

League of Women Voters of Tacoma-Pierce County Observer Corps

Name of Agency: City Council Committee of the Whole

Special Meeting with Neighborhood and Community Services
Department

Date: Sept 18 2018

Observer Reporting: C Rikerd

Length of Meeting: 75 minutes

Members Present/Absent: all present, plus City Manager, City Attorney, Neighborhood and Community Services committee members

Others present (i.e. media, public): Catholic Services representative, Rescue Mission Representative, city staff, members of public

Content (what is being discussed): *Did they approve some action?*

Does anything relate to League priorities or positions? If so, do you recommend local League action? Was access to materials for certain agenda items limited or excluded from you? Was background material available to the public?

The presentation was a **review of the Stability Site at 1423 Puyallup Avenue**, which was established as a temporary housing solution for the homeless individuals living on Tacoma streets, creating a state of emergency in Tacoma.

The slide presentation is available online at:

<https://cityoftacoma.legistar.com/DepartmentDetail.aspx?ID=22567&GUID=9C2D2C68-455A-4EFC-93B6-89C5C7249C83&R=6ee811db-437d-44be-81f7-fd7b183f8eae>

Click on 'agenda' to get a download PDF. On this page is 'attachments: Presentation'. Click on the blue presentation link to view the slides. A sound only video, about an hour, is also available.

Points made:

- This site plan is part of a 3 phase plan to move homeless individuals into housing
- The stability site does not address the root causes of homelessness, and is only a temporary solution
- Mitigation of large unauthorized encampments needs to involve law enforcement and available temporary living arrangements
- Many homeless need long term support services, including housing support, social service and medical case management; resolution of homelessness means working with individuals, who do not fit into easily defined groups
- Disabled individuals have extreme housing difficulties
- The cost in 2017 was about \$2.5 million
- Projected cost for 2018 is \$6.9 million
- \$\$ have been budgeted for a landlord liaison to seek out housing solutions for the most vulnerable
- \$\$ have been budgeted toward a mental health court
- City is working with faith based organizations to allow them to shelter small numbers of homeless on church property
- Existing shelter beds only offer space for roughly ½ the homeless population in Pierce County

- Surprisingly few of the people who moved to the stability site were willing to accept social services offered
- Most of the homeless in Pierce County come into the city seeking shelter beds; outlying jurisdictions contribute \$0 to Tacoma's costs, while declining to establish their own shelters
- There is not enough money in the city budget to fully resolve homelessness and Tacoma does not have low income housing for individuals living in dire poverty

Public Meetings of interest to League – i.e., were there any public meetings announced that you think League members may be interested in attending and/or becoming involved with the issue?

This is an excellent presentation summarizing the city's efforts to resolve the homeless crisis. I strongly encourage any League member concerned about the homeless emergency in Tacoma, review the presentation and listen to the video.

Matt Driscoll wrote an excellent summary of this meeting in the News Tribune, appearing Sept 20 page 4a.

From the meeting schedule web pages, it appears the Council meets with Neighborhood and Community Services about every 6 weeks.

Process & Protocol (Observations about participants, conduct, and procedures of the meeting, and appropriate accommodations for disabled in sight hearing and physical):

i.e., did the members appear to have done their "homework"? Were members courteous to each other and the public? How does the group respond to your presence?

All participants were well prepared, and Council members asked probing questions. Linda Stewart, Director of Neighborhood and Community Services department, welcomed me as a LWV observer, said she was glad the League had sent an observer, and introduced 2 of her staff.

Mayor Woodard asked the Council and the N & C staff to stay after adjournment to talk with the public observers.

It appears the Council and the N.C.S. staff are genuinely concerned and alarmed by the rise of homelessness, the plight of the individuals impacted and the difficulties in getting people needed services and permanent stable living arrangements.

Reminders 😊 (see reverse)

The purpose of the LWV Observer Corp is:

1. To promote public interest in local government and to be a "presence" to elected officials.
2. To alert the League Board to upcoming agenda items on which we have program positions on which we can speak.
3. To identify areas for future LWV study and action.

Observers play an important role as they learn about issues and processes and are in touch with what is happening in our community. A LWV Observer is impartial, silent, and respectful. It is, however, appropriate to ask questions for clarification. Remember to wear your Observer ID Badge.