

YELM HOMELESSNESS TASKFORCE

REVIEW OF REPORT AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- On November 13th 2018, the Yelm City Council passed Resolution #595 which created the Yelm Homelessness Taskforce. The taskforce was established to identify and analyze existing resources for the homeless, to identify overlaps or gaps in existing services, and to identify areas in which the City may use its resources to coordinate services for the homeless population of the City of Yelm. It was given a timeline of one year from when the first meeting convened in January of 2019. The Yelm City Council appropriated \$2500 to “provide adequate resources to support the research and analysis and final report” of which none was spent on those endeavors. After meeting throughout the year, researching other municipalities ordinances, interviewing the homeless in Yelm, meeting with non-profits/benevolent organizations throughout Yelm, and multiple open meetings with citizen feedback, the taskforce has developed this report that includes recommendations to the Yelm City Council regarding homelessness in Yelm and the surrounding communities.
- The recommendations that were agreed upon by the taskforce to be presented to the Yelm City Council are: **A monthly Low-Income Clinic hosted by the City at Yelm Community Center; Permanent Homelessness Commission; To Increase law enforcement of Yelm regulations; Review of the current City of Yelm code and ordinances; and to work with the local nonprofits and services to coordinate efforts.**

WHAT WAS DISCUSSED ON THE TASKFORCE



The task force has discussed that factors such as population growth, rising costs of housing in general, shortage of reasonably priced local housing for low-income individuals and families, the need for more accessible medical, mental health and addictive behavioral health care and a need for a comprehensive and coordinated effort of allies are areas of interest and areas of possible need for improvement.



Presentations from Thurston County and Homeless Advocates across Thurston County

EXISTING SERVICES: FEDERAL

Dept. of Housing and Urban Development

The Continuum of Care (COC) Program - Designed to promote communitywide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness

The Emergency Solutions Grants Program - Programs designed for those in need to quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis and/or homelessness.

Title V Federal Surplus Property for Use to Assist the Homeless - Enables eligible organizations to use unutilized, underutilized, excess, or surplus federal properties to assist persons experiencing homelessness.

EXISTING SERVICES: WASHINGTON STATE

Washington State Dept. of Commerce

Office of Family and Adult Homelessness - The Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG), Landlord Mitigation Program, Emergency Solution Grant (ESG), HOME Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)

Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs - HOPE/Crisis Residential Centers, Street Youth Services (SYS), Youth Adult Housing Program, Independent Youth Housing Program, Young Adult Shelter

Washington State Dept. of Social and Health Services

Emergency Programs - Medical Programs, Emergency Food Assistance, Emergency Cash Assistance

EXISTING
SERVICES:
THURSTON
COUNTY AND
CITY OF
OLYMPIA

Thurston County:

Office of Housing and Homelessness - Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Community Investment Partnership (CIP), Homeless Housing Program, Affordable Housing Program

City of Olympia:

Mitigation Sites and Plum Street Tiny House Village

POINT IN TIME (PIT) SURVEY



Point in Time (PIT) Census data gathering on **January 24, 2019, the Yelm homelessness population hovers around 30 people** living out-of-doors, in tent campsites, in RV's with little or no hookups and in vehicles. This number is believed to be low and various workers who work directly with this population believe the number can spike to as many as 40 to 50 during different times of the year. The PIT number comprises 7% of the total of homeless in Thurston County counted on that day in January 2019 and has risen one percentage point since the previous census in January of 2018.



As the numbers gathered by the McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act program by Yelm Community Schools in the past few years indicate, this population is on the rise in our area. In the past two years, the number of students recorded by all the schools in the Yelm service area as being homeless was **89 in 2016-2017** and school year. **119 in the 2017-2018**



Housing and Shelter, Psychological Counseling, and Clean Up Facilities including showers, laundry, and haircuts



Job skills training



Counseling and rehabilitation of those addicted to substances



Additional Food options including dinners and Food Banks in Yelm

NEEDS IN YELM

PUBLIC INPUT



Most people wanted stricter ordinance enforcement and to give more funding to the police force.



Connected homelessness with drugs



Wanted little to no taxpayer money spent



Focus on working with private organizations

PUBLIC INPUT

"It's time to send these homeless away like Seattle did. Give them a bus ticket out of town and bring our farm community back. If little homes are on your books you will be voted OUT. Sick of how our little town has become over the last 8 years. No more money greed!"

"I propose that instead of providing housing for this population, we provide avenues for assistance. Perhaps bus passes to nearby cities who have shelters in place, brochures to drug & alcohol programs, schedules for needle exchange programs, resources for the local food bank, warm clothes drive, information on rehabilitation programs for those who are injured, outlets for behavioral health resources, information on job fairs or entry level local positions available, etc... Therefore my family votes no to a shelter/housing/camp for the homeless to come to Yelm or the surrounding area."

