

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL AGENDA BILLNO. 2018 - 72

CLEARANCES	Initial	Date	Date Received in Council Office	Agenda Date	Assigned to:
Originator:	Brenner	2/7/2018		2/13/18	Pub Wks & Hlth
Division Head:					
Dept. Head:	<i>DDamin</i>	<i>2.7.18</i>			
Prosecutor:					
Purchasing/Budget:					
Executive:					

TITLE OF DOCUMENT:

Update from HomesNOW - volunteer efforts to provide homes & shelter for homeless

ATTACHMENTS:

SEPA review required? () Yes () NO	Should Clerk schedule a hearing ? () Yes (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>) NO Requested Date:
SEPA review completed? () Yes () NO	

SUMMARY STATEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE LANGUAGE: (If this item is an ordinance or requires a public hearing, you must provide the language for use in the required public notice. Be specific and cite RCW or WCC as appropriate. Be clear in explaining the intent of the action.)

Update from HomesNOW on volunteer efforts to provide homes and shelter for the homeless in Whatcom County

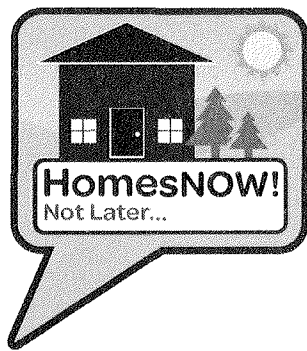
COMMITTEE ACTION:**COUNCIL ACTION:**

Related County Contract #:

Related File Numbers:

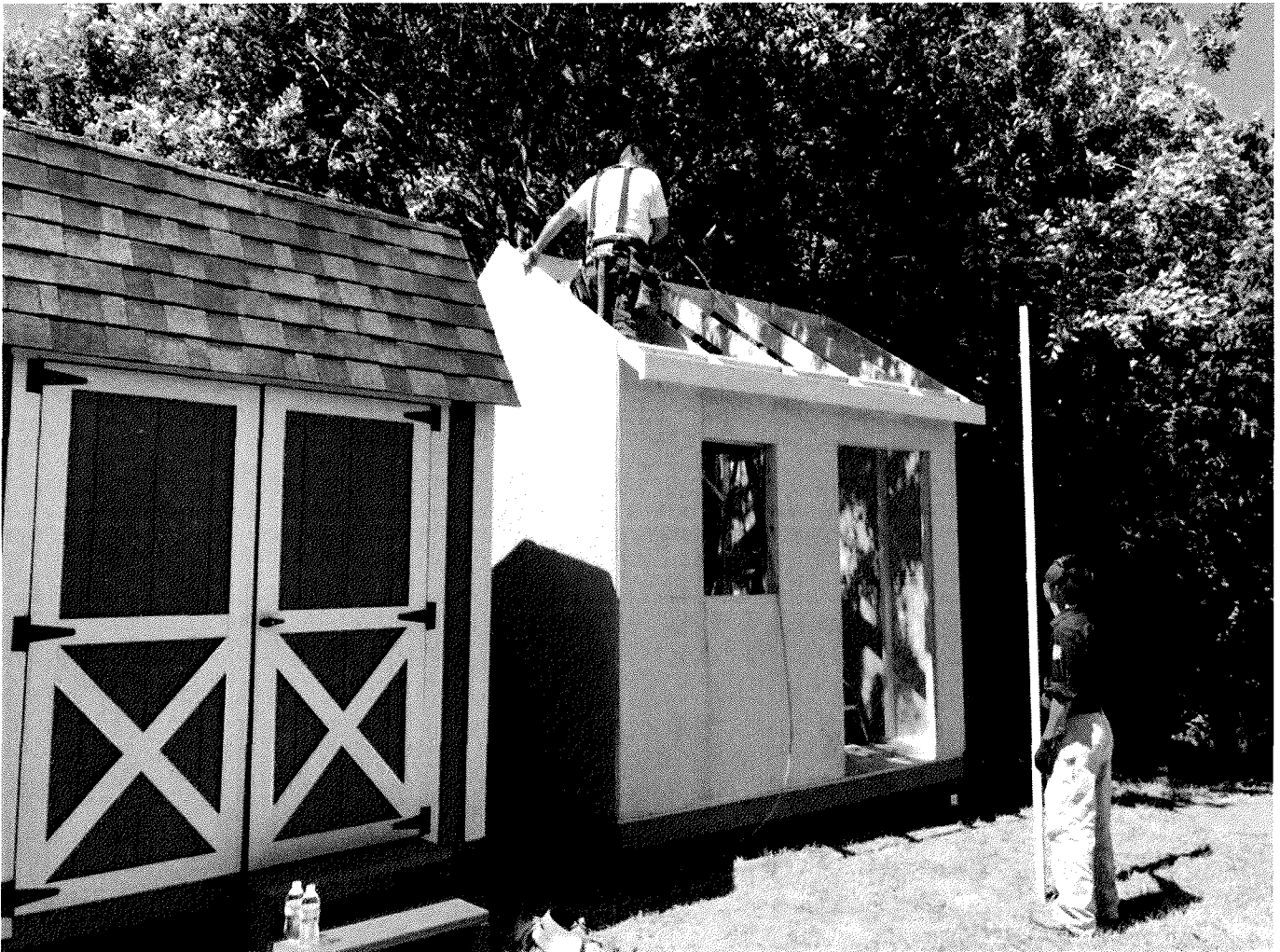
Ordinance or Resolution
Number:

Please Note: Once adopted and signed, ordinances and resolutions are available for viewing and printing on the County's website at: www.co.whatcom.wa.us/council.



