

**CITY OF SILVERTON
HOMELESS/HOUSING TASK FORCE MINUTES**

September 2, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Kyle Palmer called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. The task force members and staff were present through the virtual meeting platform Zoom. Mayor Palmer explained the meeting is being held through Zoom due to Governor Brown’s Executive Order 20-16.

Present	Absent	
X		Kyle Palmer
X		Jaime Fuhrman
X		Sara White
X		Helen Thomas <i>(arrived at 7:02 pm)</i>
X		Jess Miller
X		Dana Smith
X		Jennifer Hannan
X		Sarah DeSantis
X		Hilary Dumitrescu
	X	Karolle Hughes
X		Joseph Schmaus

Staff Present:

City Manager, Christy Wurster and Assistant to the City Manager/City Clerk, Angela Speier

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Member Miller made a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting held on May 27, 2020. Member Dumitrescu seconded the motion. Member DeSantis asked for the minutes to be amended to reflect her not being present at the May 27, 2020 meeting. There was no further discussion and the motion passed as amended 8-0 with member Smith abstaining, because she was not in attendance.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Palmer noted a letter was submitted earlier today by Aaron Huddart (see attachment 1) and shared with the Task Force members. There were no additional public comments.

IV. WINTER SHELTER REQUEST – SHELTERING SILVERTON

Member White explained in the packet was a proposal for a winter sanctioned campsite. She explained Sheltering Silverton has decided to change their course and read a prepared letter to the members (see attachment 2). Sheltering Silverton does not think they will be able to acquire and organize the needed resources to successfully implement a managed campsite at this time. She said with the extreme health, safety and economic challenges due to COVID-19 the community must come together with as much creative power as possible to figure out how to continue to serve and support those facing the threat and reality of homelessness. She reviewed a number of questions she would like the Task Force to discuss during the meeting and called for members to help come up with creative solutions.

V. OPEN DISCUSSION/BRAINSTORMING

Chair Palmer opened up the discussion for members to help brainstorm ideas for winter sheltering. Member Smith thanked Member White for her comments and said she is heartbroken at the predicament the community finds itself in again. Member White said the funding they received last year to help staff the warming shelter will likely not be available to them this year, so the camping proposal will likely need to be abandoned. She explained Sheltering Silverton is looking at responding to the needs of individuals on a case-by-case basis. They know 25 adults and three children under the age of 10 that are unsheltered in the community. She said by November she expects that number to double or triple. They will be leaning on regional shelter facilities which also have dimensioning capacity. She explained they are unsure how they will host their Resource Center, because it is a small space located in the basement of the Community Center with no windows or ventilation.

Member Smith asked about the possibility to pull together campers and RVs in one spot and/or driveways. Member White said that is a good short term solution for shelter, but it would require a lot of staff check-ins and she does not think there would be enough community partners to support that type of program this winter.

Member Miller asked if school gymnasiums would be available as alternate warming shelters since at this point they will not be utilized for their primary purpose. They can also usually be secured from the rest of the building.

Member Dumitrescu also serves as the chair of the Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance Subcommittee on Winter Warming and explained the funding situation. She said the money that was set aside for this winter has been used for COVID-19 response and a new funding source will likely not be available until the spring. The shelters in Salem are largely volunteer based through a network of churches and are temperature activated. Sheltering Silverton is focusing efforts on trying to help figure out a solution for winter shelter for each of their clients based on their individual needs.

Member Schmaus asked if the City would be willing to allow the Community Center Gym to be used as an emergency shelter in case the temperatures get too low. Chair Palmer said the RVs might be the ideal solution, but staffing could be a problem for that type of program as well as for any churches that might be willing to participate. He further explained this is a problem throughout Oregon and the homeless population is not growing in Silverton due to Sheltering Silverton's efforts to house people and provide a warming shelter for the community. He said the discussion tonight should be focused on how to keep people safe this winter. Discussion ensued on the pros and cons of using RVs on private property as a possible solution this winter. Member White said it will be difficult to obtain safe RVs at the numbers needed and raised liability concerns with them being placed on private property. Members discussed the possibility of hosting individuals at the reservoir if it were to be closed this winter. Member Dumitrescu stressed that any group shelter environment will need significant oversight.

Member DeSantis asked how the Resource Center will be set up and managed this winter. Member White said they have been discussing leveraging some of the left over funding from last year to expand the Resource Center hours. They would like to be open from 8-5 Monday – Friday. This will be a place where people can go to get out of the elements, have a hot cup of coffee and receive case management services. She said the key will be to leverage existing resources related to COVID-19. They have not been able to determine where they will house the Resource Center, because they are currently operating out of the Community Center Parking Lot, but will need to find an indoor location soon. City Manager Christy Wurster explained the limitations for the Community Center Gym due to the City's current staffing levels and not being able to meet the cleaning protocols associated with COVID-19. She explained new OSHA guidelines will also be released shortly which could also impact use at the Community Center. Member Dumitrescu explained there are slightly different FEMA guidelines related to emergency shelters that would likely apply to the use of the Community Center. Member White asked if the City could stop with the displacement of unhoused individuals.

Chair Palmer asked the members to begin thinking about options, because this is not something that can wait. He stressed anything is on the table for discussion. Member Miller suggested using a survey tool in order to get community input and ideas, similar to the Civic Center survey which had a good response rate. He said it might help people not feel like they are missing out from being able to provide input on a topic once a meeting gets scheduled. Once the topic gets scheduled people tend to give input that is very reactionary. A survey mechanism could help gather ideas in a more organized and tempered manner. Chair Palmer said the questions will need to be well thought out and members discussed the idea of surveying the community to solicit input on sheltering options. Member Dumitrescu made a motion to move forward with a community based survey to seek input on sheltering solutions and how best to manage the homeless population. Member Smith seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously (10-0).

The next Task Force meeting will be scheduled for Wednesday, September 16 at 6:00 p.m. in order to discuss the survey questions and outreach options. The goal should be to have the survey finalized and out in the community no later than September 30, 2020. Member Dumitrescu said she will reach out to her colleagues in Lane County to see if they have developed a similar survey, which could help get the process started.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Member Smith made a motion to adjourn. Member Miller seconded the motion and Chair Palmer adjourned the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

/s/Angela Speier, Assistant to the City Manager/City Clerk