



## Memorandum

**TO: SATPAL SIDHU, COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

**FROM: ERIKA LAUTENBACH, HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR**

**DATE: FEBRUARY 12, 2024**

**RE: SEVERE WEATHER SHELTER UPDATE**

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Due to a combination of an increasing number of unsheltered individuals and limited shelter beds, Whatcom County has either staffed or contracted with a community partner to staff a severe weather shelter during winter months since 2019. In spring 2023, Whatcom County's previous contract provider indicated they would no longer staff the severe weather shelter. In summer 2023 county staff published a request for proposals seeking a qualified provider to run a severe weather shelter for the 2023-24 winter season. No applications were received. The County was unable to identify a willing and available partner to provide the service. As a result, Whatcom County Health and Community Services staff were tasked in 2023 to plan and operate a severe weather shelter over the 2023-2024 winter season.

The following were the agreements made as staff prepared to take on this new body of work:

- Locate, acquire, and equip a location to operate a shelter from November 1, 2023 through February 29, 2024.
- Recruit and train on-call volunteers and temporary paid staff to support operations.
- Operate overnight (5pm to 8am) when forecasted conditions meet previously established [Severe Weather Shelters Guiding Assumptions](#) and sufficient staffing is available.

The severe weather shelter, located at 810 N. State Street, has operated fourteen nights since the beginning of the 2023-2024 winter season. In addition, staff maintained daytime hours for five days thus far.

Staff will provide an update on planning, operations, logistics, and staffing at the February 20 Committee of the Whole meeting. Following the 2023-2024 winter season, which ends on Feb. 29, staff will provide a full After Action Report, recommendations, and policy questions for Council consideration.

**WHATCOM COUNTY**  
Health and Community Services



Erika Lautenbach, MPH, Director  
Amy Harley, MD, MPH, Co-Health Officer  
Greg Thompson, MD, MPH, Co-Health Officer

Please call Erika Lautenbach at 360-778-6005 with questions. Thank you.