HomesNOW! – 6 Tiny Homes with Service Building Pilot Project

HomesNOW! is a 501c3 non-profit that has the goal of ending homelessness in Whatcom County permanently by 2020. Finding properties that the city owns that are not being used would provide an ideal first step toward achieving these goals.



Liability and Insurance:

HomesNOW! would be responsible for providing insurance for the property. A local Farmers Insurance agency is willing to insure the property and tiny homes.

Employment and/or Income:

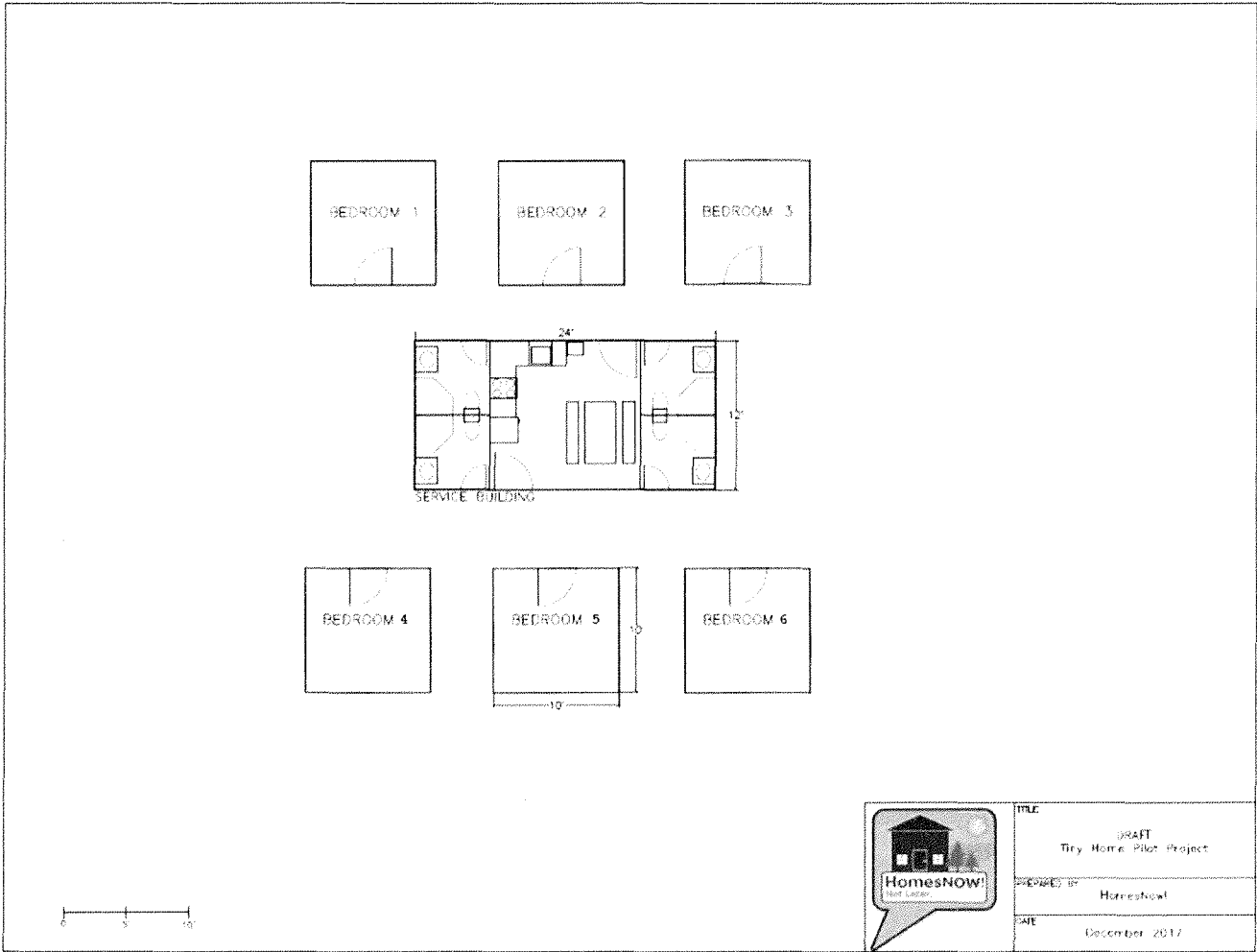
The first residents for the home will be individuals who are homeless but have some income, either through full-time or part-time employment or through Social Security/disability payments or Veteran's benefits. Many homeless individuals are hardworking and just need a hand up and a little help because they can't afford rent at current market values for rent in Bellingham. HomesNOW! is aware of the level of funding needed to house

people who are without work or without income and need long-term support, and that is why for this first project as a first step, we are seeking homeless individuals who are employed or have income coming in to make this self-sustaining in the long-run without relying solely on charity or donations. We have 5 people on our waiting list already who have jobs or income who can be helped immediately.

