

Archived: Monday, October 26, 2020 10:29:38 AM

From: webmaster@shorelinewa.gov

Sent: Saturday, October 24, 2020 8:38:34 PM

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Form Name: Comment on Agenda Items
Date & Time: 10/24/2020 8:38 pm
Response #: 813
Submitter ID: 39626
IP address: 192.182.158.19
Time to complete: 45 min. , 42 sec.

Survey Details: Answers Only

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1. CaraLee Cook
2. Shoreline
3. (o) Richmond Highlands
4. Caraleester@yahoo.com
5. 10/26/2020
6. Enhanced Shelter
7. Hello, I wish to explain my thoughts about the enhanced shelter proposed for my neighborhood. I am a social worker with 30 years management experience running 24 hour support services for people who have developmental disabilities and co occurring mental illness. I also have a sister who has a drug addiction, mental illness and has been often homeless for the past few years.

It is my long experience that drug addiction is a serious and devastating problem. Many times drug addiction and mental illness go hand in hand but we definitely see brain damage resulting from drug abuse especially Meth, so that the user is experiencing chaotic thoughts, disrupting behaviors, and obviously theft to keep the habit when addiction devolves and jobs and family relationships are lost. The longer a person uses Meth the longer it takes the brain to heal and it might take many months to overcome the damage before the person could handle routine tasks and maintain a home.

Most of the homeless population can and should use regular shelter services. When a person has devolved to the point they are erratic and having unpredictable disruptive behavior, the regular shelters do not welcome these clients and that is the population who uses enhanced shelters.

Last fall when trying to find my sister shelter- she was not really safe to stay in our family homes- we tried to find local shelters for her. Most required an eventual enrollment in drug treatment. We found one low barrier shelter (Salvation Army downtown) but the manager warned me that the shelter was too dangerous for my sister- that it was chaos there and she would be in danger. He said he frequently broke up knife fights between clients and there were many drugs traded between the clients. She would not be safe in the low barrier shelter!

She ended up in a shelter that required drug treatment and while not enthusiastic about it, and with some setbacks, she is finally clean and building her brain function back so that there will be a chance she can maintain her own apartment again. She sounds sane and rational and I am thankful every day that she lived through her addiction and homelessness.

If not for the drug treatment requirement she would not have made this change. Drug addiction is very powerful and strong incentives need to be in place to move people forward. All of us see the devastation that drug abuse has caused in Seattle and the rest of the west coast. Mere financial trouble is not what is causing the tent camps and chaos, it's drugs. A concerned and responsible society should help people to put their lives back together, not help people to stay mired in addiction.

A council member told me he was encouraged by the fact that there would be 14 staff to 60 residents, but once you consider 3 shifts, days off, maintenance and administrative staff my calculation is there would be at most 4 staff per shift. This is not enough people to keep the shelter of 60 clients safe much less provide therapeutic case management.

From a social work perspective I believe society is obligated to help people towards a better life. Tax money is collected from even low wage earners so we really owe it to them to make a good impact with their public dollar investment. Shelter should require drug treatment enrollment and that must be a package deal with any shelter dollars spent.

The low barrier shelter will be used only by people not welcome elsewhere because obviously vulnerable or non drug addicted clients would not be safe in the low barrier shelter and they will not choose it. This means the clientele served at the Shoreline low barrier shelter will be people who are not interested in drug treatment and making a change. They might, due to drug brain damage, pose a risk to my community. Low barrier shelter encourages drug addiction to continue.

Please instead build shelter space for people who want to make a change, or are at least willing to make a change to stay warm and safe. We have to come together to fight the blight and chaos that drugs have wreaked on our neighbors and loved ones. Drug treatment required shelter is an urgent need that Shoreline should not ignore. Please do not use public dollars for a low barrier shelter. Thanks, CaraLee Cook
8. (o) Oppose

Thank you,
City of Shoreline

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