PUBLIC INPUT

- “I’m a resident of Roy WA however my family and I consider Yelm our “home town”. The majority of our money used for extra curricular activities is spent in Yelm. We choose to move here after my husband separated from the military in 2014...I want to point out that I understand our state government has made dealing with homelessness very challenging, but the solutions listed by this committee to combat homelessness are not in my opinion what is best for this city or its residents. There are already many programs available to people in need. The problem? Is that many don’t allow people to be current drug users. We need to re enforce our current laws and allow our law enforcement to do their jobs to the FULL extent of the law. Let’s start kicking people off of property that doesn’t legally belong to them, booking people for public intoxication, booking people for small property crimes, arresting people for the crimes they commit. This town can not afford to enable homelessness.”

PUBLIC INPUT

“Uncle Sam moved me here in 1986 and Yelm has been my home since. I'm now retired from the military and run a small trailer maintenance and repair business. I've been here long enough to see and grow along with my adopted home and love what it has become...I see the homeless problem as multifaceted and place it into 4 categories. 1st and foremost from my observations, addiction is by far it the largest reason people end up in homeless situations. Second is mental illness, third is those who have become homeless due to a catastrophic life event. The final one is those who just choose to live off the grid and good graces of other people. Easy to say--- now how do we fix it?”

“While the adult homeless issue is no doubt an issue needing to be spoke on, I feel the amount of young people that are living on the street has gotten to a point that if it isnt spoken of, then I fear the yelm community truly has given up on its children.”

PUBLIC INPUT

- “I am not able to attend the public meeting so I am voicing my opinion regarding Yelm becoming a sanctuary city. I do not support this happening. I have spoken to many people in the area about this and I have not heard one healthy reason for us to support this. I believe we should take care of the homeless that we have in the city, but Yelm is not equipped to handle more being brought in from other areas. It would "ruin" our city just like it has done to Olympia. I have spoken to several business owners in the Olympia area in the last 6 months. It is a catastrophe!!”

- “While the adult homeless issue is no doubt an issue needing to be spoke on, I feel the amount of young people that are living on the street has gotten to a point that if it isnt spoken of, then I fear the yelm community truly has given up on its children.”

PUBLIC INPUT

PROPOSALS

#1 Monthly Low-Income Clinic at the Yelm Community Center

- Monthly Low-Income Clinic hosted by the City at Yelm Community Center (YCC) designed to help our most vulnerable citizens with access to assistance.
- Citizens can speak with representatives/volunteers from DSHS to sign up for existing state resources;
- Thurston County Office of Housing and Homeless Prevention for the County's existing resources;
- Drug counselors from volunteer organizations that will help people with sobriety from narcotics;
- And health care professional volunteers

PROPOSALS

#2 Permanent Homelessness Commission

- Create a permanent Homelessness Commission to provide quarterly reports/recommendations to the Yelm City Council
- The commission would be made of local residents who would be appointed by the Mayor with confirmation from the City Council.
- The Commission would produce and maintain list of available services to homeless/low-income individuals

PROPOSALS

#3 Increase law enforcement of Yelm regulations

- Increase enforcement of current ordinances and RCWs pertaining to property rights of business owners and private residences.
- Utilize code and ordinances to remove/prosecute offenders
- Increased funding for public safety
- Build on current law enforcement partnerships with neighboring local governments including Thurston County and the Nisqually Tribe to increase narcotics enforcement.

PROPOSALS

#4 Review of current City of Yelm code and ordinances

- To create humane regulations that don't infringe on Constitutional rights of homeless individuals
- To give more regulatory tools for city officials to work with property owners and business owners
- Requires city attorney to review ordinances pertaining to homelessness and property rights

PROPOSALS

#5 Work with local non-profits and services to coordinate efforts

- Increase existing partnerships and create new partnerships with Non Profits and Churches in Yelm/Thurston County that already provide services to low income and homeless such as dinners
- Make available the list of existing services the Yelm Homelessness Taskforce created for our most vulnerable citizens in Yelm in an easy to distribute handout

PROPOSALS

Recommendations with a tied vote

- **Move Thurston County Code Blue events from Public Safety Building to YCC** - Protect more people by providing a less intimidating space for hazardous weather events such as extreme cold or heat.
- **Public Works Jobs Program** - Empowerment of homeless individuals through wages and training as well as reducing homelessness as trained people move into permanent housing

NEXT STEPS



More public comment



City Council to deliberate on recommendations



Follow council procedures for new proposals and create an official recommendation through the subcommittee process



Hold public hearings on all new proposals that make it through the subcommittee process



Placed on city council meeting agenda for possible vote