
- The average cost of a bed per year in 2022 at 22 North is \$25,000
- The average estimated annual cost of one Tiny Home at Gardenvue is \$15,000
- The average annual cost for a bed in federal prison is \$35,347
- The median annual PSH unit cost is \$13,349.31, fluctuating depending on population level and program size
- The median annual cost of a single night by night shelter bed in Washington State is \$13,421.05
- The estimated annual cost of a single bed in a county-run low barrier shelter is \$24,000; and

512 **WHEREAS**, shelter is a more cost-effective form of intervention compared to a night in a  
513 hospital, motel, Whatcom County jail, and federal prison; and

514  
515 **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County now has experience operating a shelter; and

516  
517 **WHEREAS**, on April 8, 2024, Bellingham City Council approved the purchase of a property  
518 at 3300 Northwest Avenue to be used as the new location for a tiny home village to replace two  
519 existing villages, Swift Haven (25 beds) and Unity Village (23 beds) operated by HomesNOW!; and

520  
521 **WHEREAS**, the new North Haven tiny home village will be operated by HomesNOW! and  
522 could be ready for 48 guests by late 2024 pending Temporary Shelter Permit approval; and

523  
524 **WHEREAS**, HomesNOW! has expressed interest and ability to expand tiny home shelter  
525 capacity; and

526  
527 **WHEREAS**, Lighthouse Mission Ministries operates Base Camp, a low barrier 24-hour  
528 reservation-based shelter that provides a safe place for up to 200 adults to stay; and

529  
530 **WHEREAS**, Lighthouse Mission Ministries reported that in a matter of a few weeks they had  
531 to turn away 20+ families due to lack of capacity; and

532  
533 **WHEREAS**, Lighthouse Mission Ministries will replace the current 200-bed Base Camp  
534 shelter with a new 300-bed shelter later this year at 910 W. Holly Street with the potential for an  
535 additional 100 beds during extreme weather; and

536  
537 **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County also provides funding to support shelters with Domestic  
538 Violence and Sexual Assault Services of Whatcom County, Northwest Youth Services PAD Program,  
539 Opportunity Council, Lydia Place Motel Program for families with children, YWCA, and Sun House;  
540 and

541  
542 **WHEREAS**, the hard work of dedicated staff from these shelters and others have prevented  
543 hundreds of people from having no other option than to sleep outside; and

544  
545 **WHEREAS**, the County and community partners have increased shelter beds over the last  
546 few years, but demand continues to outpace the supply, and the need to expand year-round  
547 shelter capacity continues to exist; and

548  
549 **WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Council acts as the Whatcom County Health Board to  
550 enact local rules and regulations as are necessary to preserve, promote, and improve public health  
551 and make recommendations to the Whatcom County Executive on matters affecting public health in  
552 our community; and

553  
554 **WHEREAS**, [functional zero homelessness](#) is a milestone that indicates a community has  
555 measurably solved homelessness, meaning that when homelessness occurs it is rare and brief; and

556  
557 **WHEREAS**, to achieve functional zero, the Whatcom County community must increase  
558 whole system capacity and availability of shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive  
559 housing, affordable housing, attainable market rate housing, behavioral health and substance use  
560 treatment, and social services.

561  
562 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council declares a goal to  
563 achieve and maintain functional zero homelessness within ten years; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council supports the expansion of year-round shelter capacity in our community, including but not limited to operating a county-managed year-round shelter and supporting tiny home villages, especially for vulnerable and overburdened communities at risk of housing insecurity and homelessness; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council recognizes the opportunity to end youth and young adult homelessness in Whatcom County and supports the establishment of shelter for families with children, unaccompanied minors, and young adults (18-25); and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council requests the County Executive to:

1. Prepare a proposal in consultation with the Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee to expand capacity for year-round shelters through a variety of methods and other preferred approaches as recommended by the County Executive.
  - a. Consider different types of shelters including county-managed, congregate, tiny homes, pallet shelters, urban camping zones, safe parking, and low barrier.
  - b. Consider population specific shelter including for families with children, unaccompanied minors, and young adults (18-25).
  - c. Determine if a temperature dependent shelter or a nightly winter shelter is operationally preferable. If recommendation is continuing to contract/operate a temperature dependent severe weather shelter, evaluate the temperature threshold required for opening the severe weather shelter.
  - d. Use the Homeless Strategies Workgroup recommendations and action steps to inform proposal for expanding shelter capacity.
  - e. Include budget impact analysis that outlines costs, staff time, funding sources, and other necessary considerations.
2. Explore options to coordinate, collaborate, and cost share increasing shelter capacity with all seven cities in Whatcom County, other local, state, federal, and tribal jurisdictions, and community partners.
3. Identify strategies to support building nonprofit provider capacity.
4. Explore Whatcom County owned properties and future land acquisitions for expanded shelter and housing capacity.
5. Identify a provider who will ensure adequate winter sheltering for the 2024-25 winter season. If no provider is available, then establish a plan for Whatcom County to operate.
6. Contract with an independent entity to conduct an evaluation of Whatcom County's coordinated entry system in coordination with the WCHCS, other organizational homeless and housing service providers, and community members with lived experience.
7. Provide a road map for how to achieve functional zero in ten years with annual progress reports.
8. Create a plan to do community outreach to locations where unsheltered community members reside.
9. Create a training and employment program supporting unhoused community members, in partnership with the business and labor community; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the shelter options and budget impacts be provided to the Whatcom County Council for review and consideration by September 30, 2024 to ensure adequate time to include funding in the 2025-26 biennial budget; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council respectfully requests that the Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee (WCHAC):

- 615 1. Create a short-term subcommittee that sunsets December 31, 2025 to issue shelter  
616 recommendations with the following specifications:
- 617 • The subcommittee, led by the WCHAC Chair, shall include Housing Advisory  
618 Committee member and nonmember participation including those with lived  
619 experiences.
  - 620 • Review and provide feedback on the County Executive's proposal for expanding  
621 year-round shelter capacity, funding sources, staff needs, and possible locations  
622 (including lands currently owned by county or those available for purchase).
  - 623 • The subcommittee should recruit additional expertise, as needed, to meet the  
624 deliverables and scope.
- 625 2. Provide recommendations to the Comprehensive Plan specifically addressing  
626 homelessness and shelter capacity and related zoning and land use policies and  
627 regulations.
- 628 3. Review and provide input and direction on the county's upcoming 2024 Plan to End  
629 Homelessness; and  
630

631 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council request council staff support  
632 in exploring options for establishing an independent, quasi-governmental entity dedicated to  
633 housing and homeless issues; and  
634

635 ~~**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council supports any efforts by the~~  
636 ~~cities of Whatcom County to increase shelter capacity, including but not limited to the~~  
637 ~~implementation of safe parking sites, relocation and expansion of tiny home villages, the extension~~  
638 ~~of the lease and permit for the current Basecamp location to expand capacity for the 2024-25~~  
639 ~~winter season, and the operation of daytime severe weather drop-in locations.~~  
640

641 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council supports any efforts by the  
642 cities of Whatcom County, in addition to County activities, to increase shelter capacity, including  
643 but not limited to the implementation of safe parking sites, relocation and expansion of tiny home  
644 villages, and the operation of severe weather shelter.  
645

646 **APPROVED** this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024.  
647  
648  
649

650  
651 ATTEST:  
652  
653  
654

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

\_\_\_\_\_  
655 Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council  
656  
657

\_\_\_\_\_  
Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

658 APPROVED AS TO FORM:  
659

660 George Roche via email 7/16/2024  
661 Civil Deputy Prosecutor