Long-term though, to help those in need who are also unemployed, HomesNOW! plans to open a non-profit thrift shop at a nearby location where goods, furniture and supplies can be donated, organized, stored and sold to fund operations and future home development for those in need. This shop will be used to employ future residents who are unemployed, to help them get on their feet. Minimum wage will be \$15-20/hr (part time or full time) depending on the level of experience of a homeless individual who needs work. This is done to empower the homeless to become self-sufficient and independent.

Property and Structure Layout:

HomesNOW! is asking for a basic pilot project of six tiny homes and a service building. The service building would provide a community area as well as bathrooms and kitchen. The tiny homes will be 10' x 10', and the service building will be 12' x 24'.



Bills and Rental Costs:

Bills will be paid for on the property through rent, which will be charged on a non-profit basis. This rent will keep initial costs low for start-up to get people housed. **Rent will be based on ability to pay, and will be 20% of their income or \$250/mo, whichever number is lower.** This rent will be used to pay all bills for the tiny homes such as electrical, water/sewer, garbage, internet as well as supplies for the homes such as toilet paper, soap and other household products. Also, utilities are included in this rent, so the percentage is effectively lower than the industry standard of 30%. This model is being used for 2 reasons. One is that we will be able to self-sustain and self-fund operations and maintenance without relying solely on donations, the other is that residents will transition to regular housing easier since it will be similar to the model they will encounter once they no longer need housing assistance from HomesNOW but just doesn't require nearly as much income. This gives the person time to save up some money, get the help they need (whether mental health or drug treatment) and move on. The long-term goal is to get residents transitioned to regular housing within a few months to make room for more people who need help. When one person moves out it leaves a unit for somebody new who needs help. Over time this will create progress by reducing the number of people who are homeless on a continuous basis.

Home Repairs and Builds:

HomesNOW! would take responsibility for any repairs for the tiny homes. The repairs would be paid for through donations and reserve funds. The labor to do any needed repairs on the structure would be volunteer labor. This would also provide an opportunity to empower residents to learn a skilled trade through volunteering with a skilled professional in the areas such as Information Technology, Carpentry, Construction, Plumbing and Electrical. HomesNOW! would have the homes inspected and certified to ensure that the structure is up to code and safety regulations.

Transportation:

Some of our potential employed residents are currently living in their car or van. These residents will be able to transport themselves around town and provide rides for others. For those who do not have a vehicle, we would hope to find a location that is near a bus stop. Also (if possible) within walking distance of a grocery store. This is ideal for not having to drive a long distance to pick up basic necessities or to look for employment.

Security:

If the city or county accepts our proposal, the homes will be under 24/7 surveillance. 720P HD Security cameras will be placed around the perimeter of the approved property and will monitor all activity happening outside the homes. This is done to protect both the residents and the neighbors from any potential problems that could arise (legally or otherwise). Location will also be able to be monitored remotely through an app on the phone and PC. Security Cameras will not be installed inside the houses, to preserve the privacy of the residents in their own bedrooms.

Support Services:

HomesNOW! wants to set up each resident with a case worker to determine which specific areas of help that the resident would benefit from. Some residents might require job training, others might require mental health counselling or drug/alcohol treatment. The case worker/social worker will decide which support services a resident will need (if any) based on evaluating each individual, while helping them in a surgical way based on their individual needs to empower them to get back on their feet to become independent.

Home Management (Daily Life):

HomesNOW! will have weekly group house meetings with all the residents and at least one member of the board from HomesNOW. One of our residents will be designated as home manager and will be a line of communication between the HomesNOW members and residents to ensure smooth and effective operations and management of the home. All residents must be approved by management and go through the application process. Every resident will take turns cleaning the house (dishes, bathrooms, rooms, living room, etc.). All residents must be engaged in services where necessary and pay rent. Residents will not be permitted consume any controlled substances which are illegal under Washington State Law or if case worker determines substance abuse treatment is necessary (for legal substances). Drug testing will be required by request of HomesNOW. Residents will not be drug tested unless there is suspicion of consuming an illegal controlled substance through secondary signs such as erratic behavior, mood swings, increase in mental instability, anger management issues or other reasonable concerns that would warrant a drug test.

City/County Future Land Use:

In the meantime, the tiny homes can be used to house people who are homeless and who have some income. If the city or county needs to allow a property to be demolished, HomesNOW can vacate the property with a 3-month notice (flexible). Since we would be leasing it from the city or county, the city/county could allow us to use the land until it determines that what HomesNOW is doing is the best use of the property or until it can determine an alternative use for the property. In the meantime, it can be used to help those in need. Building tiny homes allows the dwellings to be moved later if the situation changes.

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